

# Meth clinic opposition: prejudice or ignorance?

**A**S A parent of a methadone clinic client I ask this of both the Westfort business owner and councilor who have expressed their discern at a clinic being located in their part of town: Are you basing your comments, perceptions and points of view out of ignorance or prejudice?

These clinics are vital parts of a system that addresses the disease of addiction. These clinics do offer counseling and physician services to the best of their ability and budgets. My child, if given a second chance, probably would not follow the same path that led to an addiction of prescription painkillers. An addiction that was easily fed through the prescriptions issued by his physicians.

Both of these men need to realize that most individuals do not simply wake up one day and decide to become an addict. Many situations that are unique to each individual influence the path, the speed, and the depth of their addiction. Sirs, many of these addicts have probably purchased clothing in your store or voted for you in the municipal elections.

Most amazing is the fact that some of these addicts may be children, brothers, sisters, mothers or fathers of people you know. And, they're already living in your "picture perfect

community." They just have chosen not to disclose to everyone around them their addiction issues as many of your friends or acquaintances with other serious health issues have chosen not to.

I have gone with my child to the clinic almost daily for the last eight months and as I wait in my car many of these people have approached me. And, guess what? It was not for money, smokes or drugs. It was for a brief and polite conversation about the weather, my car, how my son was doing, how they were doing, and what their plans were.

The most important thing I have heard out hundreds of these conversations is how the methadone and the clinic have supported their recovery, how their families now understand their addictions and the need to support them through their recovery program.

As for increased violence, property damage, theft, snatch and grab, disrespect for your little community I say to you "Don't worry!" The clients of the methadone clinics are only interested in receiving their medication and then leaving the area. They most likely have jobs, doctor's appointments or other personal issues to deal with and quickly make their way home to the support groups they can count on.

Most of the clients that will use the new clinic already live in your area and support the many businesses there. Granted, there will always be a few bad apples in the bunch. Hey! They just might be the same ones that frequent your beer store, or the local bars that become crowded on the weekend and leave garbage dumped in the bank parking lot and throughout your streets.

In conclusion, if you want to keep your community safe and something to be proud of maybe the two of you should pay closer attention to local drug house that is within walking distance of the new clinic or visit the seniors complex a block away and watch the traffic going in their for their drugs. Yes! Believe it or not some seniors sell their prescriptions to others that re-sell the pills for highly inflated prices. Hopefully, none of them are customers at your store or supporters of yours while on council. These things do happen in Westfort where I live and enjoy the beauty of a quaint little village.

I suggest that both of these men attend a meeting of the drug strategy committee established in Thunder Bay and learn the facts. Thunder Bay (including Westfort) has a major drug addiction problem and it cannot continue to be hidden in the back lanes in an out-of-

way spot. It is a community problem and all areas of the city must come together to move forward.

As for the TBRHSC being the place for "these people" to go for their methadone give your heads a collective shake. The place is already overcrowded and the hard-working staff stretched to their limits. Just try going to the emergency for health issues and inform them you're an addict. The stigma will add to your wait time because they might believe you're only there for drugs.

The clinic and its staff have helped my family member move forward in order to regain employment and pay off debts, and once again be productive and even get out to shop in Westfort.

The management/operators of the O.A.T.C. facilities must also realize their responsibility to the community is to provide clean and safe facilities. Therefore, when graffiti appears have it cleaned, provide garbage and butt receptacles, provide clean furnishings, floors, and walls, and most important provide a water cooler so clients can refresh after taking their methadone. Public image and community pride is also important and your responsibility as a community partner.

**Name withheld**