Unleash Solutions

We can talk about problems or we can talk about solutions. The first one starts us off, initiating conversation. The second, looking for a solution, is a better choice to making change happen. It has been said that if we continue to do things the same way and expect a different outcome then we are just fooling ourselves. We need to change the way we do things in order to create a different outcome.

Community development is not the work of one organization or service group. It is the work of everyone. Think about how you can change the things that you do not like. What would be your solution to something that is not offered or that annoys you about our community? Have you looked around and thought that there must be a better way to deal with issues?

April 29th was the first meeting of business owners, Town of the Pas, RM of Kelsey, RCMP and others interested in being involved in a Solutions Lab. Creating solutions towards issues that are looming in our region. What better way to take out April than with a Solution Lab? The Chamber of Commerce is leading the direction in this lab. They brought together and invited others to share solutions towards the issue of street people that are negatively affecting downtown business.

Some of the discussion reflected the current state of what is know as a stall. No action, as complaints come forth daily regarding the increasing numbers of street people causing disturbances downtown. Some business owners move them along to allow customers to access their business. Numerous phone calls to the RCMP are made daily. The RCMP do what they can but agree that this is a social issue and needs to be addressed by many players. This means that as a community we need to set about a plan of action.

United we need to take steps towards integrating ideas to address the situation like restorative justice, relocation of services away from local business, transitional housing, provincial backing for large-scale action and learning from how other communities have dealt with these issues. One solution presented was to create a bylaw against panhandling to eliminate the exchange of money being handed to people with addictions. If you want to truly help someone who is hungry, a better option would be to give them food or meal.

The business community is looking to create more open communication with each other to share information regarding trouble-makers and who to watch out for. How do you feel about banning individuals from businesses and the homeless shelter if they display disruptive, disorderly, and violent behavior? This was presented as one solution to the immediate concern. There was a difference of opinion on support for the homeless shelter, from closing it to having it open 24 hours. Where there is consensus is that none of us should tolerate disorderly behavior around businesses and in the community. Business owners are spending considerable time dealing with the social issues of the street people. This discourages locals and tourists from shopping downtown and is moving business away from the north. How do we as a community move forward? Do you have a solution?

The Safe Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) group has met regularly to work towards solutions for everyone involved. We are all in this town together. Create your solution and pay it forward.

There is an incredible wealth of sharing that came out of this virtual meeting. It is clear that the RM of Kelsey and the Town of The Pas as well as local business need to work towards making the downtown core safer. This task cannot be accomplished by one group. Today is a new day and those involved took the lead to start the process for change. Two local participants agreed to put a survey together and others agreed to distribute it to community to hear your voice. Your input is valued and necessary for the growth of our community. Watch for the survey in your mailbox or online. Make sure your voice is included.

Innovative thinker, Karen Driedger of fourward thinking, is up for the challenge, door opening so to speak, to facilitate healthy discussion to Make Shift Happen. Karen is spear heading collaboration. Inspiring community leaders, groups, organizations and individuals to think about solutions to create a community that we all want to be a part of. Everybody is you. Town of The Pas, RM of Kelsey, OCN, our youth, our seniors, everybody!

Karen believes, “The solutions are with us, we just have to unleash them.” Everybody has an opinion but what is your solution. It takes all of us.

I leave you with this one thought, “What do we have to do to make change happen?”

Make Shift Happen