January 14, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Vimy Arena and ADDICTIONS PREVENTION

Regarding the proposed recovery facility at Vimy Arena

I would like to talk about prevention. Firstly I would like to say that removing recreational facilities from our neighbourhoods seems counter-productive to fighting the opioid crisis. There has been a lot of focus in this conversation on the management of illness and recovery but not very much focus on prevention which is in my view equally significant. I feel a vital element of prevention is providing (not removing) multi-purpose facilities to engage our children in meaningful activities such as sports, arts and crafts, books, social clubs, and quality family time whenever possible. By closing down our recreational facilities you are impairing that effort.

Treatment facilities are required and important but recreational facilities such as the Vimy Arena should not be swapped out for recovery centres. We should not give up on prevention. On the contrary, please bring back recreational facilities to help our kids thrive, don't take them away. The more you take away the more vulnerable our youth will become. How can we shut down facilities that contribute to a healthy active lifestyle for children and then say this will benefit our community and mitigate the opioid crisis. These recreational facilities may also potentially save lives.

Not all families can afford organized sports, and community recreational facilities then become even more important. They are needed to provide kids with positive opportunities, such as indoor soccer, skating, lacrosse, summer clubs, etc. We are all aware that physical activity and sports can greatly contribute to healthy minds, boost productivity and self-esteem for many kids, and also reduce their boredom levels. The proactive benefits of recreational centres are invaluable, and should be promoted and not eliminated.

Seven Oaks Arena is not in our catchment. A bus ride to Seven Oaks is 60 to 90 minutes away. It's a long car ride too. Most Crestview parents will not send their kids to Seven Oaks. You are bulldozing away the tools that help the parents of this community. First the Vimy arena was declared surplus, for reasons which remain a mystery, as it is only 37 years old. Then, when the land is rezoned as commercial, the curling club may be in jeopardy and may have to close its doors. The curling club is another vital family centered facility, very valuable for the welfare of our kids. We have a lot of memories at the curling club, entire days are spent there, curling and visiting in the upper level and snack bar.

The recovery facility is one of second chances, but it should not come at the expense of our youth's first chances in this community. I think an effort can be made to accommodate both of those very important components of the opioid crisis. Prevention and recovery.

We are not aware of a single other location which has been considered for this project. What is the reason for this? We have also recently asked why the Shriner's Hospital at Wellington Crescent was not being offered to Mr. Oake for his recovery facility. We understand it has been vacant for over a year, and is directly owned by the Province. It would not require a land transfer and rezoning which is consuming a lot of valuable time. It would not infringe on any parkland. It is a large building with many amenities, such as a kitchen, a gym, a wing for staff, access to transportation. It is an architecturally beautiful heritage building and it's even on the River. The cost to upgrade it cannot be at issue, since last week, the City voted to give away 1.4 million dollars without batting an eye. Though we don't know its exact condition, can this facility be operational much quicker. Could it be up and running with a little work by summer or fall? In the alternative, are there other equally suitable locations, which would speed up the process for people who desperately need the recovery facility. We believe that anyone who is seriously interested in meaningful recovery and sobriety will be hoping for state of the art **medical care**. We don't think they would care at all about a shiny new building or a creek view. They need proper medical care and support first and foremost.

The Vimy Arena is still a viable recreational space for the youth of Crestview and can be repurposed for their benefit. Why has the City allowed it to remain closed and fall into disrepair for all these years and then re-direct us to Seven Oaks Arena, miles away from our homes.

I would like to speak a little bit about Sturgeon Creek Parkway which also falls into the category of addiction prevention. It is an integral and enriching part of family life. It is used as low cost recreation and exercise which helps our kids stay healthy. A park by its very nature is a recreational space, the parkland at Vimy Arena should remain an extension of recreation. There may be treatment facilities in residential areas, but this is different. This will be in the middle of parkland. We do not believe Parks and Addictions Centres belong together.

So we respectfully request that you, who have taken an oath to represent all of us Winnipeggers impartially, will vote for the kids currently growing up in Crestview, and help us fight the opioid crisis with measures that promote prevention. We ask that you assist us in repurposing and maintaining our much needed recreation centres and parks for the youth of our community. They dearly need these resources each and every day during their formative years.

We hope that you will not rush through this very important decision and give everyone an opportunity to find a compromise that considers the best interests of all involved. We are not insensitive and ignorant, we are just trying to protect our kids and provide them with the best lifestyle possible, like all parents do. We need our recreation centres to stay open.

I have to add that through this process, we are disheartened to hear some of our elected officials refer to our community as “full of drug dealers and needles at the Vimy Arena” in the press. This is a narrative intended to discredit our community. We have issues like every other community, this is true, but it is unfortunate to hear some councillors, whom we trust to protect and defend ALL of us, not just a few of us, make disparaging comments about one of their communities. We find this sadly unprofessional. We know there were no needles at Vimy Arena when it was a vibrant operational part of the community. We also want to thank Mr. Dobson and Mr. Fletcher for showing courage in their efforts to help us hold on to our parks and REC facilities for the benefit of our kids. They are the only ones who seem to have the best interests of this community at heart. We are disappointed by some behaviours we have seen play out.

Finally though this is self-evident, I will say it anyway. We all have experience with the opioid crisis and we all know someone who is afflicted by it. We know what a difficult and debilitating illness it is. We have seen it also. Of course we support the addictions Recovery Centre, we know there is a need. We especially support a facility like the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre which we know will offer state of the art treatment, and will help many get back on their feet. On this point there really is no debate.

We hope that the Foundation can open its doors sooner rather than later in a more suitable location.

Thank you for your time.

Annabela Darvill