



Mary Lee Booth Presentation at the City of Moose Jaw Public Meeting on Community Wellness and Safety

Hello—my name is Mary Lee Booth and I am retired from a 35-year career in the field of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I recently completed a five-year term on the MJ Board of Police Commissioners, and I am the current Chair of Square One Community. This evening, I am speaking as a concerned community member.

We have 25 emergency shelter spaces in Moose Jaw. Riverside Mission provides 10 beds for men and Willow Lodge provides 15 beds for males and females. If both shelters were fully occupied that is 25 people off the street from 8 pm to 8 am. I understand that Willow Lodge has had over 70% full occupancy since opening their doors SIX months ago.

Interestingly, according to the latest MJPS data on crime rates, crimes against the person and crimes against property have trended downward in the PAST SIX months.

We know that when basic needs, like food, water and shelter, are NOT met there is an ***increased likelihood*** of higher risk behavior, some of which are criminal. Survival instincts kick in and sometimes these survival behaviors are the ones that other community members get very concerned about. This item directly impacts the health of the community.

I am proud to call Moose Jaw my home for 64 years and I am not afraid to walk downtown or in Crescent Park. On Jan 29 this year, Moose Jaw Today proclaimed Moose Jaw as one of the most volunteer-rich communities in the province. This makes me so proud because this demonstrates that our citizens care about their city and are serving their fellow community members. We recognize the plight of those who are suffering and are committed to walking with them to ease their burdens and above all, lend a helping hand to offer supports.

So, what are some solutions?

We recognize that emergency shelters and meal programs are NOT the only solution to homelessness. However, they are an important piece of the continuum of social housing support services. What is a **continuum of support services?** It's outreach, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, different levels of supported living, barrier-free access to health and social services to aid in recovery-- all of which contribute to successful independent living. And because individuals who are unhoused have legitimate financial and transportation barriers, the services and supports need to be where the people are. That IS in the city core.

Another solution is a Social Housing Advisory committee, which is currently being assembled by Square One Community. This is a committee of 13-15 agencies with a vested interest in social housing that collaborate on solutions to housing insecurity issues. This committee will oversee projects such as the Point in Time count and systems mapping of services/supports to individuals with housing insecurity. This Social Housing Advisory committee will gather FACTS and data, analyze the evidence, identify gaps in service and work with community partners to fill service gaps. The Social Housing Advisory committee understands that the housing insecurity problem belongs to the **community**, not one or two agencies. And collectively WE seek solutions for the health of the community.

There already are some great collaboration and partnerships between some agencies—all trying to work on solutions. Having said this, collaboration between human service agencies, business partners, government representatives and community members could be better. Increased collaboration could give opportunity for less duplication of service, less competition for the same funding, and demonstrate that us Moose Javians WANT to work together to keep our community inclusive, healthy, and safe for **all citizens, whether they own a home or not.** Thank you.