

# **Keeping Spruce Grove Neighbourhoods Clean, Safe and Attractive**

**To: Spruce Grove City Council, Spruce Grove City Manager, Spruce Grove Fires Services, Spruce Grove Enforcement Services**

## **Purpose of this presentation:**

**To protect neighbourhood standards, public health and the environment from unsightly premises and potential hazardous health situations that affect quality of life.**

**To keep properties at current values when surrounding properties are not taken care of and existing land use bylaws are not sufficient to control unsightly properties. This presentation is to ask Spruce Grove City Council to ensure proper governance is in place to protect neighbourhoods.**

**To keep peace and disruption in said neighbourhoods.**

**To establish bylaws/rules to enforce Landlords to keep properties clean and maintained.**

## **We are asking Spruce Grove City Council and administration:**

1. For clarification, improvement and identification of standards, compliance and, where necessary, enforcement initiatives required to uphold existing bylaws.
2. To identify and uphold specific bylaw regulations to maintain safe and attractive neighbourhoods. Neighbours should be informed of any changes to land bylaws or any leniency/gray areas when problems arise. Surrounding property owners have a right to know.
3. To define and strengthen the Nuisances, Unsightly and Untidy Property Bylaw C-909-15; part of which should establish just how many RV Parking unit are allowed backyards. There are obvious loopholes and gray areas of existing bylaws that allows current lack of enforcement on properties that are derelict.

4. To establish bylaws that are enforceable requiring Landlords to take care of their properties. Licensing could be an option for Landlords that own more than one property (business license) e.g. One rental property in Brookwood neighbourhood is part of possibly 12 properties owned by an one individual in the Spruce Grove and area. New rules/bylaws would discourage “slum landlord” situations that seem to exist now. Also out of eight properties within our immediate area **three** rental properties.

a) Landlord Role and responsibilities to be more clearly defined in land use bylaws.

b) Neighbouring residents have a right to how issues are being handled by landlords.

c) Neighbouring properties have a right and should be informed when rental properties are to exist; for example, letters are sent out when a homeowner applies for a business license.

**Rental properties are a business and could be treated under same existing business licensing and zoning laws.**

**With the increase of rental properties in the Brookwood neighbourhood and many Spruce Grove neighbourhoods, we believe what we are asking will help enforce standards that will keep Spruce Grove’s reputation as a clean and vibrant place to raise a family, plus keep property values at par when derelict properties exist.**

**To allow for proper enforcement when derelict properties exist, one suggestion is to establish or add to existing City land use bylaws that would cover the following that currently exist under Alberta’s Residential Tenancies Act - Section *Laws for Landlords and Tenants in Alberta***

***Make sure that the residential premises meet the minimum requirements set out under the: (a.) Alberta’s Public Health Act; (b.) Housing Regulation; and (c.) Minimum Housing and Health Standards, (can be found on the Alberta Government Open Data website at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/minimum-housing-and-health-standards>) for the duration of the tenancy.***

***The primary objective of the Minimum Housing and Health Standards is to protect and promote the health and well-being of occupants of rental housing premises and of those who may reside in the immediate vicinity of such premises. It establishes minimum conditions which are essential to good health and which***

***make housing premises safe, sanitary and fit for human habitation. The Housing Regulation and corresponding Minimum Housing and Health Standards govern the conditions and maintenance, the supplied utilities, and the use and occupancy of housing. They are enforced by inspections of housing premises by public health inspectors/executive officers of Regional Health Authorities. source: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/minimum-housing-and-health-standards>***

## **History and Explanation of Rental Property behind this presentation:**

### **Brookwood Neighbourhood Spruce Grove**

Our concerns in the Brookwood neighbourhood have already been addressed to Spruce Grove City Council, Spruce Grove Bylaw Enforcement, Spruce Grove City Manager and Spruce Grove Fire Department numerous times for the past five years. Spruce Grove Bylaw Enforcement have made numerous visits to a nearby derelict property and efforts are made to clean up for short term periods but ongoing issues continue.

We are frustrated at the different rules/bylaws that we have been told over the years. For example, Steve Chipchase with Land Use Bylaw Enforcement indicated three years ago only one trailer was allowed to be stored/parked in the backyard during winter months; two years ago we were told two trailers would be allowed to be stored in the backyard, and now there are three trailers stored and are hooked up to electricity. People have been seen coming and going (to us people are living in trailers) during winter months. We have observed people living in trailers for the past five years.

A garage exists today at this problem property with serious roof deterioration that is a major safety concern. Again we were told this was being addressed by Steve Chipchase two years ago. We are not sure if the landlord was contacted or who is responsible for the building that is obviously very unsafe. Nothing has changed. There are numerous children in this household that play in this unsightly backyard in these deplorable conditions.

