

CUPE LOCAL 4670

SUBMISSION TO THE RESORT VILLAGE OF FORT SAN

Relocation of Pine Lodge Treatment Centre to the Resort Village of Fort San



INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4670 welcomes this opportunity to address the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San about the possible relocation of Pine Lodge Treatment Centre into the former Prairie Christian Training Centre (PCTC).

CUPE Local 4670 is the bargaining agent for non-managerial employees of Pine Lodge Treatment Centre. Our union represents 20 members who work as counsellors, addictions attendants, cooks, housekeeping, laundry and maintenance. Most of our members live in Indian Head and the remainder live in surrounding areas.

CUPE is the largest union in Canada, representing about 700,000 members nation-wide. CUPE is also the largest union in the province with 30,000 members in Saskatchewan working in health care, K-12 education, municipalities, libraries, and in numerous community-based organizations such as childcare centres, group homes, vocational centres and women's shelters.

Our union fights to protect and advance the working conditions and interests of our members but CUPE also strongly promotes the economic and social health of our communities. Pine Lodge Treatment Centre provides invaluable support to our communities at a time when addictions treatment is needed now more than ever.

We wish to state upfront that CUPE Local 4670 does not speak on behalf of Pine Lodge Treatment Centre. That said, we hope that our presentation here today – from frontline staff – will help to alleviate any lingering concerns that Council may have about the possible relocation of Pine Lodge into your community and answer any outstanding questions.

CONCERNS WITH THE RELOCATION

Through various media reports, we are aware that many residents of Fort San have petitioned Councillors with concerns about the impact the possible move of Pine Lodge into the former PCTC property will have on community safety and property values.

It is not unusual that certain stigmas are attached to people with addictions and treatment facilities.

However, we wish to acknowledge that the primary concern of the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San, as stated in your February 23, 2021 news release, is “whether a substance abuse

treatment centre fits into the definition of a ‘Residential Care Facility’ as defined in the Resort Village of Fort San Zoning Bylaw.”¹

We are not experts in zoning bylaws. However, as the File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council recently pointed out, their Leading Thunderbird Lodge residential treatment program for First Nations and Inuit male youth has operated successfully in Fort San since 2007. According to their February 19, 2021 media statement, “The site and facility itself began as the former New Dawn Valley Centre Adult Treatment Centre in 1985, which has since maintained the zoning permits to operate as a treatment facility to this day.”²

We also note that the owner of the former PCTC property, James Archer, maintains that the addiction treatment centre has similar goals to the former training centre which was a live-in facility. “There’s a residential component and a training, individual counselling and group therapy component to it as well,” Mr. Archer said. “So our position is that it’s a fairly consistent use of what the property has always been used for.”³

CUPE Local 4670 appreciates that the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San has the responsibility to interpret its own zoning bylaw. If Council concludes that a residential addictions centre would not fit into the current definition of residential care facility, then we would strongly encourage Council to amend the zoning bylaw to facilitate the move of Pine Lodge into the former PCTC building.

We understand that two other concerns that Council expressed last month have since been addressed. We are aware that Pine Lodge Treatment Centre has recently communicated to your Council its desire to permanently re-locate to into the PCTC, which would address the uncertainty and concerns about a future substance abuse centre, perhaps not as well-run, replacing Pine Lodge after a temporary re-location.

We also understand that the owner of the former PCTC property has since submitted a written development plan for the site, which addresses another concern identified in your February 23 news release.

Lastly, we note that Council’s February 23 statement pointed out that there may be concerns with different types of substance abuse treatment centres. Specifically, it was noted that “some, like Pine Lodge, have patients who check themselves in voluntarily; while others have patients who are ordered into treatment by the courts. Numerous Fort San residents who participated in a

¹ “Statement from the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San regarding the redevelopment of the former Prairie Christian Training Centre site,” Resort Village of Fort San, February 23, 2021, http://fortsan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/FortSan_PCTC-REDEVELOPMENT_Feb-23-2021.pdf

² “FHQTC Supports Pine Lodge Development in Fort San,” File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council Media Statement, February 19, 2021, <https://fhqtc.com/fhqtc-supports-pine-lodge-development-in-fort-san/>

³ Arthur White-Crummey, “Reeling from fire, treatment centre faces cold welcome in resort village,” Regina Leader-Post, February 12, 2021. <https://leaderpost.com/news/saskatchewan/reeling-from-fire-treatment-centre-faces-cold-welcome-in-resort-village>

public information conference call about a substance abuse treatment centre at the former PCTC site expressed public safety concerns about the possibility of patients from the latter type of facility causing disturbances in the village.”⁴

We wish to alleviate this last concern by telling you more about the background of the Pine Lodge Treatment Centre and how it operates.

