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Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray Alberta T9H 2K4

RE: Urgent Need for Action to Address Homelessness and Tent City Impact on Downtown Businesses

Dear Mayor Bowman and Esteemed Council Members,

I hope this letter finds you in all well. As the Executive Director of the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, I write to you today on behalf of the downtown business community, raising a pressing concern that demands immediate attention and action.

Over the past several months, an area of our downtown has experienced a significant challenge due to the emergence of a tent city, attracting individuals struggling with homelessness and addiction issues. While we acknowledge the complexity and multifaceted nature of these challenges, the close proximity of the tent city to numerous businesses, including establishments catering to children, has resulted in substantial negative consequences.

Business owners in this downtown area, who have invested their time, resources, and passion into creating vibrant spaces, are now confronted with a difficult situation. The presence of the tent city has led to increased incidents of aggressive behavior, and petty crimes. These activities have not only disrupted the daily operations of businesses but have also instilled fear and concern among employees, customers, and the community at large.

The businesses directly affected include family-friendly establishments, where parents and guardians no longer feel comfortable bringing their children due to the potentially hazardous environment. The negative impact on the livelihood of these business owners, as well as the reputation of our downtown area as a safe and welcoming place, cannot be overstated.

We recognize that homelessness and addiction are complex social issues that require compassionate and comprehensive solutions. As the regional leaders, we turn to you for your guidance, support, and commitment to addressing these challenges effectively and with a sense of urgency.

We respectfully request that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo take immediate action to:

- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including social service agencies, law enforcement, and community organizations, to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the tent city situation.

- Increase the presence of law enforcement and security personnel in the specific downtown area to ensure the safety and security of businesses, employees, customers and the general public.
- Provide additional resources for outreach services, addiction support programs, and mental health resources to assist those in need and help them transition to a path towards recovery.
- Establish a task force or working group comprising representatives from the business community, community organizations, and local government to facilitate open dialogue and collaboration in finding effective, long-term solutions.

We understand that this is a complex issue with no easy solutions. However, we firmly believe that by working together, we can develop strategies that address the root causes of homelessness and addiction while also providing support and resources to the affected individuals.

As advocates for the business community, we are committed to being active partners in finding and implementing solutions that benefit both our local economy and the well-being of our residents. We invite you to engage in a constructive dialogue with us to develop a sustainable plan that ensures a safe and prosperous future for downtown Fort McMurray.

We sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and your dedication to the well-being of our community. We look forward to working closely with you to address this critical issue and create a vibrant downtown area that fosters economic growth, social harmony, and a strong sense of community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Dianna de Sousa  
Executive Director,  
The Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce