

Dawson Creek Community Drug Survey: Facts and Opinions 2007

Final Report

Prepared for City of Dawson Creek by the
Drug Free Committee of Dawson Creek

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Executive Summary

In March 2007, the Drug Free Dawson Creek Committee administered an anonymous, community-wide survey to help them understand if there is a drug problem in and around Dawson Creek and the steps the community might take to deal with it. The main points arising from this survey are:

- Ninety percent of respondents believe there is a serious or extreme problem in Dawson Creek and area. Drug houses, dealers, some businesses, night clubs and bars were identified as supply points. Involvement of organised crime is a concern.
- Many families have experienced problems – conflict and violence, financial problems, loss of friends etc and need help and support to resolve these issues.
- There is concern about the supply and use of drugs in and around schools, a need to deal with this, and recognition that early awareness and education is needed both for students and families.
- Drug users were more likely to start use between ages 14 and 16, many stopped by age 19 and many continued. It appeared that earlier starting lead to longer or continued use.
- There is evidence of use of drugs while at work, at school, operating vehicles and machinery by a significant number of respondents.
- There is much frustration with the seeming inability of the legal system and the RCMP to deal with these issues.
- Solutions will come from a balanced approach involving the individual, the family, the community, the legal system and the health system.
- In response to potential options in dealing with drug related problems, the community gave preference to the following:
 1. Youth Programs and Activities (833 ranked it first)
 2. Impose more severe sentences (791)
 3. Provide treatment programs (785)
 4. Education and Awareness (763)
 5. Simplify search warrant procedures (741)

With the findings of this survey in hand, suggested action steps are:

To maintain momentum, The City of Dawson Creek needs to explore how human and financial resources can be obtained to provide a shorter-term (12 month) initiative and also to develop a longer-term 5-10 year strategy in order to provide leadership and organisational support in combating drug abuse issues and building a healthier community.

Continuing the Debate & Taking Responsibility, The Drug Free DC Committee can take advantage of this report as a vehicle for bringing about debate with interested organizations; provide greater education and awareness to a broader public audience, improve and strengthen the committee, recruit additional members including RCMP, Northern Health Authority, high school students, art and music reps, camp first aid attendants and utilize the media more effectively. This will allow the committee to search globally for ideas other jurisdictions are trying and to propose unique solutions to test in Dawson Creek and area.

To understand the legal system, The Legal Community (judges, lawyers, police, legal personnel) need to meet over time with the City of Dawson Creek and the Drug Free DC Committee to discuss what works, what is problematic and how the system can work more effectively. This could involve approaching higher levels of government where there is a clear case for seeking a change in laws, regulations, funding strategies and implementation of programs.

Work with the RCMP, The RCMP need to engage in constructive interaction with the City, Committee and community members to explore ways of dealing more effectively with drug issues.

Identified Businesses & the Business Community, The Dawson Creek Business Community (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Downtown Merchant's Association, etc.) in partnership with the City and RCMP need to become familiar with the extent of drug use in the business community. Members of the Business Community need to be encouraged to contribute potential solutions. Education and awareness at all levels will help to identify ways of clarifying and dealing with illegal drug supply and use issues.

The Workplace, The City of Dawson Creek and the Drug Free DC Committee need to explore ways to manage and reduce the impact of drug use and abuse in and around the workplace. This could include working with the BCCSA, industry leaders, first aid emergency staff, WorkSafe BC and various industry associations. Industry Associations need to be encouraged to actively participate in and provide resources for this work.

School District 59, SD#59 needs to be commended for efforts and encouraged to continue to strengthen their links with the community. Educators and concerned parents need to explore what has worked and what opportunities there are to improve school and family education activities. This may include developing and testing educational activities, helping schools to enact and apply by-laws, engaging in active participation with the Drug Free DC Committee, development of more youth driven programs and encouraging more community and parental involvement with the schools.

Focus on providing Youth Programs, it is recommended that the City of Dawson Creek continue to do more research, develop more programs that focus on healthy youth development and invest in organizations that support youth locally, including volunteer networks.

Service Providers and Services, The City needs to support service providers including the Community Service Network and Northern Health Authority to explore innovative ways to offer services as needed. This includes integration of appropriate health, legal and voluntary services, development of creative new ways of dealing with problems and seeking additional resources, especially for responding to critical situations.

Treatment Programs & Harm Reduction Strategies, The Community Service Network and Northern Health Authority need to become actively involved and aware of different logics and be open to exploring different approaches where evidence suggests they can work. In Dawson Creek, perhaps a focus on education & awareness and improving access to counselling services may be the first step.

The Culture and Aesthetics in the City, The City (with the help of local citizens and senior governments as appropriate) must provide leadership and build on their vision of a drug free community, must address underlying social conditions, and build on the strengths of local organisations.

More details are provided in Section 7 of the report.

It is assumed that this report and the sorted comments will provide initial material to allow various groups to move ahead and deal with different aspects of the drug use and abuse situation. Respondents put a great deal of time and effort into answering the questions, and the survey team put great effort into entering data, analysing the data and preparing a report. It would be a great loss if the information in this report and the comments are not acted on.

We complete this report with a final comment from a person who provided guidance and helped us by reviewing the draft report. She had this to say:

“Overall raising awareness about the concerns of a significant percentage of the community is helpful, but strategies that bring people together and focus on enhancing the strengths and positive aspects of Dawson Creek may be more effective than punitive and judgemental approaches that foster suspicion among neighbours and create division and potential conflict.” (McCreary Centre Society, 2007)

1. Background and Context

Together with the favourable conditions brought about by oil and gas and other economic activities comes some real social challenges concerning housing, social services, recreation and drug and alcohol use and abuse. In response to some of these concerns a committee was established under the City of Dawson Creek to work on drug related issues. This introductory section explains the Drug Free Committee; and the survey process. Similar studies and projects are described in Section 2.

1.1 The Drug Free Committee

The Drug Free DC committee was formed in response to numerous concerns expressed by community members about the alleged growing drug problem in Dawson Creek. It meets monthly and works on a volunteer basis in the following areas: newsletter, website, education & awareness, community events, discussions, explore funding opportunities, and sharing of information.

The vision statement for Drug Free DC is

“Drug Free Dawson Creek is committed to making our community safe by providing awareness, education and the means to rid our streets, homes, schools and community of illegal drugs; making Dawson Creek a better place to live, to work and to play for generations to come.”

Members of the committee include representatives from South Peace Community Resources Society, Ministry of Children & Families, School District #59, Kiwanis Enterprise Centre, Dawson Creek Counselling Services, RCMP, Dawson Creek Health Unit, DC Aboriginal Family Resources Society, Nawican New Horizons Alcohol & Drug Program, Northwind Healing Centre, Northeast News, Peace Country Society Acquired Brain Injury, Salvation Army and interested members of the community.

Drug Free DC reports to the Mayor and Council about drug-related issues in the City of Dawson Creek, BC. Councillor Brent Neumann heads up the committee and is assisted by a recording secretary, provided by the City of Dawson Creek.

The committee has experienced many growing pains over the years as the members represent many different agencies and viewpoints, and the drug issues being discussed are complex and difficult to understand, with solutions that are not readily apparent.

1.2 This Survey

In the fall of 2006, a decision was made by the Drug Free DC committee to gather data about drug problems in the community in order to identify potential solutions, to determine the best use of resources and to guide the development of a plan for the committee to focus on. Funding for this was provided by provincial and local governments.

The committee determined that the best way to get information was to administer an anonymous, community-wide survey. The questions were designed to allow citizens an opportunity to voice

their concerns and share their knowledge about what they saw happening in the community. It was designed to get information from the community as a whole, to identify high risk populations and drug supply and demand mechanisms. It also provided an opportunity for community members to become involved in the debate concerning drug related issues and to express their ideas concerning how the community should deal with these issues.

1.3 The Survey Process

The survey process was delayed when the first consultant left town for “greener pastures” and a new survey team had to be found. The survey was designed to be simple and easy to answer. It fitted front and back on a single sheet of paper, with a half page space for additional comments. Survey design input was provided by members of the Drug Free DC committee; by the McCreary Society that has designed several drug use studies; by staff of The Centre of Addiction Research at UVIC (CARBC) and Dare to Care Inc.

The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) had these sections:

- **Demographics** of survey respondents (Questions 1-7) related to age, gender, how long the respondent has been a resident of the community, marital status, annual household earnings, number of children living at home and primary occupation.
- **Personal experience** (Questions 8-12) which included questions related to personal use of illegal substances, injection of drugs, problems caused by the use of drugs in relation to self or family, situations where you might have been under the influence and typical starting age of substance use.
- **Community related questions.** (Questions 13-22) These questions asked for the perception of drug problems in Dawson Creek, ease of getting drugs, source for getting and using drugs, interest in participating in community action to help prevent drug abuse, fear for safety, and responsibility for the problem, alcohol and tobacco use, importance of potential solutions.
- There was a half page of space (Question 23) for **additional comments**.

The survey went through various revisions and was pre-tested with a representative group of citizens prior to settling in on a final version.

A number of approaches were discussed. One was to engage a telephone survey firm to do a random phone survey. Another was to have a local team do a random survey. After much debate it was decided that a mail out survey with stamped return envelope would be most useful.

The survey was mailed to 6,000 households in the Dawson Creek area with a postage-paid, self-addressed return envelope. There was a 3 week period of time allotted for returning the completed survey, with a return deadline date of March 30, 2007. Surveys were also distributed through social service agencies that had direct contact with clients working to overcome drug-related problems. This was done in an effort to get information from people that had first hand experience, realizing that they were a potentially hard to reach target group. Response through social service agencies was limited but provided some helpful data and insights.

A total of 1126 questionnaires or approximately 19 percent were returned. This is considered good for a mail-out survey. There was some evidence of incomplete questionnaire distribution.

Some people, both rural box holders and apartment dwellers reported they did not receive questionnaires, but it is not possible to know how many people were missed.

Survey data was entered into an MS Access Database, sorted and analyzed. Analysis included simple counts and also a number of cross tabulations to find out if different groups gave different answers. Comments were entered into a word file and subsequently sorted into topics including: personal stories, community, education and awareness, and the legal system.

