



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

September 8, 2023

Honorable Dan Williams
Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
130 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

RE: Proposal for a Northeastern Alberta Recovery Community: Healing Through Culture and Tradition

Dear Minister Williams,

We trust this letter finds you in good health. First and foremost, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations on your recent appointment as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Your leadership in this critical portfolio is deeply valued, and we are confident that your dedication and expertise will have a positive impact on the well-being of Albertans.

We're writing to bring to your attention a proposal that holds the potential to address a pressing concern in our province: the intertwined challenges of addiction, mental health, and rising crime rates in northeastern Alberta.

The proposal we wish to present is for the establishment of a recovery community in the Lakeland district of northeastern Alberta. This community would be a culturally sensitive and holistic treatment center, designed in consultation with the communities of northeastern Alberta as well as its First Nations and Metis Settlements. The model for this initiative draws inspiration from the successful Blood Tribe Recovery Community and the Tsuut'ina Nation Recovery Facility, both of which showcase the power of Indigenous traditions in fostering healing and recovery.

It is important to note that while this proposal will have serious First Nations considerations, it will not be exclusive to only First Nations. The aim is to create a space that welcomes individuals from all walks of life, fostering an environment of inclusivity, understanding, and collaboration on the journey towards wellness and recovery.

The urgent need for such an initiative arises from the alarming impact of the opioid crisis and substance abuse on our communities. The surge in addiction-related fatalities, coupled with the rise in criminal and violent activities, emphasizes the dire need for targeted interventions that can effectively address the distinct challenges faced by our communities. The proposal aims to create a secure and supportive

environment that leverages the wisdom of Indigenous traditions to foster healing, growth, and empowerment for up to 300 individuals annually.

In alignment with the proposal's objectives, we wish to highlight the following points:

1. **Culturally Appropriate Programming:** The recovery center will offer a range of programs rooted in Indigenous cultural practices, faith, and traditions, ensuring participants' emotional and spiritual needs are addressed.
2. **Holistic Treatment Model:** A multidisciplinary team of professionals will create personalized treatment plans that encompass physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of healing.
3. **Community Involvement:** Family and community engagement will be integral to the recovery process, fostering a network of support that contributes to successful outcomes.
4. **FNMI Partnership:** The involvement of local bands and Metis Settlements in this project reflects a collaborative approach that respects and empowers Indigenous leadership in healing.

We believe that the establishment of this recovery community in the Lakeland region would not only address pressing challenges but also serve as a beacon of hope for individuals and families affected by addiction and mental health issues. By investing in culturally appropriate and holistic approaches, we can create a lasting impact on the lives of many and contribute to a healthier and more resilient Alberta.

We kindly request your consideration of this proposal, as well as the involvement of relevant stakeholders in its realization. We are confident that this initiative has the potential to bring about positive change and to serve as a model for addressing similar challenges in other parts of our province.

Finally, given the significance of this proposal and its potential to address a critical issue in our community, we hope for the opportunity to arrange a meeting between you, our partners, and stakeholders involved in this initiative. This meeting would provide an invaluable platform to discuss the finer details of the proposal, address any queries or concerns, and seek your insights and guidance. Your support and engagement in this matter would greatly contribute to the realization of this much-needed recovery community, marking a positive step towards a healthier and safer northeastern Alberta.

Thank you for your time and attention. We are eagerly looking forward to your response and the possibility of working together to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Scott Cyr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Scott" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Cyr".

Scott Cyr, MLA
Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul

Cc:

Honourable Danielle Smith – Premier of Alberta

Honourable Adrianna LaGrange – Minister of Health

Honourable Rick Wilson - Ministry of Indigenous Relations

Honourable Brian Jean - Minister of Energy and Minerals - MLA for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

Honourable Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk - Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees - MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville

Mr. Glenn van Dijken, MLA
Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock

Mr. Garth Roswell, MLA - Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright

Chief of Staff Marshall Smith – Premier’s Office

Chief Zone Officer Stacy Greening – North Zone

Zone Medical Director Dr. Brian Muir – North Zone

Chief Superintendent Peter Tewfik – RCMP
Officer in charge of Community Safety & Well-being

Director Menasha Nikhanj - I/C Community Engagement and Outreach, Community Safety and Well-being Branch “K” Division, Alberta RCMP

Chairman Stan Delorme – Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement

Chairperson Charles Gladue – Fishing Lake Metis Settlement

Chairperson Kathy Lepine – Elizabeth Metis Settlement

Chief Gregory Desjarlais – Frog Lake First Nation

Chief Kelsey Jacko – Cold Lake First Nation

Chief Trevor John - Kehewin Cree Nation

Chief Terry Cardinal - Saddle Lake Cree Nation

Mayor Craig Copeland – City of Cold Lake

Mayor Elisa Brosseau – Town of Bonnyville

Mayor Maureen Miller – Town of St. Paul

Mayor Nicholas Werstiuk – Village of Glendon

Reeve Barry Kalinski – Municipal District of Bonnyville

Reeve Glen Ockerman – St. Paul County

President Rick Jerome – Bonnyville Friendship Centre

Executive Director Agnes Gendron – Cold Lake Native Friendship Centre

Executive Director Hinano Rosa - Mannawanis Native Friendship Centre Society

President Lise Fielding – Bonnyville and District Chamber of Commerce

President Ryan Lefebvre – Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce

Executive Director Yvonne Weinmeir – St. Paul & District Chamber of Commerce