



## City addresses misinformation regarding its efforts to support Wetaskiwin's vulnerable humans

**Thursday, October 14, 2021 (Wetaskiwin, Alberta)** – Some concerning misinformation has recently been published regarding the City's approach to assisting Wetaskiwin's vulnerable humans experiencing homelessness. These distorted claims are addressed herein. The provision of accurate information is always the City's goal, as this is the best way to combat rumours and mistrust within the community.

[APTN Article](#) (published Oct. 8)

- **The City did not fine Craig Haavaldsen or Rock Soup Foodbank and Greenhouse, nor did the City threaten to close Rock Soup.** A non-compliance order was issued to Rock Soup due to the facilitation of an encampment on a property that was not zoned for temporary shelter use. Additionally, the City Manager and other city employees met with Mr. Haavaldsen multiple times in a proactive attempt to collaborate on a solution. The encampment had become increasingly contentious for many in the community as illustrated by the many community members who spoke about their safety concerns at [the Open Mic portion](#) of the August 16, 2021 Council meeting.
- **While crime was down in the City overall during The Open Door's 24/7 Integrated Response Hub operation in Wetaskiwin's downtown core, there was a spike in increased theft, assaults and other serious issues downtown during the same time frame.** This localized and increasingly dangerous pattern of crime was one of the primary reasons behind Wetaskiwin City Council's vote to end the lease agreement with The Open Door. This increase in issues located in our downtown core is supported by data collected from our Community Peace Officers, who saw 324 investigative files created during the Integrated Response Hub's operation downtown. Data specific to the downtown core for this period of time has also been requested from Wetaskiwin's RCMP but no statistics have been shared to date—other than the City's overall crime trends.
- **The Open Door Association has refused to complete a City of Wetaskiwin mobile vendor permit, which would allow them to deliver outreach services to the vulnerable population.** Legal counsel for the City advised the use of its mobile vendor permit to help ensure that outreach services can be delivered safely, especially given the legitimate safety concerns voiced by many within the community during the Hub's operation downtown. The City Manager also offered to grant permission for The Open Door to deliver outreach services outside of the permit process, provided they share the locations they plan to deliver services, as well as the specific services being offered (medication distribution, etc.), but they refused. The Open Door continues to refuse to provide the information required by the City in order to ensure the safe delivery of services, yet blames the City for being a roadblock.
- **The article ends by spinning the City's lack of availability as dereliction of duty instead of dedication to City matters.** The fact that the City of Wetaskiwin was under a State of Local Emergency—specific to the vulnerable population—for 282 consecutive days to allow for the Hub to legally operate in the Civic Building downtown underscores the City's dedication to helping provide for its vulnerable humans. Members of Council and City staff have been regularly attending meetings to assist the vulnerable population, including the Guiding Coalition on Homelessness and the Regional Community Safety & Well-Being Committee.





[Global News Article](#) (published Oct. 13)

- **It is the Government of Alberta that is financially responsible for health care and social services—which is why they have a Ministry of Health (including mental health and addictions), and a Ministry of Community and Social Services.** The City finds it concerning that a senior Alberta Health Services (AHS) employee is anonymously quoted as condemning the City for a situation the Province is responsible for.
- **The City’s concerns about the increase in theft, assaults, and public drug use in the downtown core during the 24/7 Integrated Response Hub’s tenure were not exaggerated.** City Council and Administration heard from many residents and business owners who were negatively impacted by The Open Door’s operations. Numerous meetings were held with downtown businesses due to the increase in vandalism, theft, and assaults in the downtown core.
- **Crime in Wetaskiwin’s downtown was trending down in August solely because The Open Door vacated the Civic Building early August.** That leaves the rest of August for crime rates to fall in the downtown core, given that most of those experiencing homelessness had re-located to Rock Soup by this time—which is not located in the City’s downtown core.

The City of Wetaskiwin is only one stakeholder of many trying to help find solutions for our community’s ongoing social issues—and we desperately need provincial funding. The newly-established Winter Shelter Advisory Committee is comprised of experts from all fields and service areas—including AHS—to help us arrive at a solution together. Publishing and perpetuating misinformation that villainizes an entity does nothing to help achieve a safe space and trauma-informed treatment options for our community’s vulnerable humans.

Find out what the City has been doing to assist those experiencing homelessness at [whatifwetaskiwin.ca/homeless](http://whatifwetaskiwin.ca/homeless).

### **About the City of Wetaskiwin**

Wetaskiwin is a secure, connected, and inclusive community, home to a diverse population of nearly 13,000 people. Located only 30 minutes south of the Edmonton International Airport, the City of Wetaskiwin provides a high quality of life through ample recreation opportunities, diverse cultural activities, and a modernized, business-friendly downtown.

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