1.4 Presentation of Survey Results

This report follows the question layout (Appendix A) starting with demographic data, personal experience with drugs and community perceptions concerning drug use and options to deal with drug related issues. Some of the additional comments provided by respondents are woven into these sections as appropriate and others are discussed in Section 5. To read all of the comments see <http://www.dawsoncreek.ca>

This report omits the names of people and places identified in the survey as being involved in illegal drug use activities, and survey results are presented anonymously. Between 3 and 10 percent of respondents did not answer any given question and these are shown No Answer (No Ans) in the tables.

1.5 Reaction to the Survey

Many people in the community felt the survey should be filled out by drug users, not non-users, and this resulted in many people disputing the validity and logic of sending out an anonymous, city-wide survey. A number (about 20 people) commented in regard to the likelihood of drug users filling out the survey honestly, if at all. Another view expressed by 21 respondents was that this survey was a waste of time and money. These feelings were captured thus: “Waste of money survey as sanctioned by DC and other idiots.” And “this is just another government way of not admitting there is a problem. Do you really think the crack addicts will fill this out?” Or “just open your eyes, drive around, look at all the crack and meth houses around.” Also “I’m appalled at the fact that you need to waste tax-payers money to send out this survey discussing a problem that every citizen of Dawson Creek is already fully aware of.” They obviously felt money could be better used in other activities.

Despite these negative perceptions, the return rate on the surveys was approximately 19 percent and respondents freely shared their concerns, stories and comments resulting in an interesting collection of data regarding the drug problem in Dawson Creek and area. A number of people made positive comments regarding the effort to understand and gather information concerning the drug situation. For example, one said, “thank you for doing this survey and your efforts to deal with this serious problem,” and another, “Kudos to the city for being willing to listen to citizens.” In the next section we scan other studies and activities.

2. Scan of Related Studies and Activities

Drug use and abuse is of concern in most communities and many communities and organisations are involved in researching and acting on drug related issues. The team did a scan of related studies and community action and made contact with some of these workers. In this section we ask about findings from related studies, look at arguments for a strict application of laws and penalties, look at arguments for harm reduction and legalization, and seek examples of community action that we could look into. This report can only “skim the surface” of these issues. For further information readers are referred to reports and web pages in the reference list.

2.1 Other Studies

School District 59 had questionnaires answered by grade 7 to 12 students in 1996, 1999, and 2002. The questionnaires were answered by 1462 students in 2002, down from 1721 in 1996. About 16 percent were from Chetwynd, 15 percent from Tumbler Ridge and 68 percent from Dawson Creek, evenly distributed between South Peace Secondary School (SPSS) and Central Middle School (CMS).

For 2002 about 21 percent reported they had never used drugs or alcohol. Seventy five percent said they had used alcohol and this increased with age. About 44 percent said they had used drugs, up from 41 percent in 1999. It appears that about 12 percent of students reported relatively high use of drugs and/or alcohol, using them between 2-4 times per week or more than 4 times. (8% in 1996). Two thirds of the students reported attending house or bush parties in 2002, up from 55% in 1996. Over half the students reported using drugs and/or alcohol at these parties. About 60 percent of students said yes to a question asking if there is an alcohol and/or drug problem among teens. (SD 59, 2002)

The McCreary Institute carried out similar but broader surveys on “healthy youth development” in randomly selected high school classes across BC. McCreary noted a slight reduction in reported alcohol use with 57 percent reporting they had ever used it. However, about one quarter of respondents reported binge drinking within the last month. Fifty five percent reported ever using marijuana and about 30% of boys and 17 percent of girls said they used marijuana more than 100 times. There was evidence that a small percent of students had used other drugs such as mushrooms, hallucinogens and cocaine, but no information of rate of use. The study team felt they get better results when they focus on young peoples’ strengths and resilience. They also noted the value of strong connections with parents and schools and that the majority of students reported they felt well connected. (McCreary 2003 pp15-17)

The Canadian Addiction Survey carried out by the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse (CCSA) randomly selected and interviewed by telephone 13,909 Canadians 15 years and older in all ten provinces. In brief, this survey reported some use of alcohol by 66 percent of respondents, and frequent use by 13 percent for all Canada. Figures for BC were also 66 and 13 percent. About 6 percent were considered heavy drinkers. Current use of Marijuana (the past year) was 14 percent for Canada and 17 percent for BC. Interestingly this survey found that lifetime use of cannabis increased with education and income adequacy.

Most commonly reported drugs ever used, apart from marijuana, were hallucinogens (11.4 %) cocaine (10.6%) speed (6.4%) and ecstasy (4.1%). Current use of cocaine was reported at 1.9

percent for Canada and 2.6 percent for BC. The most important harm reported was to physical health. Other harms included harms to friendship and social life, to home and marriage, work, and financial harms. (CCSA p7)

In 2004 the Northern BC Council on Substance Abuse (BCCSA) commissioned a study of substance abuse and stress issues in northern workplaces. They sent mail out questionnaires through companies and held a series of 6 focus group meetings in northern BC communities. Among other things they reported that most employees believe that substance abuse is still a problem, that alcohol is the major drug of choice, followed by marijuana with cocaine having a growing presence in boom communities. They noted stress in the workplace and a feeling that employee and family assistance programs were somewhat inadequate. Key recommendations included learning about and emphasising early interventions, including employee groups meaningfully involved in health and safety committees and conducting frank examinations of employee and family programs. (BCCSA 2004)

Personnel from the Centre for Addiction Research in BC (CARBC) noted that abuse of alcohol and tobacco which impact 20 to 25 percent of the population place a much greater burden on health and social services than other drugs which impact 1 to 2 percent of the population. In a recent paper presented at Kelowna they reported BC Ministry of Health data that showed preventable death illness and disability in BC contributed by different risk factors is:

Tobacco	12%
Alcohol	10%
Obesity	10%
Physical inactivity	10%
Illicit Drugs	2% (Stockwell 2005)

CARBC have recently initiated a community network project that will link with community action groups seeking to prevent harm from substance use.

2.2 The Application of Laws and Penalties

There has been much public debate that appears to favour “reform” of criminal laws and the use of much more severe penalties for those caught trafficking in or using illegal substances. During the last Federal election all parties made some reference to law and order issues and Canada’s “New Government” the Conservative Party made some specific commitments to bring in legislation. The Canadian Police Association (CPA) has taken a lead in urging the government to act on the promised legislation. They said in a Feb 13, 2007 press release:

“Our role is to work closely with elected officials of all political parties to improve community safety through constructive reforms of our justice system. These issues transcend party lines. In fact all major parties had a tough on crime approach during the last election. We are simply asking MPs to act on their commitment.”

They are concerned about the “revolving door of justice.” (CNW Feb 13th 2007) The CPA is also advocating a National Drug Strategy which has a balanced approach to limit the supply and demand for illicit drugs. They argue for an integrated approach to prevention, education, enforcement, treatment, rehabilitation and research.

A HIV-AIDs Policy and Law Review article argues that while the National Drug Strategy as renewed in 2003 sets out to focus on harm reduction, three quarters of the investment to date has

been on continuing supply reduction enforcement strategies that has been shown in the scientific literature to be ineffective or harmful. (de Beck et al 2007)

An interesting story was introduced in the respondent comments and this was followed up by a web search. It featured an Edmonton police officer named Maurice Brodeur, aka “officer harassment.” Brodeur says that “typical law enforcement is ineffective, there is a perception in the community that dealers are operating with impunity and good people are moving.” He says this is not acceptable. (Brodeur et al, Powerpoint) The program involves police using any legal means to harass drug dealers out of neighbourhoods. They work with bylaw officers, health inspectors, landlords and even the families of the druggies to make it impossible to do business. The key to the program, Brodeur says, is working with other agencies and especially the people in the neighbourhood. They make information available, encourage people to report observations, track and analyse this information and use various means to contact and disturb drug houses. They report success in shutting down or moving drug houses in some parts of Edmonton and surrounds and are now engaged in training that will expand the approach.

2.3 Harm Reduction and Legalization

Harm reduction recognises that a certain small group of drug users are severely addicted and will continue to use drugs. It has centred on needle exchange programs that reduce the risk of spreading infections such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDs. A more sophisticated level is safe injection sites such as INSITE in Vancouver which is a unique experiment in North America. This approach has been controversial. Advocates argue that it provides a clean and safe location for people who must use drugs, reduces the risk of overdose and infection and perhaps most important, puts people in touch with health workers if they wish to seek detox and rehabilitation help. They also argue that it has reduced drug use and crime in the surrounding areas. (INSITE 2006) At present the INSITE program is only permitted to function until the end of December 2007. Critics argue that it has not had success and that it condones the use of illegal substances. The CPA is on record as being opposed to safe injection sites. (CNW Sept 1st 2006). The City of Victoria and the Vancouver Island Health Authority have proposed a modified approach to safe injection sites, but it is not clear if the Federal government will provide the necessary modifications to the Federal Drug use laws.

Another little known harm reduction issue is that medical doctors have the option of prescribing and administering methadone to severely impacted heroine addicts. It is difficult to find much information about the level of use and impact of this treatment option. There is also a suggestion that prescribed heroin treatment might be more useful than methadone which is said to be highly addictive. One physician said harm reduction can be helpful when appropriately used, while another said: “it is a crock.” (Personal Communication with un-named Physicians)

Another debate is around the decriminalisation or legalisation of marijuana. Decriminalisation means that no criminal record arises from possession of a small amount of marijuana. Twelve US states have moved to decriminalise. Arguments are that decriminalisation does not lead to more use of drugs or use of other drugs; that it frees up police resources and reduces police and legal costs; that the harm from prohibition is greater than the harm from the drug; and that prohibition does not lead to reduced use of marijuana. It is noted that there is little evidence of harm from marijuana compared to legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. A Canadian Senate committee did a detailed study of this issue, supported these arguments and declared it was time for these

laws to be changed. However, the Canadian parliament has debated this issue without passing legislation and a number of agencies such as the CPA argue for continuing prohibition.

A broader argument concerns legalisation compared to prohibition. Arguments for prohibition generally focus on health, harm and related criminal activity, both local and organised. The US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has played a leading role in this effort with activities both in the US and many supply countries. The DEA has offices in Ottawa and Vancouver. The United Nations convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) impacts on the freedom of countries to modify drug laws.