BACKGROUND ON PINE LODGE TREATMENT CENTRE

Pine Lodge Treatment Centre is operated by Pine Lodge Addiction Recovery Inc., which is a non-profit corporation. Since 1986, Pine Lodge Treatment Centre has provided residential addictions treatment services in the community of Indian Head. Prior to the December 24, 2020 fire that severely damaged our building, Pine Lodge had 33 in-patient beds.

Thanks to a highly supportive and structured educational and therapeutic approach provided in a peaceful, semi-rural setting. Pine Lodge has assisted thousands of people to begin their recovery from addiction and get their lives back. Clients from Regina and other parts of southern Saskatchewan are referred to Pine Lodge by family doctors, employee assistance plans (EAPs), Addictions Services and detox facilities. In some cases, the Ministry of Social Services can also refer clients to Pine Lodge so they can regain custody of their children once they complete the program as outlined below.

Our clients come from all walks of life, cutting across race, class, income and gender lines. Many suffer from alcoholism, addictions to crystal meth and fentanyl. Often, clients suffer from secondary addictions like gambling.

Counsellors facilitate group sessions and use a variety of therapies, clinical and evidence-based practices to help our clients overcome their addictions. These approaches include motivational enhancement and interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy and educational groups and lectures.

Before arriving at Pine Lodge clients must go through a 14-day detox plan at a detox facility or at their home. So, clients are not using alcohol or drugs when they enter the facility. Clients must stay at Pine Lodge for 28 days to get a medallion to show their completion of the program. During intake of new clients, staff ensure that no drugs or alcohol are brought into Pine Lodge. Drop-offs from visitors are also checked for these items. Addictions attendants monitor the clients throughout the day to ensure participation in programming and activities. Attendants also do regular room checks.

⁴ “Statement from the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San regarding the redevelopment of the former Prairie Christian Training Centre site.”

Clients go for short walks each day, usually only five minutes, but they cannot leave the facility on their own. They must either walk in a group of three or walk with all clients. They must sign out when they leave the property and sign in when they return. Curfew is 10:45 p.m. each night. Clients are not allowed on anyone's property other than a local store where they can purchase cigarettes or personal items.

Pine Lodge clients reside at our facility voluntarily because they want to change their lives for the better. Clients are aware of the stigma that is often attached with residential addictions facilities and people suffering from addictions. For that reason, clients are extra vigilant with their conduct on outings.

However, if a Pine Lodge client wants to leave our program, all they need to do is inform a staff member who will help gather their luggage and arrange transportation. No one needs to sneak out in the middle of the night. In the unlikely event that a client is caught with drugs or alcohol they are automatically discharged from Pine Lodge. If a client is suspected to be using, the Program Director will order that a drug test be administered. The Program Director, Administrator, counsellors, or addictions attendants can administer the test, which is done promptly.

Foster Monson, Pine Lodge Treatment Centre's executive director, has noted publicly that the facility has treated 11,000 people over the last 35 years and have not had one incident. Indian Head's Mayor, Steven Cole, has corroborated this. "It was an asset to our community. We had no trouble, zero, and I am disappointed they have had to leave town," he told the Fort Qu'Appelle Fort Times.⁵ We understand that Mayor Cole has also sent a letter to the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San to confirm this.

Don McMorris, Minister of Government Relations and long-time MLA for Indian Head-Milestone, has praised Pine Lodge for helping to turn around many lives and has stated that he has never received one complaint about Pine Lodge's operations.⁶

The File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council has stated, "We encourage the community of Fort San to support The Calling Lakes Centre [former PCTC] in providing a temporary home for Pine Lodge Treatment Centre with the understanding that Leading Thunderbird Lodge has operated successfully for over 14 years with absolute minimal negative impact on the community..."⁷

Clearly, there is no evidence to suggest that Pine Lodge and its clients would pose any kind of threat to the public safety of Fort San residents or cause any disturbances.

⁵ Alan Hustak, "Fort San split over new addictions centre," *Fort Times (Fort Qu'Appelle, SK)*, February 19, 2021.

