

I wish to express my support for the Tamitik Status of Women zoning amendment application for 461 Quatsino Blvd.

I do not live in Strawberry Meadows, nor do I live within a 90 metre distance of the site. I live on Stikine Street and I walk in my neighbourhood every day. I can see the proposed location from my home and I drive by it every time I go downtown. So, yes, I am a neighbour and this project matters to me. In fact, every person who lives in Kitimat is a neighbour, including the women and children who will benefit from this multi-use building.

I attended the public meeting at the Luso and honestly, the event made me feel sad for our community. I understand that the intent was to provide a safe space for various voices to be heard but that is not at all what happened. The loud, angry voices and the body language of the clearly well organized Strawberry Meadows group in that hall was intimidating. The moderator commented at the outset that a demographic was missing from the discussion. She was right but more than one demographic was missing. I wish I had had the opportunity to say “thank you” to the brave woman sitting beside Lani Gibson who shared her thoughts on why this multi-use building is the best option. I was surprised that even one client was there, and of course TSW is not going to ask their clients to speak in that environment. TSW is in the business of helping our neighbours who have already been victimized and who already feel like they aren’t welcomed by some members of our community. So no, the voices of those who need the services of this project were mostly not heard.

So who else was not heard? Me. There were several times that I started to raise my hand to make a comment but I didn’t because all that anger made me feel intimidated. I did not feel safe enough to speak but I have been chastising myself over and over for not saying something at least, for not being publicly supportive of TSW and all the good they do for our community. I keep wondering how many people there are like me who just weren’t brave enough to stand up in the face of all that anger. I’m fearful that council will only hear the loud, angry, dissenting voices because it is much more difficult for some other quieter, more fearful voices to be heard. That is why I felt compelled to write this letter.

I recognize that only the zoning is being decided at this point but the public conversation always goes way beyond just the zoning. What is being discussed

and decided is whether our community will support this project. The argument that it should go in some other location doesn't wash because that wouldn't result in no one complaining, it would likely just result in different people complaining. It's not just about features of a building, it's about privilege and a "not in my backyard" backlash that all projects like this one face.

I heard a lot of complaints at the Luso meeting, many of which don't make much sense to me. In regard to building height: when I realized the crane someone put up along Quatsino was to demonstrate the height of the building, I thought, "oh, that's hardly taller than the buildings across the road and certainly not as tall as the trees". Also, the shadow study concluded that no existing homes will be made darker by the new building.

One woman complained about the four storey height of a small portion of the proposed building, saying something like "they will see my family barbecuing, they will see me sun bathing". This is not a valid argument. Even a single family two storey home next door would allow a neighbour to see over any fence that was erected. I think the kind of privacy this woman is speaking of cannot be achieved in town no matter who is next door.

On the topic of traffic, I struggle to see how this project, with it's driveway onto Quatsino will cause any traffic into Strawberry Meadows. As I said, I walk and drive past the location often but I am not upset that some vehicles will be coming in and out of another driveway along the road. It's not a mall and I would wager that a lot of our neighbours who will be coming in and out will be walking. By comparison, the Civeo camp inside the Strawberry Meadows subdivision clearly does create a large amount of traffic.

This is the right location. I felt disgusted when someone at the meeting suggested moving this project to the parking lot behind the vet. Really? Do you want to live in a parking lot? I was further disgusted when another man talked about how women's shelters used to be secret and maybe these women might not be comfortable in such a big building. Come on! The fact that domestic violence isn't talked about openly is a big part of why it continues.

The goal of this project isn't to just provide an emergency shelter for women and their children trying to escape violence. With the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage housing and

affordable housing and all of TSW's services, it will provide a better future for these families so that they can stay safe. This location will allow these women and their kids to walk to the library and the pool and the parks while still affording them a sense of living in a neighbourhood, a sense of belonging, a sense that yes, their lives and the lives of their kids are going to get better because they are part of a community that cares and wants to help.

With regard to the elephant in the room, the "not in my backyard" resistance that nobody is admitting to out loud: The women and kids who will benefit from this project are victims, they're not criminals and they should not be hidden away somewhere like a dirty little secret. The perpetrators of the violence these women and kids are fleeing, are out and about in our community. Homelessness, poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, mental health problems, sexual assault, domestic abuse, victimization of women and kids - all these issues are already in our community, and in our neighbourhood. This project won't bring problems to our neighbourhood, it will help solve the problems that are already here.

I had earlier heard a comment that perhaps these women would not be safe so close to the Civeo Camp. Wow. It's mind blowing that a 1400 bed camp for mostly men who have no community connection with Kitimat that apparently at least someone thinks is dangerous to the public safety, a site that already takes up space and creates traffic and light pollution in Strawberry Meadows just rolls along while we have angry public meetings about a project to help women and kids. Just wow.

Council needs to pass this zoning amendment. TSW has made it clear that they ARE willing to work with their neighbours with regard to the needle exchange, buffers, parking, windows, fencing and other issues. However, TSW must be allowed to proceed with the basic layout and design of the building because they are trying to make best use of the dollars available and to create a space that best serves our neighbours who need their help.

We cannot call ourselves a community if we fail to help our most vulnerable citizens. The TSW multi-use building in this location, will be a great addition to Kitimat. I will be proud to have it in my neighbourhood. Every time I drive or walk by that brand new, attractive building, I will know that women and their children

are safer, that they are getting the support and help they need to live better lives and to become independent, strong, valuable members of our community. I will know that Kitimat is becoming a safer, better place for all of us to live. I will also know that our council recognized that it is their responsibility to do what is best for the entire community.

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