Arguments for legalisation are that the current system provides a high value, high risk system which is highly profitable for organised crime, and provides huge employment for enforcement agencies. Also that the current illegal system does not provide for any tax revenue to provide for regulation, quality control and the costs of dealing with harms caused by drugs. In the US incarceration rates are very high and biased toward non-white minorities. Prohibition advocates often go back to the era of alcohol prohibition and show how crime reduced after prohibition was removed and regulated alcohol distribution systems were put in place.

In 2001 The Economist, a well respected economics magazine did a 29 page survey of the illicit drug industry. They claim to have long advocated legalisation although they recognise that it will likely increase use. They went back to British philosopher John Stuart Mills who argued that “the state had no right to intervene to prevent individuals from doing something that harmed them, if no harm was thereby done to the rest of society.” They note that governments have legalised gambling, alcohol, and tobacco even if nicotine is more addictive than heroine. They note that harm from the current prohibition approach falls disproportionately on the poor in rich countries with the example of the US where a disproportionate number of non-whites are arrested, sentenced and imprisoned even while drug use levels of whites and non-whites are about the same. Also on a number of poor countries such as Columbia and Afghanistan where the illegal drug trade finances powerful gangs who threaten and corrupt state institutions.

The Economist notes that prices reflect the ferocious efforts of the rich countries to suppress the drug trade. It is a globalised and highly successful industry. An industry that cannot be regulated and have quality control because it is illegal. In the final paragraphs they note the challenges of legalisation and say “governments allow citizens freedoms to do many potentially self destructive things – bungee, motorcycles, guns, alcohol, cigarettes – some far more dangerous than drug taking. Trade in drugs may be immoral and irresponsible, but it should no longer be illegal. (The Economist, 2001)

LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition)

“is an international non-profit educational organisation that was created to give voice to all the current and former members of law enforcement who believe the war on drugs is a failed policy and who wish to support alternative policies that will lower the incidence of death, disease, crime and addiction.”

One former drug enforcement officer in a long detailed paper traces the US evolution of the “war on drugs.” He claims that the number of narcotics agents expanded rapidly, that charges were upgraded for example from user to dealer, that results were greatly exaggerated to keep funds flowing and yet analysis shows little benefit from the huge expenditures. Other points were that the pressure on marijuana caused the price to escalate which in turn drove dealers and users to

switch to hard drugs. This author noted that after 4 decades you find the courts choked up with drug cases, a huge population of incarcerated people with a bias on Afro-Americans and other minorities, drugs that are cheaper, much more potent and more readily available. He feels ending of prohibition with regulation, quality control, taxing and provision of other related services makes much better sense. (Jack Cole 2005)

2.4 Community Action and Resources

The study team felt there must be other communities working their way through similar drug use and abuse crises and set about to identify such communities and resources available to help communities. In fact it was difficult to identify communities that have embarked on drug related action. Indeed it may be that Dawson Creek with its drug free committee is in a lead position. It is noted that most communities, like Dawson Creek have formal agencies such as the DC Addiction Counselling Centre with responsibility for drug and alcohol issues. A number of resources and ideas were uncovered.

Some useful papers were available in a police training conference. One paper dealt with crime prevention through social development and asked if and how community initiatives can be sustained. They felt a continuum of responses is appropriate. These involve prevention, intervention, enforcement and reintegration. They acknowledged that inter-sectoral work can be difficult, that jurisdiction challenges often emerge, and that often the focus is on individual clients and not the root causes of crime. These authors suggested there is a need for local buy-in and control, that workable structures are needed, that coordination and communication are fundamental and that early successes pay dividends. (Caputo and Jamieson 2007)

David Butler Jones, Chief Public Health Officer had some very pragmatic comments at the same conference. He said in a Saskatchewan example about welfare and work:

Most people, I find, given the choice, would prefer to work and participate. However, what is the incentive to work if doing so adds little or nothing to your income, but you lose prescription and dental benefits for your kids. Not a very rational choice. So Saskatchewan decided to provide health and social benefits to low income families to reduce the barrier to work. And we find not only are more people working with all the benefits to self-esteem and the economy, but it also makes a positive difference in how they use the health system.”

An important example of how policies can be modified to create a more positive social climate. (Butler-Jones 2007)

One other speaker illustrated the complexity of Canadian attitudes toward crime issues as reported on various surveys carried out in Canada:

“Two thirds of Canadians are dissatisfied with government crime reduction policies, according to surveys since 1990. They want:

- Policies that are tougher on criminals and tougher on causes.
- New investment in prevention rather than criminal justice.
- To give young people a better start as the surest way to prevent crime.

When asked to choose, two out of every three Canadians:

- Prefer to lower crime through additional funding for education and jobs rather than police and prisons;
- Believe that expanding youth literacy and other training programs rather than more police would be most effective in preventing crime;
- Believe their provincial government should place crime prevention among the top five priorities, along with health care, education, child poverty, and the environment.” (Johnson 2007)

Nadler and Hibino have a helpful story documenting a meeting that was held to discuss a crime crisis that had just occurred. Much anger was expressed and many were disdainful concerning the police. Finally, one young lady insisted on clarifying why they were meeting and a young person said “maybe we can help the police.” This focussed the group and they set out to arrange a meeting with the police. (Nadler and Hibino 1996)

The Times Colonist ran a feature story on the Mustard Seed Hope Farm that is being established to provide a location where selected addicts can engage in a 9 month healing process. Similar approaches may be possible in the Peace Region (Kruchak 2007) The team also became aware of the Communities that Care approach being used in the US and the wealth of preventative resources available on the SAMHSA web pages in the US. (SAMSHSA). These materials focus on risk and protective factors.

A news report tells of action taken by the small native community of Ahousat, near Tofino. They were fed up with drug dealers and bootleggers and decided it was time to take back their culture and set an example. They wrote a letter to dealers. “It has come to our attention that you are bootlegging and drug dealing. Concerned members have informed us of your actions. We the Hawiith along with chief and council are directing you to stop immediately.” The chiefs offered recipients of the letter options such as following plans of the holistic centre, and signing a contract to complete a one year process, or leave the community and return only when they are prepared to live a healthy lifestyle. The news story was reporting the return of dealers, after a month in Esperanza, a remote treatment centre. This action was not without controversy, but certainly caught the attention of dealers. (Canoe News, June 29 2007)

Stockwell and colleagues in their book on Preventing Harmful Substance Abuse have a number of chapters on preventative strategies that have been tested and applied in different locations. For example, the Sacramento Neighbourhood Alcohol Prevention Project outlines a model and experiment that was set up to reduce alcohol use among teens and young adults. This Chapter presents an approach that was based on a model of the problem. (Treno et al 2005)

The AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission) has prepared an Alberta drug strategy which builds on the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, policing and enforcement. This strategy is to be evidence-based and aims to leverage experience and resources. Given the proximity to Alberta it is worth learning more about this strategy and some of the materials and processes prepared to facilitate implementation. (AADAC, 2005)

In reviewing AADAC web pages an important philosophy emerged:

“Our goal in providing treatment is to ensure that each person receives the treatment that best suits their needs. Over the years, we’ve learned a thing or two about the clients we serve. We’ve learned that each person who comes to AADAC for treatment is different

and has "their own story." Some people are just beginning to have problems because of their drinking, drug use, or gambling; some are having very serious problems. Other people come to AADAC because someone they love is having problems and they want information. Each person has different problems and different needs." (AADAC 2007)

Crystal Meth BC. This is an organisation focusing on methamphetamine use and abuse in BC and Canada. This organisation is willing to assist communities that face crystal meth crises.

<http://crystalmethbc.com/>

2.5 Summary of Scan

This scan identifies a number of related studies and organisations that have relevant experience and information. Messages are there is information available although it is difficult to find specific information about community action. There is a need for balance between implementation of laws and other aspects of drug prevention, education, and services, and it might be time to revisit questions concerning decriminalisation and even prohibition. Also there are opportunities for thoughtful and creative community based and political action.

One person in discussing the work of the drug free committee commented that if we choose to listen to the community, as we have done through this survey, then we have taken on a responsibility to hear their messages and act on them. With this in mind, we move now to listening (or reading) to what the community had to say.

3. Demographics of Respondents

To get started in answering the survey, respondents were asked a number of questions about themselves.

3.1 Gender, Age and Children

Respondents were likely to be older with 40 percent between 40 and 59 and a quarter being over age 60. (Table 3.1) Because the School District surveyed students during 2002 (Section 2.1 above) this study did not pursue information from younger age groups.

Almost three quarters of the respondents were female, almost 70 percent were married or living common law and 18 percent reported being single. A small percent were newcomers and over three quarters had been in Dawson Creek area for more than 10 years. Almost 60 percent reported no children under 19 years of age in their households, and 30 percent reported one or two children. (Table 3.1) Concern regarding children came up in a number of the comments and stories.

Table 3.1.1 Demographic information about respondents – Questions 1 to 7

Age											
	Under 19	19-29	30-39	40-59	60 +	No Ans	Total				
#	23	132	207	463	288	13	1126				
%	2	12	18	41	26	1	100				
Gender											
	Female	Male	Total								
#	819	307	1126								
%	73	27	100								
Time in Dawson Creek											
	< 2 yr	2-5 yr	5-10 yr	> 10 yr	No Ans	Total					
#	73	91	78	866	18	1126					
%	6	8	7	77	2	100					
Marital Status (*CL common law)											
	Single	Married/CL*	Div/Sep	Widow	No Ans	Total					
#	202	767	108	25	24	1126					
%	18	68	10	2	2	100					
Earnings											
	<15,000	15-30	30-50	50-80	>80,000	No Ans	Total				
#	86	186	191	240	294	129	1126				
%	8	17	17	21	26	11	100				
Children under 19 in home											
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	>Four	No Ans	Total			
#	639	158	192	78	15	11	33	1126			
%	57	14	17	7	1	1	3	100			
Occupation											
	Agriculture	Education/Health	Forest	Gas/Oil	Retail Service	Retired	Student	Unempl	Other	No Ans	Total
#	54	204	28	98	238	185	34	44	206	35	1126
%	5	18	2	9	21	16	3	4	18	3	100

3.2 Occupation and Earnings

Close to 50 percent of respondents reported household earnings of over \$50,000 and a quarter of respondents over \$80,000. Statistics data shows average income of \$43,000 for Dawson Creek. (Appendix B) Given that many families would have two incomes, then the reported figures may be near to the average. Eleven percent chose not to answer this sensitive question. Respondents reported a wide range of occupations with the largest group being involved in retail, sales and services, and the next group being in education or health related occupations. (Table 3.1.) Almost 10 percent reported being involved with the oil and gas industry and a number of respondents selected more than one occupation. For example, some selected agriculture together with oil and gas. Categorisation was not fully satisfactory with 18 percent being categorised as other with home-maker, government worker and office work or administration as the most common other answers.

