SUBMISSION – VICTOR MONDACA

ITEM 1 OF THE REPORT OF THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND PUBLIC WORKS DATED JUNE 9, 2022 REGARDING REGENT AVENUE BUS SHELTERS

Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2022 8:49:52 PM

Personal information
Full name: Victor Mondaca
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Job title:
Organization:
Address:
City: Winnipeg
Province or territory: Manitoba
Postal code: R

Delegation information
Committee: Council
Committee - council: Opposed to the recommendations
Committee - other: N/A
Agenda item (number and title): Regent Avenue Bus Shelters Dismantling

Service inquiry: Submit Comments in writing
Participation preference: N/A
Comments in writing: I am writing to you today to voice my opposition to the proposed dismantling of the Regent Ave Winnipeg bus shelters and to ask you to vote against said proposal.

This past Wednesday, June 14, 2022, I presented as a deligate in front of the executive policy committee in opposition to the proposed dismantling of the Regent ave bus shelters.
I'm a support worker and N'Dinawemak - our relative's shelter. I've chosen this career path because at one point in my life I was also unsheltered and also facing my drug dependency issues and mental health issues alone. I'm here to show the unsheltered people that they are not alone, to speak for those who may not have a voice in a forum such as this, to advocate on their behalf, and to personalize this topic and remind everyone here that we are talking about people.

This proposed dismantling of the bus shelter on regent ave is another attempt at the out of sight out of mind mentality that our homeless population, that our relatives, have already faced time and time again. They are people, some brother some sisters some mothers some daughter, just because you are now seeing a glimpse of what we see every day and, all because it's turning up in places that you didn't expect like now on Regent ave.

This proposal is not a solution. This proposal would make vulnerable people even more vulnerable while offering absolutely no solution to the actual problems. In the last six months I have personally saved the life of 7 people from drug overdose, people who deserve this counsel's attention, people who have time after time been let down by the system, where instead of solutions they offer us resistance, resistance in not allowing supervised consumption sites, resistance in resources, resistance in services. These people deserve better, they deserve better than bus shelters as a last resort they deserve better than having no choice but to choose unheated bus shelters.

Have you ever taken the time to even interact with someone unsheltered? Have you ever asked why they choose to be unsheltered? I have. Most will tell you this is not a choice but a last resort. The underlying issue here is public safety according to the counselors in favor of the dismantling of these bus shelters, of the dismantling people's homes, let me tell you that the problem is far more complex than a public safety concern for people visiting the mall or waiting for the bus.

Taking down a bus shelter or all of them won't actually fix any issues it just sweeps them under the rug again, until these people, our people pop up again and then you'll try to sweep them under the rug yet again. Removing anything without a proper game plan on how to address all the underlying issues isn't how we get this resolved. If anything, this will further hurt and possibility cause more damage to an already over stressed and marginalized group of people, because once again to remind everyone these are people we are taking about.

Everybody on City Council gets to go home to their heated and air-conditioned house, take a shower eat dinner and watch tv, and these people are out there seeking out the minimum, shelter. And unfortunately, these shelters have become their homes for as long or as little as the can, so yeah they seek the same things we do have friends over and have drinks gather and socialize. Unsheltered people have an amazing sense of community, they help each other love each other like family, and sometimes yes, this spills over into the public eye but I don't see bars being shut down for people throwing up in there parking lots, I don't see football games canceled because people are drinking excessively or even publicly.

Sometimes the people who are using the bus shelters are doing so because some of the shelters don't have a co-ed area so for them to sleep beside a loved one would be impossible, so I say again this is the last resort for some people, there last resort is sadly a bus shelter. One of the only solutions to the homeless situation is housing, we need housing that allows us to meet people where there at, not everybody is ready to be sober and that's okay, some people need co-ed housing and that's okay, some people need a safe place where they can express their sexuality and that's also okay.

We as a city are failing; we are all failing these people if this is their last resort. Taking these shelters down is moving us all in the wrong direction. We as a city are better than this.

In closing I urge you to leave these bus shelters intact, and to be outraged, but be outraged that bus shelters are the only option for some people in our city.

Allow us time to find better solution for our people together; let's use this opportunity to build safe consumptions sites, low barrier transitional housing and resources to help us fight this drug epidemic. Let's take this opportunity to reconcile past mistakes that have put people in these situations, and most of all help us give people hope Unlike many here I go to work every day hoping and praying that one day this city no longer needs my position.
Thank you,

Victor Mondaca
N'Dinawemak shelter team lead and support worker
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