



**To: Mayor and Council**  
**From: Lake of the Woods Development Commission**  
**Date: Jun 27, 2012**  
**Re: Homelessness Report**

Recommendation:

THAT the City of Kenora establish a Task Force on Homelessness to develop a community strategy to address homelessness and related issues in Kenora, led by Mayor and Council.

Background:

In 2006, the City of Kenora adopted its first Economic Development Plan, which outlined the community's transition from a pulp and paper mill town to a destination and lifestyle community. The Plan included a section on Social Issues in recognition that the Plan could not succeed unless the community addressed its social issues of homelessness and addictions.

In 2009, the Lake of the Woods Development Commission reviewed and refreshed the Economic Development Plan and removed social issues and health care for two reasons:

1. These issues were not the core business of the Lake of the Woods Development Commission
2. The Commission did not have the resources to address the issues- neither staff nor funding

Recently, the critical nature of the issues of homelessness, addictions, and vagrancy and their direct impact on Kenora's economic future, were brought to the forefront in three different ways:

1. 750 Community Re-branding surveys identified homelessness/street people as Kenora's number one issue
2. Over 65 retail business owners in Kenora who were interviewed for a business retention and expansion survey identified homelessness/street people/vagrancy as key barriers to growth and development.
3. A Kelowna business in Kenora for a site visit noted homelessness as an issue for business development.

Homelessness and its related issues directly impact Kenora's ability to attract business, visitors, and new residents to the community.

The proposed Task Force would take a leadership role in addressing the issue in the community by pulling together the many organizations in Kenora already working on various aspects of the issue and developing a community-wide strategy to address the issues. Working together to develop a common strategy will maximize resources and produce results. There are many good programs and efforts already underway in the community, but no one organization with the overall vision or responsibility for the issue. It is for this reason that the Lake of the Woods Development Commission is recommending that the effort be led by Mayor and Council. Leadership by Mayor and Council demonstrates the importance of the issue to the community and the organizations working on different aspects of the issue.

**Budget Implications:**

**Policy Implications:**

**Communications:**