In summary, the typical respondent was female, married, older, and relatively well off. BC Statistics data for Dawson Creek is attached in Appendix B as a basis for comparison.

4. Personal Experience with Drug Use and Abuse

Questions were asked about experience in using specific drugs, whether use of drugs has caused problems for the respondent or their family and whether the respondent had been under the influence while at work, at school or driving vehicles or machinery. Many respondents went on to relate personal stories regarding theirs or their families experience with drugs.

4.1 Reported Drug Use

A summary of drug use (prepared during analysis) indicated approximately 83 percent of respondents reported no use of drugs, 6 percent reported using marijuana only, 5 percent some use of drugs and 2 percent reported heavy drug use. (Table 4.1.1)

Of specific drugs, Marijuana was most often mentioned with 6 percent (72 people) saying they sometimes use and 5 percent reported using it often. Cocaine was next with sometimes using indicated by 29 respondents (3 percent) and often by 20 people (2 percent). Crystal Meth, Ecstasy, Heroin and Mushroom were used sometimes by some people and there was some use of prescription drugs mentioned by 2 percent of respondents. (Table 4.1.1)

When asked: “Have your ever injected drugs?” 33 people or 3 percent answered yes. It was not possible to obtain more information on this, although some respondents were very frustrated at finding used needles in parks and school grounds.

4.2 Alcohol and Tobacco Use

During discussions with other projects we learned that alcohol and tobacco generally put a much higher load on social and health services than other drugs so questions were included to get a sense of alcohol and tobacco use. No use of alcohol was reported by 27 percent of respondents, 63 percent reported drinking alcohol sometimes and 7 percent reported using it often. For tobacco 76 percent reported no use, 8 percent used it sometimes and 13 percent reported using it often (Table 4.2.1) From other studies we learned that drug and alcohol use was likely to be linked but our data did not allow an adequate exploration of this idea.

4.3 Drug Use by Occupation

When drug use was cross-tabbed by occupation some patterns emerge. For example, retail and service people and health and education workers are more likely to use marijuana only. Retail, students and gas and oil workers were more likely to report heavy drug use. For cocaine; oil and gas workers and unemployed were more likely to report often using cocaine. Six percent of oil and gas workers and 11 percent of unemployed reported often using cocaine. For marijuana use retail, sales and service people, students and unemployed were most likely to report using it often. (Appendix D)

Table 4.1.1 Reported experience with drug use

8	Summary					
	None	Some	Heavy	Marijuana only	No Answer	Total
#	933	59	19	67	48	1126
%	83	5	2	6	4	100

	No	Some	Often	No Answer	Total
8a Cocaine					
#	1033	29	20	44	1126
%	92	3	2	4	100
8b Crystal Meth					
#	1062	8	6	50	1126
%	94	1	1	4	100
8c Ecstasy					
#	1056	16	4	50	1126
%	94	1	0	4	100
8d Heroin					
#	1064	9	3	50	1126
%	94	1	0	5	100
8e Hallucinogens					
#	1066	5	2	53	1126
%	95	0	0	5	100
8f Inhalants					
#	1064	6	5	51	1126
%	94	1	0	5	100
8g Marijuana					
#	961	72	56	37	1126
%	85	6	5	3	100
8h Mushrooms					
#	1049	20	6	51	1126
%	93	2	1	5	100
8i Prescription drugs					
#	1044	25	5	52	1126
%	93	2	0	5	100
8j Steroids-Body Building Drugs					
#	1070	2	2	52	1126
%	95	0	0	5	100
8k Laced Drugs					
#	1058	10	4	54	1126
%	94	1	0	5	100
8l Other (mostly alcohol)					
#	784	9	12	321	1126
%	70	1	1	29	100

Table 4.2.1 Number Reporting Alcohol and Tobacco Use

	No	Some	Often	NA	Total
20. Drink Alcohol					
#	301	704	80	41	1126
%	27	63	7	4	100
21. Use Tobacco					
#	854	88	144	40	1126
%	76	8	13	4	100

4.4 Impact of Drug Use and Abuse on Respondents and Their Families

Respondents were asked “during the past year, has the use of drugs by yourself or a family member caused any of the following problems?” A list of possible problems was provided. Drug issues were being felt by a large number of individuals and families with 190 people or 17 percent reporting problems. (Table 4.4.1)

Table 4.4.1 Problems Related to Drug Use and Abuse (Q10)

10. Any Family Problems				
	Yes	No	No Answer	Total
#	190	882	54	1126
%	17	78	5	100

		Yes by #	Yes by % ¹	% of yes answers ²
Kind of problem				
10a	Accidents	33	3	3
10b	Apprehension of Children	20	2	2
10c	Criminal activity / Legal	71	6	8
10d	Death of friend or relative	37	3	4
10e	Family conflict or violence	115	10	12
10f	Financial problems	112	10	12
10g	Gambling	14	1	1
10h	Homelessness	56	5	6
10i	Job Loss	79	7	8
10j	Loss of Friends	95	8	10
10k	Medical Illness	47	4	5
10l	Not enough food	56	5	6
10m	Prostitution	22	2	2
10n	Psychological illness	73	6	8
10o	Relationship ended / Divorce	64	6	7
10p	School related problems	39	3	4
10q	Other ³	12	1	1
	Total of yes answers	945		100

1 Yes percent is percentage of 1126 people who answered yes

2 Percent yes is percent of all 945 yes answers

3 Other included: motivation, don't see children, stress etc.

The most frequently reported problems were: family conflict or violence, financial problems, loss of friends, psychological illnesses and failed relationships. When impact of drug use was cross-tabbed by gender there was no difference in answers given by male or female respondents.

4.5 At Risk “Under the Influence”

Respondents were asked “during the past year, have you been under the influence of drugs while at school, at work, while driving a vehicle or operating machinery.” There were 94 yes answers representing 8 percent of the total. Some may have answered more than one activity thereby reducing the percent. It appears as a serious problem and this concern was supported by comments concerning the workplace such as “My husband knows drugs are used while truck drivers are working in the oil patch and on the highway.” and “talk to some of the 20 year olds and you’ll hear of drugs in construction camps -- there are kids on drugs driving heavy equipment – scary.” (Table 4.5.1)

Table 4.5.1 Respondents reporting risky activity while under the influence of drugs (Qu 11)

Activity							
	At School	At Work	Driving Vehicle	Using Machinery	Not under Influence	No Answer/ Don't Use	Total
#	9	33	44	8	19	1013	1126
%	1	3	4	1	2	89	100

4.6 Age at First Use of Drugs

Finally, in this section, respondents were asked: “If you have ever used drugs, at what age did you start and stop?” A total of 288 people or 25 percent of respondents indicated they had started using drugs. The most likely time of starting was between 14 and 16 years of age. Many of these people (84 or 29 percent) had quit before age 19 or the end of high school. It appears that those starting earlier were more likely to use drugs for a longer period or continue to use them. Ninety one people or 32 percent reported they were still users. (Table 4.6.1)

4.7 Personal Experiences with Drug Use

More than 30 of the people who took time to make additional comments provided stories about their personal experience with drugs. It is a challenge to summarise these stories that usually had a strong emotional impact and reminded us how difficult it can be to deal with loved ones and people who become addicted to drugs. For example, one said “I have a cousin who got into one of the bad drugs, lost everything and is now sleeping on the street.” In a similar vein, “We have seen a good person with so much potential and ability being sucked in by smooth talking traffickers and end up homeless and unable to provide for self.” Another told the tragic story of “a very dear friend who shot himself because he didn’t want to be the person drugs had turned him into.”

Some related more direct experience.

“I had to end a long term relationship with someone I cared very much about due to crack addiction. He was a great guy, hard working and caring, who got into drugs while away

at camp. It slowly got worse with lies and manipulation and he stole money from me. Addiction is hard to understand.”

Table 4.6.1 Age of starting and stopping use of drugs.

Starting Age	# users	% of users	# Quit <19	% quit <19	Average year use	# Still use	% Still use
10 or less	3	1.0				3	100
11	4	1.4	2	50	4.5	2	50
12	13	4.5	2	15	12.9	6	46
13	23	8.0	7	30	12.5	9	39
14	44	15.3	17	39	8.8	13	30
15	48	16.7	18	38	5.4	13	27
16	52	18.1	22	42	4.1	13	25
17	25	8.7	7	28	3.5	9	36
18	29	10.1	7	24	5.0	8	28
19	12	4.2	2	17	4.4	4	33
20	11	3.8			5.0	6	55
21	3	1.0			18.5	1	33
22	2	0.7			3.5	0	0
23	1	0.3			1.0	0	0
24	2	0.7			1.0	0	0
25	6	2.1			3.3	2	33
28	2	0.7			4.5	0	0
30	2	0.7			5.5	0	0
>30	6	2.1			4.0	2	33
Totals	288	100.0	84.0	29.2		91	32
Note: Small numbers may make percents difficult to interpret							
Percentages in total line are percent of 288 (eg 84/288*100) and (91/288*100)							

Another said “My son started using at a young age and he is now in jail. He has ruined his life and made mine a living hell as well.” One told of her own experience. Her marriage dissolved and she turned to drugs to forget. After some very difficult experience she was finally able to get family support and get herself clean. Another related a detailed heart rending story about her addicted husband and the loss of a friend to drugs.

