



THERE'S A BETTER
WAY

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Open Letter to Central Albertans

February 26, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Red Deer – Mountain View, AB

I spoke with an Alberta government official in mid-December 2020 re: the status of the proposed recovery community facility in Red Deer, as originally announced in mid-July 2020. I was informed that the project is bogged down in the bureaucratic process. The official hoped that there would be a public update prior to Christmas but this has yet to occur.

With that being said, I wanted to propose a project that I came across that may be beneficial for Red Deer and Central Alberta.

To my knowledge, the project originated in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is called "There's a Better Way". Please see this YouTube link for a short video on the project.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CTKUVeuxx0&feature=emb_logo

In a nutshell, the program aims at providing flexible work opportunities to those experiencing homelessness in order for them to earn some cash and be better connected with services. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide a base for which these individuals can move into permanent housing and full-time employment.

I truly feel that giving people the dignity of work makes an immense difference in their life. This is very evident in 2020-21 as many people have lost their jobs, their businesses and ultimately, their sense of purpose in life.

I have reached out to representatives from Safe Harbour, Turning Point and the Mustard Seed as I feel their involvement would be crucial. All three organizations expressed interest in pursuing a similar program for Red Deer. The major concerns they expressed in seeing this program get off the ground were twofold:

1. Funding for staff to facilitate the project along with funding to employ individuals through the program.
2. Partnership with the City of Red Deer to provide opportunities to complete manual labour tasks within the community. (cleaning up garbage, shovelling snow, etc.)

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I reached out to the City of Red Deer (including the Mayor and all city councilors) along with Red Deer North and South MLAs on February 10, 2021 to discuss the merits of the program in light of the delays to the proposed recovery community facility. I have yet to receive a response.

For 2021, Red Deer City Council is recommending funding of \$516,974 for Urban Encampment and Debris Cleanup on Public Lands. My initial thoughts were to see if the "There's a Better Way" program could be funded through an allocation of some of the funds earmarked for the rough sleeper and drug debris cleanup. Additionally, the program could be funded through private sector donations to the previously noted organizations. Amounts donated to these organizations would qualify for a donation tax credit regardless of whether the funds were donated personally or via your corporation.

If you, your organization or anyone you know feel that there would be an opportunity for a program such as this to operate within Red Deer, I would love to discuss this further with you.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jared Pilon
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