### **Brookwood Backyard:**

- Garbage and debris that includes animal waste, loose garbage and waste, discarded furniture and home items, propane tank, dilapidated vehicles (trailers) - all that are health and safety hazards. This debris has damaged neighbouring fences. In one instance one neighbour had to build a new fence along the existing falling down fence,

another neighbouring fence had to be repaired as a result of garbage and junk piled up against the fence.

- Issues with ongoing garbage and unsightly messes in this backyard have been going on for many years. Three years ago a very large dumpster became permanent in the backyard for the summer until Spruce Grove Enforcement did make the necessary moves to have it removed. But only after the complaints about the bad smell and surrounding neighbours suspected raw sewage from trailers in the backyard was emptied into the dumpster. That same summer four trailers and a couple of tents filled the backyard with people living in them thus creating more unsightly garbage and often a lot of noise.

### **History:**

**Most of the following can be verified by the different Spruce Grove City Departments, as numerous official complaints were made pertaining to the following instances:**

***(This is just a rough estimate of the ongoing complaints; there is much more.)***

Many complaints to animal bylaw because of no fence in the yard, dogs on the loose, excessive barking and eventually a dog attack on a neighbourhood child.

The Spruce Grove Fire Department has been called about backyard unattended fires, burning garbage and unsafe fireplace.

Numerous noise complaints made to local bylaw enforcement over the years.

Front yard - Large dead Birch tree for the last number of years that branches break with strong winds and spread to neighbouring properties. It is close to one property and there is fear of it crashing down.

2014 - Operation of business without a license (tenants eventually moved out)

2015-16 - Unkept messy yard with weeds, tall grass and piles of garbage.

2018-19- RCMP became involved and interviewed many surrounding neighbours. We are unaware of what happened as a result of these interviews. Again we, surrounding property owners, have a right to know.

2019 - There were nine people living in the house plus others in trailers. They told the City there were only 5 people living there. Two kids and three adults. More than

one dog barking and running loose, biting a child and jumping on visitors to a neighbouring house. An unkept yard, piles of garbage everywhere, vehicles parked on the back lawn with people sleeping in them. Repaired broken falling down fence using wood pellets, garage roof caving in, cats (many) roaming free and using neighbours garden flower beds as litter boxes. Numerous adults involved in physical fights, loud shouting and yelling and police arrests. Adults having knives as weapons. Both the power and water were cut off.

2019 - Large dog running loose and jumping on people.

2019 - Dog issues and camping trailer parked in driveway with people living in it.

2019 - One ton truck parked on the lawn in between 61 Beverly and neighbours. A C-can moved into the backyard on the lawn.

2019 - Truck and trailer parked on the lawn in the backyard with several people living in it.

2019 - Truck and camper with people living in it, still in the backyard on soft ground.

2019 - People living in the trailer on the driveway.

2020 - A motorhome parked on driveway with someone living in it, in addition to another occupied trailer.

2020 - Contacted Stuart Houston and members of City Council about ongoing issues not being dealt with by the City.

2020 - Were operating business without licence. C-can on lawn with vending machines in it. Parking vehicles on the lawn. Piles of garbage all over property.

2020 - Moved in another camping trailer with someone living in it. Moved in second storage unit. Using washer tub on rubber tire as fire pit, and was left unattended.

2020 - More junk piles everywhere. Another bin was brought in. They were coming into a neighbour's front yard in the middle of the night to look for cats in flowerbeds. Complaining neighbours met with Steven Chipchase, and was told that City were working on resolving all issues at this dwelling.

2020 - David Worlanski from Enforcement Services contacted neighbours and said there had been an order issued (to deal with all issues). Compliance was dated for June 15, with enforcement planned if the order was not met.

2020 - Continued parking on lawn, neighbours started replacing the fence between property going the maximum height. Now getting expensive to protect neighbouring properties from these deplorable conditions.

2020 - Garbage bins overflowing and sending garbage all over the neighbourhood. Another camper was moved in with someone living there.

2020 - A generator in the garage was used to power the house as well as the various trailers parked in the backyard.

2021 - Operating a business without a license.

2021 - Still parking vehicles on the lawn, garbage all over the yard, motorhome moved back in, with someone living in it. Excessive dog barking- sometimes for hours.

2021 - Piles of garbage messy yard, people living in campers and tents vehicles in the backyard

2021- More campers are back with people living in them.

2021-2022 - Motorhome parked on front street. A full propane tank was on the back bumper on the motorhome. Residents at were told by bylaw to move it every 72 hours. It got too cold and the motorhome would not start. They attempted to tow it with an SUV, blocking the whole street for a long period of time, sometimes unattended. Eventually law enforcement came, motorhome was towed and impounded.

2022 - Spring - Numerous evenings - Many people playing soccer on the front lawn, hitting vehicles along the street and people running onto neighbouring properties. Residents continually enter neighbouring properties, jumping or climbing over private fences.

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