Then there were people concerned about the danger of drug activities in their neighbourhood. “Our home was at risk of burning due to a drug lab where an explosion killed one man and caused serious burns to two others. Unknown to me a drug issue was going on right under my nose.” A similar story concerned dealers breaking into a house to use the phone to make deals. This respondent reported a series of bad experiences with this known dealer.

4.8 Summary of Experience with Drug Use and Abuse

In summary most respondents were not users. Over 80 percent of those who completed the survey were non-users. While it is possible to argue that drug users avoided filling this survey, the 2 percent reporting heavy use of drugs is not very different from the level of heavy drug use reported in other studies. It is worth noting that the study was not aimed just at drug users, but at

the whole community. It was designed to help us understand the nature of the drug problem in and around Dawson Creek and the steps the community might take to deal with it.

Of the “hard” drugs, cocaine was most often used. Oil and gas workers and students were more likely to use cocaine often (6% of each). Marijuana was used by about 11% of respondents and 6% used only marijuana. Students, retail and service workers and agricultural people were most likely to report using marijuana often. A large number of people (70%) reported using alcohol although most (63%) only sometimes. About 21% reported tobacco use.

Some 17 percent of respondents reported experiencing family problems with drug use or abuse. Family conflict or violence, financial problems and loss of friends were most often mentioned. This means many people experience problems related to drug use and abuse.

About half drug users reported starting drug use between the age of 14 and 16 years. About 30 percent of users reported quitting by age 19 and about 32 percent were still using. A younger start appears to lead to more years of use and a higher likelihood of continuing use.

5. Community Reaction and Suggestions

This section reports on answers concerning the nature of drug issues in the community, where people obtain and use drugs, thoughts on community action, and a scoring of options for acting on drug use and abuse.

5.1 The Nature of Drug Use

When asked if “in your opinion, are there drug problems in Dawson Creek,” 90 percent of respondents indicated there is a serious or extreme drug problem in Dawson Creek. (46% serious, 44% extreme) (Table 5.1.1) Many people made additional comments concerning the problem. One said “Dawson Creek has a huge drug problem and there have been weird incidents which are drug related.” This problem was related to growth of the oil and gas industry. Another said “the downtown has changed for the worse, I don’t feel safe walking my kids to the store.”

When asked if it is easy to get drugs in Dawson Creek, 65 percent of respondents replied that it is easy to get drugs, 28 percent responded they did not know, and 6 percent did not answer. (Table 5.1.1)

Table 5.1.1 Drug problem and ease of getting drugs.

13. Is there a drug problem?						
	No	Small	Serious	Extreme	No Answer	Total
#	3	52	518	496	57	1126
%	0	5	46	44	5	100

14. Is it easy to get drugs in Dawson Creek?					
	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
#	730	6	318	72	1126
%	65	1	28	6	100

5.2 Source and Use of Drugs

When asked where people get drugs the most common answers were from drug or crack houses, (17%) from dealers, sellers, suppliers (16%) or at bars, night clubs or pubs. (14%) (Table 5.2.1)

Many people provided names and descriptions of drug sources either in the question answer or in additional comments. This included identification of a number of bars and clubs. There was a recurring theme of “prominent business people” being engaged in the supplying, dealing and distribution of drugs, and using legal business activities to cover for illegal business activities. Other less specific answers included: on the street; downtown and from friends or acquaintances. Also a number indicated that drugs could be obtained in and around the middle and high schools. There were a number of cynical comments such as “get a life,” “students know,” “duh-everyone knows,” and “police already know” which indicated that they thought this was a foolish question because everyone must know.

Table 5.2.1 Where do people get drugs in Dawson Creek?

Source	#	%
Drug-crack houses	145	17
Dealers-sellers-suppliers	137	16
Bars-night-clubs-pubs	124	14
Anywhere-everywhere	94	11
The street	87	10
Downtown	61	7
Friends-peers-acquaintances	53	6
In or around schools	50	6
Private Homes	23	3
Hotels-Motels	15	2
Certain businesses	14	2
Taxi-cab drivers	13	1
Delivered or phone order	12	1
Neighbours	9	1
Skate board park	7	1
At work	7	1
Doctors-Med professionals	4	0
Kin Park	4	0
Parties	3	0
In alleys	2	0
Vehicles	2	0
Teen hangouts	2	0
Parents	2	0
Teenagers	2	0
Convenience store	2	0
Total	874	100
<p>Note: Many people mentioned more than one source There were many no or don't know answers Percent of number answering (X/874*100)</p>		

When asked where people use drugs in Dawson Creek, 224 people (25%) stated that people use drugs anywhere and everywhere. 211 people (23%) stated in homes and apartments, 103 people (11%) stated in bars and nightclubs and 75 people (8%) stated in school areas around Central and South Peace Secondary School. (Table 5.2.2)

Other places where people use drugs included: streets, drug or crack houses, vehicles, parties, alleys, work, downtown, parks, skateboard park, public areas, bathrooms, events and gathering places, friends, abandoned buildings, camping, behind businesses. Also mentioned were hotel rooms, near the rink, behind art gallery, fields, garages, offices, the ski hill, under bridges, the valley, back yards, church steps and along the walking path.

Table 5.2.2 Where do people use drugs?

Where Used	#	%
Anywhere-everywhere	224	24.6
Homes-apartments	211	23.2
Bars, night clubs,	103	11.3
School areas Central & SPSS	75	8.2
Streets	64	7.0
Drug, crack, dealer's houses	39	4.3
Vehicles cars	34	3.7
Parties (incl bush)	31	3.4
Alleys	24	2.6
Work	22	2.4
Downtown	22	2.4
Parks	22	2.4
Skate board park	10	1.1
Public areas	7	0.8
Bathrooms, bar & public	6	0.7
Events and gathering places	5	0.5
Friend's place	5	0.5
Abandoned buildings	2	0.2
Camping	2	0.2
Behind businesses	2	0.2
Totals	910	100
<i>Note: People mentioned more than one place There were many no answers or don't know</i>		

5.3 Participation and Responsibility

People were asked “Would you like to participate in community action to help prevent drug abuse?” Thirty percent (333) of respondents said that they would like to participate in community action. When asked: “Would you be afraid for your safety if you were involved in drug abuse prevention activities?” 463 people (41%) of survey respondents said that they would be afraid for their safety if they were to become involved in drug abuse prevention activities. (Table 5.3.1)

Table 5.3.1 Number and percent willing or afraid to participate (Question 17, 18)

	Yes	Don't Know	No	No Answer	Total
17. Would you like to participate?					
#	333	476	232	85	1126
%	30	42	21	8	100
18. Would you be afraid to participate?					
#	463	323	256	84	1126
%	41	29	23	7	100

When the reaction of males and females was compared, males were more likely to say no, they would not participate and females were more likely to say they would be afraid to participate. One person said “it depends on the kind of action.”

When asked “whose responsibility is it to deal with drug problems,” almost half (46%) of the respondents felt it was the responsibility of all the groups identified, the individual, the family, the community the legal system and the health system. Slightly more people indicated the legal system and the individual as being primarily responsible, and the health system was held less responsible. (Table 5.3.2)

Table 5.3.2 Whose responsibility is it to deal with drug problems (Question 19)

19.	Who is responsible?	Number			Percent		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
a.	The individual	905	221	1126	80	20	100
b.	Family	819	307	1126	73	27	100
c.	Community	847	279	1126	75	25	100
d.	Legal system	924	202	1126	82	18	100
e.	Health System	603	523	1126	54	46	100

5.4 Options for Acting on Drug Issues

Respondents were asked how important selected options are in dealing with drug related problems and asked to check one box for each option with ‘1’ being very important, ‘2’ important and ‘3’ not important.

Those actions identified as very important (1) by the most people were youth programs and activities, imposing more severe sentences, treatment programs, education and awareness and simplifying search warrants. Those identified as least important were legalising the use of substances, having safe injection sites, drug free zone signage and a needle exchange program. Some survey respondents felt strongly about saying no or no way, so a “no” column was added to the following table. This represents the strong feelings some respondents have concerning legalising, and harm reduction activities such as needle exchange and safe injection sites. (Table 5.4.1)

In other words a majority of respondents said there has to be a much stronger “law and order” approach to dealing with drug issues. This data was reinforced by comments on the law, most of them advocating a much tougher stance. Comments such as:

“The reason I know there is a problem, I hear it on the police scanner all the time. When there is a call to places where drugs are sold, the police know they are a drug house. It seems they have no right to go in and search these places. When they do charge people the court system is so lax they let them off. The court system is a big farce.”

Table 5.4.1 Scoring options for acting on drug issues

#	Score	1	2	3	No Answer	NO	Total
22a	Counselling services	694	259	67	106		1126
22b	Detox facilities in area	721	226	65	113	1	1126
22c	Education & Awareness	763	195	67	101		1126
22d	Increasing Low income housing	294	329	334	167	2	1126
22e	Imposing more severe sentences	791	141	105	87	2	1126
22f	Legalize the use of substances	139	100	671	189	27	1126
22g	Community Action plan	563	341	80	141	1	1126
22h	Needle exchange program	256	275	389	189	17	1126
22i	Signage (i.e. drug free zone)	212	223	526	155	10	1126
22j	Simplify search warrant process	741	154	99	131	1	1126
22k	Safe injection site	175	240	486	201	24	1126
22l	Treatment programs	785	167	54	119	1	1126
22m	Youth programs and activities	833	130	52	110	1	1126

%	Score	1	2	3	No Answer	NO	Total
22a	Counselling services	62	23	6	9		100
22b	Detox facilities in area	64	20	6	10		100
22c	Education & Awareness	68	17	6	9		100
22d	Increasing Low income housing	26	29	30	15		100
22e	Imposing more severe sentences	70	13	9	8		100
22f	Legalize the use of substances	12	9	60	17	2%	100
22g	Community Action plan	50	30	7	13		100
22h	Needle exchange program	23	24	35	17	2%	100
22i	Signage (i.e. drug free zone)	19	20	47	14	1%	100
22j	Simplify search warrant process	66	14	9	12		100
22k	Safe injection site	16	21	43	18	2%	100
22l	Treatment programs	70	15	5	11		100
22m	Youth programs and activities	74	12	5	10		100

Another said

“The court system needs to be less concerned about process and more concerned about punishing people for crimes. They need to back up police force rather than tie them up in court so they cannot do their jobs.”