⁶ Alan Hustak, "Support for Pine Lodge move gains momentum," *Herald Sun (Melville, SK)*, February 26, 2021.

⁷ "FHQTC Supports Pine Lodge Development in Fort San," File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council Media Statement, February 19, 2021.

In recent years, the provincial government has expanded its support for mental health and addictions services. As part of its Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, in 2019 the provincial government provided \$467,000 to Pine Lodge Treatment Centre to create 10 new inpatient treatment beds, bringing the total number of beds to 33. Minister of Health Jim Reiter said, “This investment will help Pine Lodge reduce wait times, providing people across southern Saskatchewan with better access to inpatient addiction services.”⁸

More recently, Pine Lodge received funding to expand its operations to add 10 pre-treatment beds. This expansion will take effect when a new facility is secured.

Pine Lodge’s reputation and success in helping people overcome their addictions has undoubtedly helped it secure this additional funding to expand its operations.

Dave Morgan, a former addictions counsellor and guest presenter at Pine Lodge, wrote recently in the *Leader-Post* that he has referred many clients with addictions to our Centre. “It is my considered opinion that Pine Lodge has become one of the finest in-patient addictions treatment centres in Western Canada,” wrote Morgan.⁹

2020 was a challenging year for Pine Lodge Treatment Centre, its employees, and the clients we serve. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the temporary closure of the Centre last spring. Out-patient counselling started in May and the Centre re-opened in July, however, physical distancing restrictions in public health orders restricted the number of clients to one per room instead of the normal two. The number of clients the Centre could house was capped at 15. Last year was capped off with a devastating fire at our facility in on December 24 which essentially destroyed our facility in Indian Head. Since this date, Pine Lodge has reverted to out-patient counselling. In late February, Pine Lodge laid off 14 employees, citing the continuing absence of a physical space to provide our services. Seven counsellors remain actively employed, providing out-patient services.

Pine Lodge counsellors continue to provide the best possible service under difficult and challenging circumstances, but we cannot provide the same level of high-quality support our clients have received in the past without a physical building.

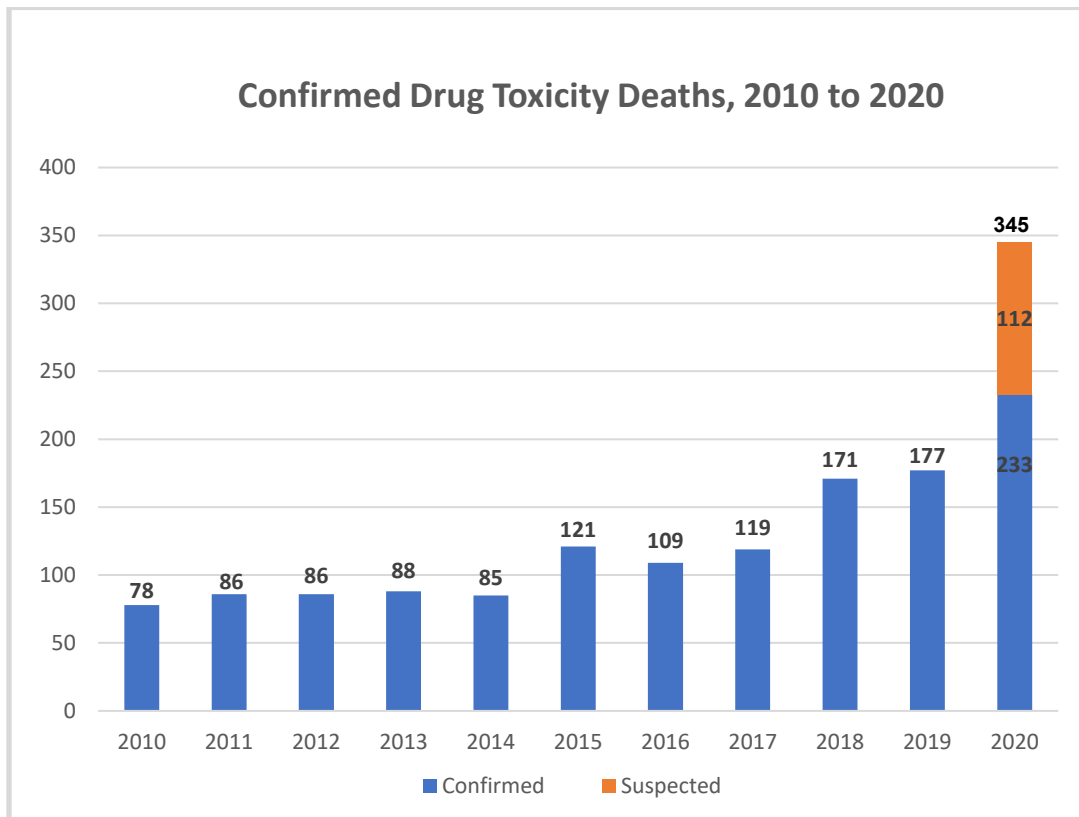
Meanwhile, the waiting list for people seeking the life-changing support that Pine Lodge offers continues to grow each day our Centre remains without a new home. At last count, there are over 60 people on the waiting list to attend Pine Lodge – at a time when our province is grappling with an alarming epidemic of drug overdoses.