One person who has been involved said

“Our justice system makes me sick. I have sat in court in both Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie. More people should go and listen to get to know what is really going on in our court system. I have been sitting in the waiting room and people will come out laughing, saying they beat the system again. They should get more time and a fine for lying and wasting court time and taxpayers money. (oh dear the lawyers would lose money) I give the RCMP heads up for the job they have to do, only to have the justice system let them down.”

There was a strong feeling against legalisation of drugs. However, a few people suggested legalising marijuana. One said “I think if they legalise marijuana police could utilise their time more effectively on harder drugs.” Another said “legalize marijuana and then go after crack heads, crack houses and meth labs.”

Some suggested we should legalise, control distribution and tax drugs as a way to take value out of the current trafficker system and provide revenue for treatment. For example:

“the government should be making it so drug addicts can purchase drugs out of a store legally. The dealers could then be put out of business. The government is basically handing billions of dollars over to these drug dealers by leaving it the way it is. It is actually costing due to rehab, welfare, health care and people being sent to jail in the drug war. There will always be junkies, but there does not have to be all the conflict with dealers if we eliminate them.”

6. Additional Comments on Drug Use

Approximately 500 people took time to write additional comments at the end of the questionnaire and this led to 80 pages of typewritten script and a long and arduous job in sorting and interpreting the comments. Many of the comments were emotional and sincere and taken together the number and depth of the comments suggests that the drug issues are of great concern to citizens in and around Dawson Creek. The number and depth of comments caused a problem in putting this report together because of a concern that the report would skim over or fail to adequately represent the issues and the depth of feeling.

Reading the complete set of comments tells a very compelling story about the drug scene in Dawson Creek. This story is likely somewhat representative of what is happening in communities all across Canada although many respondents would argue that the situation is much worse in Dawson Creek.

The comments were sorted into categories. One group focused on personal stories and reaction to the survey and drug free signage; a second on education, schools parenting and youth; a third on the community, city, workplace, media and solutions; and a fourth on legal and policing issues. It is important to note that there was considerable overlap because many comments covered a range of topics and the sorting was sometimes arbitrary.

Below we summarise and use examples in an attempt to capture the range of comments in each category.

6.1 Personal Stories

These stories covered the heart rending experience of having family members involved in drug activities and about watching neighbours become seriously hooked on drugs. Some related stories concerning fear of drug houses and of the danger concerning labs. Another discussed the negative impact on business when they had a large amount of equipment stolen. A taxi driver told of their experience in seeing where drugs are sold. This driver said “I’ve seen the \$100 bills by handfuls and dealers saying ‘if I get caught oh well, I’ll make more when I get out.’” The driver was very concerned.

One talked of “the game,” or processes whereby young people get drawn into the use of drugs. This person said:

“For some who end up on that path I believe it is important for community members to understand the unbelievable circumstances that “surround” that world so we are better equipped to help them get off that path. I believe there is sufficient documentation concerning the effects of drugs and the challenges of withdrawal, however, I don’t believe there is sufficient evidence concerning what they refer to as ‘the game’. People are beaten, raped, tortured, their lives threatened and the lives of their families threatened. For most the only way out is relocation.”

There were experiences where a person had been hooked and quit. The theme being that the person must decide to quit before it can happen. “As someone who used drugs for many years, I realised quitting was as easy putting a quitting attitude in my head. I was successful in quitting by myself.”

There followed a full report on a meeting in Grande Prairie where “officer harassment,” Maurice Brodeur was the main speaker. This Edmonton officer set about to disturb drug houses through frequent visits, having other official visit to look into violations. Apparently with great success in one part of Edmonton. (See also Section 2.2)

Of course, there was a contrary comment. One said: “There is no drug problem! Business is good. Leave us alone. We take care of our own.” In light of recent homicides it leaves one wondering about this interpretation of the word “care.”

6.2 Education, Schools and Social Services

The main theme concerning education and awareness was the idea that prevention is the key and that education and awareness for young people is a must. One person said:

“Unfortunately, the most impactful teaching tool I have used with my children is to point out and talk to them about the hard core drug users on our street. I point out those people are not so different from us. It’s just the decisions they made to use drugs and now it’s got hold of them.”

Some pointed out the importance of helping parents to educate themselves and then educate their children. There was sense that problems may be more likely to arise in ‘toxic family situations’ and this suggested that a “course in family dynamics was needed.” One person suggested that we must get to understand why people use drugs and help people to understand how drugs are marketed to them.

There was considerable concern about drugs being in and around schools. One person said: “drug use has spilled into the schools and is now elevated to hard core substance abuse. Cocaine in particular is now running rampant and marijuana is being laced to increase brand loyalty.” Suggestions included: “do unannounced searches with police dogs,” “have stiff penalties for trafficking in schools” and “keep students in school grounds all day, they have no business being up town during school hours.” Another observed that we need to intimidate kids. “Kids smoke behind South Peace constantly. It’s obvious, out in the open and there is no reason why we can’t do something about it. If they know they will be severely punished if they smoke pot like that, less kids will.”

Regarding youth a number of people argued that young people need to be encouraged to participate in music and sports to give kids more to do than “hang out.” Another noted that youth need somewhere to go. “Someone I know does a lot of drugs because he is bored.” Another said “we need to have safe, fun, inexpensive things for our youth.” In contrast one person noted that Dawson Creek has plenty of activities for young people and that “no activities is not an excuse.”

A sobering story was that:

“your drug dealers utilize teenagers more than you realize, scare tactics work very well with young people. They recruit when teens are in trouble or in need. I have had personal experience with these drug dealers recruiting teens -- they do mean business.”

On the subject of parenting two themes emerged. First, many parents are not providing the guidance and control that is needed and need to take more responsibility. One person said “I think parents must take more responsibility for where and what their kids are doing.” Second,

was the fact that many parents are aware of drug use issues and don't know how to deal with it. Concerning the questionnaire one parent reported: "We don't use drugs but our child has already filled the survey and freely admits to alcohol use, marijuana use and occasional ecstasy and magic mushrooms. We are at a loss for how to deal with this and are gravely concerned."

A number of people indicated the need for locally available detox and rehabilitation services without waiting times. For example: "we need facilities that people that want help can get into without waiting and some form of support when they return home." One person noted that:

"working in the medical field I am amazed at the amount of drug use in our town. Unfortunately because we have no detox centres our nursing staff are dealing with more physical injuries related to drug use, withdrawal and unpredictable violent behaviours."

6.3 The Community, City and Workplace

One theme was that the community has a huge drug problem and that it has become much worse in the last ten years. One person talked of taking their kids to play at a park: "by the time I left one hour later I had disposed of seven – count it SEVEN – needles just lying in the sand waiting for some unsuspecting child to stab themselves." A downtown business person reported they witness drug activities every day. They said they have reported to RCMP, have had to take extra security training measures, and feel uncomfortable going to and from vehicles in parking lots.

One observed that "the culture of the community makes a difference and the drug culture is dominant here with the oil and gas industry. We need a clean culture for Dawson Creek." Another defined the issue as a morality issue. One had the opinion that it is fraudulent use of government funds for officials who have responsibility and do not go to where the problems are. "You cannot hang a sign in your window and expect drug users to come to you – you have to go to them and develop a relationship before you can help."

Frequent comments were to "quit putting your head in the sand," "we need to act now as a community," "do something now" and "about a community action plan, do something about it now and quit pissing people off."

Two positive experiences were reported. One where neighbours took a stand concerning a drug house. "We acted as a surveillance point for the drug squad and succeeded in ridding our community of the local (and extremely busy) crack house. I feared for my safety in being found out but it was so worth it." Another talked about a drug house and the number of work trucks visiting it.

"Police need to be more proactive by cleaning out the local drug houses. We had one on our street for 6 months before the police finally raided the house. There were many complaints filed by the neighbourhood residents about the traffic and activity around the house. The people living in the neighbourhood were the ones who were instrumental in deterring the traffic by videotaping, taking pictures and confronting the people. Many of the vehicles were clearly marked oilfield company trucks."

Another noted that "everybody is waiting for someone else to act, 'talk is cheap.'" This person argued that we need leadership, action and allocation of funds to get the job done. Another said the primary responsibility for driving the drug trade out of the community lies with the elected officials and

“sorry to say this study shows how utterly lost our municipal leadership is. . . Without strong leadership to mobilize a collective effort based on public recognition of a deadly problem, we will continue to see our community deteriorate.”

There was also a respondent who observed how difficult it is to get people involved. They are part of neighbourhood watch and noted that few people come out to meetings.

A number of people expressed concerns about drugs related to the work place. The need for testing, the contribution of the “oil patch” with high earnings and free time, and operation of vehicles and equipment under the influence of drugs or alcohol were issues raised. There was concern about the safety and concern about oil based workers being involved in the purchase and supply of drugs.

A number of people expressed concern that stories are not getting out in the media. One said “rumours are rampant because of a media vacuum” and another that the media needs to get the story out. Also there were people who expressed concerns that media provides bad models for young people with the programming and games that are widely available.

There were a number of people who argued that there is a role for religion in helping to deal with drug problems. One argued she had seen people take a turn in their life when they became involved in prayer and church. Another said they pray weekly for a solution to the drug problem.

Finally, to drive the concern home one person reported “Two of our kids travel extensively for work in BC and AB. Dawson Creek is in the top three of “grungy, druggy town.”

6.4. Legal, Policing, Harm Reduction and Legalization

Probably a majority of the comments, usually very brief and to the point, covered the legal system and the RCMP. There were more than 110 comments covering legal issues and more than 90 focused on police issues. Many were very cynical and critical concerning the legal system, and the police. A number of comments were also critical of the city and the drug free committee that initiated this survey.

Of the critical comments some 48 focussed on the need for stiffer sentences or penalties. Most comments stated that the legal system was too tolerant and there was a need for stiffer sentences. Comments like “stop turning a blind eye” and “a slap on the wrist is not enough.” One said: “get help for those who need it and impose severe sentences on those who create the problems.” One said: “we need Judges that would put these people away and let them think about it, instead of telling them not to do it again and having them back on the street selling their wares before the police get back to their office.”

Another theme was that of changing the legal system to make it more effective in dealing with drug issues -- 28 comments focused on this. A further 8 focused on the judges themselves. There were arguments in favour of mandatory sentencing that would take the onus off the Judges. Also questions as to whether the Judges were afraid and whether the prosecution was able to match the high priced lawyers from the coast. “All these drug sellers have lawyers standing by.” The emphasis on human rights was also a concern. “Our justice system with its emphasis on human rights does nothing to empower our police forces to deal with this problem.” Others expressed a

concern that the legal system was more attuned to criminals. “The rights of criminals are better than those of the law abiding citizens.”

A number of people noted the need to simplify search procedures so police could go ahead and raid drug houses. “They need to cut through red-tape and make it easier for RCMP to bust the drug houses.” Another commented that: “our police departments work very hard to get these people before a Judge who in turn gives them a ridiculously light sentence.” One person said “as a society we need to give law enforcement and courts more authority to deal with criminal elements in our society.”

Some respondents noted serious problems with the Young Offenders Act (YOA). For example, one said:

“Another HUGE factor was the initiation of the YOA, which in essence, protects youth from any consequences for their illegal actions – drug use and hence criminal activity. The YOA has fostered the “me, me, me” attitude and taken away any respect for the rights and feelings of others. It has taken away the responsibility of parents to discipline and to parent. Your community action plan should lobby the government to throw out the YOA act – then and only then will our society start to heal itself from the bottom up – hence prevention.”

There were many suggestions that the RCMP should be more visible, aggressive and active and in a number of cases there was recognition for the difficult situation RCMP find themselves in. For example one person said “drop the officer off say at the Coop, walk to Safeway and the same from ICBC to the Bank of Montreal. They have to be friendly and visible (and good looking).” Another advocated “I feel there isn’t enough police presence in town they should go into pubs and bars nightly and do walkarounds.”

More presence of police on city streets was also an issue. “We have drugs on our street and never see the police in our neighbourhood. A related comment was “when citizens report suspicious activities stop asking them if they have proof – that’s the RCMP’s job. Do you want people doing your job?” Another said: “I don’t do anything in my neighbourhood because the police are not responsive in a positive way. They get reports and do not always follow-up.”

There was a theme that police must know. “When most of the town is aware of where and who the drug dealers are, police would have to be brain dead not to know. These people need to be arrested, not watched.” Many comments focused on the need to deal with dealers, and a few on the fact that organised crime has gained far too much influence.

Some people want more undercover police or the use of special forces that come in and take on the heavies. One said: “Give police more authority – have more police for undercover operations to break dealers.” Many said we need to have more police. There was also frustration that police are seen giving tickets for seat belt or speeding but not dealing with obvious drug problems.

Then some commended the police for doing a tough job well. “I know that many people vocalise that stopping drug use is the RCMP’s job and they are not doing their job. That is not fair. I commend the police, community services and others who work daily with the issues of drugs in our community.”

While many people advocated a much more rigid legal and policing approach there were those who question this. For example one said: “I feel most people do not understand addiction and its link with poverty so they resort to the politically pleasing stance of stiffer penalties etc.”

6.5 Final Comment About Comments

It is important to restate that this section has only provided a sampling of the comments and that providing a full sense of the issues and the intensity of the comments is a challenge in an attempt to provide a balanced summary of some 80 pages of comments. We now provide a statement of conclusions and some options for action.

7. Summary, Conclusions and Options

This section summarises findings, and then proposes a number of options for action at the community, the legal system and the City system level.

7.1 Summary

A mail out questionnaire was sent to households in Dawson Creek and area. The survey covered demographics, personal experience with drugs, and community related questions. Half a page was available for additional comments. Below are the main conclusions:

1. The team reviewed a number of related studies, debates concerning law and order and harm reduction and community activities in Section 2.
2. There was a good response to the survey with 1126 questionnaires returned and 80 pages of additional comments, many with very strong emotional language. A number of people were critical of the survey claiming it was a waste of money and a number commented in regard to the likelihood of users filling out the survey honestly, if at all.
3. Respondents were 3/4 female, tended to be older and better off than the population as a whole with 50% having household earnings over \$50,000 and a quarter over \$80,000. Three quarters of the respondents had been in DC for over 10 years. Almost 60 percent had no children under 19 living at home, and 30 percent had one or two children (about 540 children). Respondents covered a wide range of occupations with sales and service, health and education, retired, gas and oil workers and homemakers being the largest groups.
4. Analysis indicated that 83 percent of respondents did not use drugs, 5 percent made some use and 2 percent made heavy use of hard drugs. Marijuana (6% and 5%) and cocaine (3% some and 2% often) were most often used. About 6% reported using only marijuana. Gas and oil, students and unemployed were likely to report often using cocaine. Students and unemployed were heavier users of marijuana. Sixty three percent reported some use of alcohol and 7 percent using it often.
5. Drug issues are being felt by a large number of individuals and families with 190 people or 17 percent reporting problems. The most frequently reported problems were: family conflict or violence, financial problems, loss of friends, psychological illnesses and failed relationships.
6. When asked “during the past year, have you been under the influence of drugs while at school, at work, while driving a vehicle or operating machinery,” 94 or 8 percent answered yes. This appears to a serious problem and this was supported by a number of comments.
7. Respondents were asked: “If you have ever used drugs, at what age did you start and stop?” 25 percent of respondents indicated they had started using drugs. The most likely age of starting was between 14 and 16 years. Many of these people (29 percent) of users had quit by age 19. It appears that those starting earlier were more likely to use drugs for a longer period or to continue to use. Ninety one people or 32 percent of users reported they were still users.

8. About 30 people provided stories about their personal or family experience with drugs. These usually had a strong emotional impact and reminded us how difficult it can be to deal with loved ones and people who become addicted to drugs.

9. When asked if “in your opinion, are there drug problems in Dawson Creek?” 90 percent of respondents indicated there is a serious or extreme drug problem in Dawson Creek. (46% serious, 44% extreme)

10. When asked where people get drugs the most common answers were from drug or crack houses (17%), from dealers, sellers, suppliers (16%), or at bars, night clubs or pubs (14%). A number of specific places were identified by respondents. There was a recurring theme of “prominent business people” being engaged in the supplying, dealing and distribution of drugs, and using legal business activities to cover for illegal business activities.

11. About 30 percent of respondents indicated they would be willing to get involved in dealing with drug issues but 40 percent indicated they would be afraid. When asked “whose responsibility is it to deal with drug problems,” almost half (46%) of the respondents felt it was the responsibility of all the groups identified, the individual, the family, the community, the legal system and the health system. Slightly more people indicated the legal system and the individual as being primarily responsible, and the health system was held less responsible

12. Those actions identified as very important by the most people were youth programs and activities, imposing more severe sentences, treatment programs, education and awareness and simplifying search warrants. Those identified as least important were legalising the use of substances, having safe injection sites, drug free zone signage and a needle exchange program.

13. There were many comments expressing frustration with the legal system. Tougher sentences, have legal people take a tougher stand, having RCMP act on information they are aware of were recurrent themes. There were many suggestions that the RCMP should be more visible, active and aggressive and some recognition of the difficult situation RCMP find themselves in.

14. Many people expressed a strong feeling against legalisation of drugs although a few people suggested legalising marijuana and a few said legalise, control distribution and tax drugs as a way to take value out of current system and provide revenue for treatment.

15. A theme was that the community has a huge drug problem and that there is a culture of drug use in the community. The need for leadership, action and allocation of funds was noted and the fact that elected officials shoulder a heavy responsibility. There was concern that correct information is not getting out in the media, and a suggestion that religion may have a role in helping to deal with drug problems.

16. A number of people expressed concerns about drugs related to the work place. The need for testing, the contribution of the “oil patch” with high earnings and free time, and operation of vehicles and equipment under the influence of drugs or alcohol were issues raised.

17. The main theme regarding education was the idea that prevention is the key, and that education and awareness for young people is a must. There was concern about drugs being

available and used in and around schools, and observation of a need for engaging young people in constructive activities.

7.2 Options for Action

This section follows “Appreciative Inquiry” logic. This means we will start by asking people what they have tried, what has worked and how we can build on those successes. It also recognises that we do not start with a “blank slate.” The police, supported by concerned citizens and the City have moved to have some of the more blatant drug houses closed. Counselling is available in the city, there are active organisations working with aboriginal people, there are active voluntary groups such as AA that have valid experience and capable volunteer practitioners. There is a network of community service and social support agencies such as South Peace Community Resources Society, the Salvation Army, St. Mark’s Food Bank and other church groups that have provided support. The school system has carried out drug use surveys, gained experience and shown concern. And, of course, the fact that so many people chose to return this survey and offered comments and suggestions, means that there are many concerned citizens in the community.