⁹ Dave Morgan, “Pine Lodge an important piece of community,” *Regina Leader-Post*, February 18, 2021, <https://leaderpost.com/opinion/letters/your-letters-for-feb-18-2021-pine-lodge-needs-to-be-saved>

ADDICTIONS CRISIS

Treatment centres like Pine Lodge are needed now more than ever with mounting evidence that Saskatchewan is facing an addictions crisis.

The chart below shows the troubling growth in drug toxicity deaths as confirmed by the Saskatchewan Coroners Service from 2010 to 2020.¹⁰ The combined confirmed and suspected drug toxicity deaths skyrocketed in 2020 to 345 in Saskatchewan, which is more than four times the number of confirmed deaths in 2010 and nearly double the drug toxicity deaths in 2019.



Source: Saskatchewan Coroners Service, Drug Toxicity Deaths, Saskatchewan, 2010 to 2021, Updated March 1, 2021

In 2020, 103 of the 233 confirmed deaths (44%) took place in Regina. Fentanyl, acetyl fentanyl, hydromorphone were the opioid drugs most likely to contribute to drug toxicity deaths last year. Methamphetamine was a factor in 87 drug-related deaths.¹¹

The Saskatchewan Coroners Service is already reporting 75 suspected or confirmed drug toxicity deaths in the first two months of 2021.

¹⁰ Saskatchewan Coroners Service, Drug Toxicity Deaths, Saskatchewan, 2010 to 2021, Updated March 1, 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

As frontline workers, it is very difficult to hear that increasing numbers of Saskatchewan people are struggling with addictions and dying from overdoses while our facility is closed. We are very anxious to have Pine Lodge re-open with expanded services so we can once again give people the needed supports to help them overcome their addictions.

POSITIVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Finally, CUPE Local 4670 encourages the Council of the Resort Village of Fort San to also consider the positive economic impacts of having Pine Lodge relocate into the former PCTC building in Fort San.

Karen Main, the executive director of Leading Thunderbird Lounge, has said that since this addictions facility began operations in Fort San in 2007 it has injected \$35 million into the local economy.¹²

Travis Keisig, MLA for Last Mountain-Touchwood, which encompasses Fort San, has also publicly praised the work of Pine Lodge and estimated that Pine Lodge would bring \$2 million into the community.¹³

Allowing Pine Lodge to move into the former PCTC property would not only allow for the recall of laid off employees, but it would also allow for the hiring of additional staff for the expansion of pre-treatment beds. This could result in jobs for local residents.

There will be more people spending time and money in the community, not just during the summer, but in the off-season as well.

CONCLUSION

Once again, we acknowledge and appreciate that the responsibility for interpreting the Resort Village of Fort San zoning bylaw rests with this Council. We appreciate that you need to consider what's in the best long-term interests of your community.

We hope that our presentation has alleviated any lingering concerns Council and the Fort San community may have about allowing Pine Lodge Treatment Centre to relocate its operations into the former PCTC. We strongly encourage Council to take the necessary steps to approve this move.

¹² Alan Hustak, "Support for Pine Lodge move gains momentum," *Herald Sun (Melville, SK)*, February 26, 2021.

¹³ Ibid.

Not only does Pine Lodge present no threats to public safety, but the relocation of Pine Lodge into the former PCTC will have positive economic benefits for the Fort San community.

The members of CUPE Local 4670 are anxious to get back to work and help more people through their journey of recovering from debilitating addictions. We also look forward to becoming part of your community.

Thank you once again for allowing us to make this presentation. We are happy to answer any questions Council may have.

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