Maintaining momentum: In the comments someone said “everyone is waiting for someone else to take action.” At the end of Section 2 this quote: “If we choose to listen to the community, as we have done through this survey process, then we have taken on a responsibility to hear their messages and bring about action on them.” By carrying out this survey the City of Dawson Creek and the Drug Free DC Committee have taken on responsibility to act on serious drug issues identified by respondents. We must not lose the momentum that has been established. It is clear that follow-up and leadership are critical. **The City of Dawson Creek needs to explore how human and financial resources can be obtained to provide a shorter-term (12 month) initiative and also to develop a longer-term 5-10 year strategy in order to provide leadership and organisational support in combating drug abuse issues and building a healthier community.**

Taking Responsibility: When asked who is responsible for solving drug problems many people indicated that it was a combination of individuals, families, the community, the legal system and the health system. There is a need to focus on risk and preventative factors and also to focus on action and solutions, rather than the problem. This survey has created an opportunity at the community level to bring about an exploration and debate on taking responsibility for community drug issues. A community-wide method such as developing a “Community Action Plan” could be used to engage interested members of the community. **The Drug Free DC Committee can take advantage of this report as a vehicle for bringing about debate with interested organizations; provide greater education and awareness to a broader public audience, improve and strengthen the committee, recruit additional members including RCMP, Northern Health Authority, high school students, art and music reps, camp first aid attendants and utilize the media more effectively. This will allow the committee to search globally for ideas other jurisdictions are trying and to propose unique solutions to test in Dawson Creek and area.**

Legal System: There are difficulties in having the legal system deal adequately with drug cases that come before them. Many argued for more severe penalties for drug dealing and drug use. They felt mandatory sentences were needed and that offenders should not get just a “slap on the

hand.” This was seen both as an issue for the local legal system and for the broader Provincial and Federal systems and laws. There was also concern about the effect of the Young Offenders Act. Additional questions were raised in a review of various studies in Section 2. **The Legal Community (judges, lawyers, police, legal personnel) need to meet over time with the City of Dawson Creek and the Drug Free DC Committee to discuss what works, what is problematic and how the system can work more effectively. This could involve approaching higher levels of government where there is a clear case for seeking a change in laws, regulations, funding strategies and implementation of programs.**

The RCMP: Many people were critical of the role played by the RCMP in dealing with drug issues. There is evidence that police are able to act and bring about changes in drug situations and that they can be effective when they have broad based support and the ability to interact with community members on these issues. Some respondents appeared uncertain concerning what RCMP can and cannot do or the strategy they use in dealing with drug related problems. **The RCMP need to engage in constructive interaction with the City, Committee and community members to explore ways of dealing more effectively with drug issues.**

Business Community: Many survey respondents commented on illegal or suspicious business activities being used to fund legal business activities in Dawson Creek. Many respondents also identified businesses that were involved in or provide a site for drug supply or use. In background reading reference was made to the development of a code of best practices for dealing with these issues. This needs to be explored further. **The Business Community (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Downtown Merchant’s Association) need to become involved with the City and RCMP to become familiar with the extent of drug use in the community. Members of the Business Community need to be encouraged to contribute potential solutions. Education and awareness at all levels will help to identify ways of clarifying and dealing with illegal drug supply and use issues.**

The Workplace: A number of respondents identified drug use in the workplace as an issue. This included operation of vehicles and machinery while under the influence, sighting of work vehicles outside known drug houses, the nature of primary resource industry employment and the need for routine drug testing. The team also learned of the Northern BC Council on Substance Abuse (BCCSA) which is set up by and works with industries. **The City of Dawson Creek and the Drug Free DC Committee need to explore ways to manage and reduce the impact of drug use and abuse in and around the workplace. This could include working with the BCCSA, industry leaders, first aid emergency staff, Worksafe BC and various industry associations. Industry Associations need to be encouraged to actively participate in and provide resources for this work.**

School District 59: Many comments were made about the availability and use of drugs in and around schools and the fact that earlier use of drugs is likely to lead to more future use. There was evidence that problems were often related to unstable or difficult family situations. There was a sense that strong family connections and strong connections to school and community were protective factors that lead to lower risks. SD#59 has taken initiative over recent years to track drug use through surveys. **SD#59 needs to be commended for efforts and encouraged to continue to strengthen their links with the community. Educators and concerned parents need to explore what has worked and what opportunities there are to improve school and family education activities. This may include developing and testing educational activities,**

helping schools to enact and apply by-laws, engaging in active participation with the Drug Free DC Committee, development of more youth driven programs and encouraging more community and parental involvement with the schools.

Youth Programs: Many survey responses and emotional pleas for help were made around protecting our youth from the drug culture in the City. The most vulnerable age for experimentation with drugs was identified as being between 14-16 years old. The community needs to work collectively with youth starting at a young age to provide safe, affordable and fun activities that help youth to build their esteem, build skills, increase job employability and develop social networks. The focus needs to be on increasing school connectedness, involving parents in activities with their kids, having positive expectations of youth, increasing connectivity to the community through good citizenship and volunteer opportunities. **It is recommended that the City of Dawson Creek continue to do more research, develop more programs that focus on healthy youth development and invest in organizations that support youth locally, including volunteer networks.**

Service Providers and Services: Many people asked how they get help in times of need. There was also concern about problems of integration of services and the idea that service providers need to take initiative to find people in need and get to know them, rather than hanging a sign and sitting in an office waiting. Also when people are ready or required to seek help there should be no delays. In committee discussion it became clear that many service providers feel overloaded and unable to adequately deal with the demand for services and that budget to provide additional services is difficult to come by. There was awareness that helping people can be fraught with challenges and occasional outstanding successes. Concern was also expressed that while it is possible to get detox and rehab help in Alberta, this help is not available, except at great expense to Dawson Creek people. **The City needs to support service providers including the Community Service Network and Northern Health Authority to explore innovative ways to offer services as needed. This includes integration of appropriate health, legal and voluntary services, development of creative new ways of dealing with problems and seeking additional resources, especially for responding to critical situations.**

Treatment Programs: The community rated treatment programs right behind a concern for youth and a call for stiffer penalties for committing crimes. Although the majority of respondents came out against harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange, safe injection sites and legalisation of substances, they were in favour of treatment programs including detox/rehab and counselling. A few respondents argued for an approach oriented more toward harm reduction. Background research indicates many scientists and local political leaders are advocating harm reduction strategies together with other services. The issue is confused by governments talking of harm reduction, while putting most funds into enforcement. **The Community Service Network and Northern Health Authority need to become actively involved and aware of different logics and be open to exploring different approaches where evidence suggests they can work. In Dawson Creek, perhaps a focus on education & awareness and improving access to counselling services may be the first step.**

The Culture and Aesthetics in the City: Many comments alluded to a culture of drugs within the city. Being aware of drug sources, seeing people openly using drugs, being concerned that drug activity is part of the bar and pub scene, and part of the residential street scene, finding drug paraphernalia, signs regarding sources and so on. Many did not feel comfortable on streets and

in back lanes. Similar issues emerge in reports of bush parties and house parties in school survey reports. While the issue is somewhat clear the answer is not. Community involvement is key. Get people downtown, get people involved in reporting drug houses and drug use sites, get more presence of police in critical spots, make sure the place is tidy. **The City (with the help of local citizens and senior governments as appropriate) must provide leadership and build on their vision of a drug free community, must address underlying social conditions, and build on the strengths of local organisations.**

It is assumed that this report and the sorted comments will provide initial material to allow various groups to move ahead and deal with different aspects of the drug use and abuse situation. Respondents put a great deal of time and effort into answering the questions, and the survey team put great effort into entering data, analysing the data and preparing a report. It would be a great loss if the information in this report and the comments are not acted on.

We finish with a comment from a person who provided guidance and reviewed the draft report:

“Overall raising awareness about the concerns of a significant percentage of the community is helpful, **but strategies that bring people together and focus on enhancing the strengths and positive aspects of Dawson Creek may be more effective than punitive and judgemental approaches that foster suspicion among neighbours and create division and potential conflict.**” (McCreary Centre Society, Personal Communication)

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Appendix A: Survey

Community Drug Use Survey -- Facts and Opinions

This survey will help us understand if there is a drug problem in and around Dawson Creek and the steps the community might take to deal with it. Individuals will not be identified in the analysis and answers will be kept confidential. There are no right or wrong answers; it is your experience and ideas that matter.

We are sending a questionnaire to each household and asking that a member of the household complete and return it by mail or to a drop box at Dawson Creek City Hall. The information will be used in developing a community action plan.

If you have any questions or comments please call City Councillor Brent Neumann at 782-5311



About yourself: (To help with analysis)

1. What is your age? a. under 19 b. 19 to 29 c. 30 to 39 d. 40 to 59 e. 60 or over

2. What is your gender? a. Male b. Female

3. How long have you lived in Dawson Creek?
a. Under 2 years b. 2 to 5 years c. 5 to 10 years d. Over 10 years

4. What is your marital status?
a. Single b. Married/Common Law c. Separated/Divorced

5. What are your annual household earnings?
a. Under 15,000 b. 15,000 to 30,000 c. 30,000 to 50,000 d. 50,000 to 80,000 e. Over 80,000

6. How many children 19 years of age or younger live in your household?
a. 0 b. 1 c. 2 d. 3 e. 4 f. More than 4

7. During the past year, what has been your primary occupation, job, or activity?

a. Agriculture	d. Oil & Gas Industry	g. Student
b. Education or Health	e. Retail/Service/Sales	h. Unemployed
c. Forest Industry	f. Retired	i. Other: <i>specify</i>

Personal Experience:

8. During the past year, have you used any of the following substances?

	No	Sometimes	Often
a. Cocaine (<i>coke, crack, toot, snow, rock, blow, candy</i>)			
b. Crystal Meth, or Speed (<i>jib, ice, glass, meth</i>)			
c. Ecstasy (<i>'E', Adam, love doves</i>)			
d. Heroin, Ketamine or Methadone (<i>dope, horse, H, special K</i>)			
e. Hallucinogens (<i>LSD, Acid, PCP, Dust, Mescaline</i>)			
f. Inhalants (<i>Glue, Gas, Nitrous Oxide, Whippits, Aerosols</i>)			
g. Marijuana (<i>pot, weed, dube, "wheelchair" weed, chronic, doobie, joint</i>)			
h. Mushrooms (<i>Magic Mushrooms</i>)			
i. Prescription drugs without a doctor's consent			
j. Steroids/Body Enhancing drugs without a doctor's prescription (<i>juice</i>)			
k. Street drugs that are 'laced' with other substances			
l. Other: <i>specify</i>			

9. Have you ever injected drugs? a. Yes b. No

10. During the past year, has the use of drugs by yourself or a family member caused any of the following problems?

a. Yes *If yes, please check any that apply* b. No

a. Accidents	i. Job loss
b. Apprehension of children	j. Loss of friends
c. Criminal activity/ Legal	k. Medical illness
d. Death of friend or relative	l. Not enough food
e. Family conflict or violence	m. Prostitution
f. Financial	n. Psychological illness (depression, contemplating suicide)
g. Gambling	o. Relationship ended/Divorce
h. Homelessness	p. School related problems
	q. Other (<i>Please specify</i>)

11. During the past year, have you been under the influence of drugs while...
a. At School b. At Work c. Driving a Vehicle d. Operating Machinery e. Don't use drugs

12. If you have ever used drugs, at what age did you start? _____ Stop? _____ Still using?

Survey second page

The Community

13. In your opinion, are there drug problems in Dawson Creek? Check one.

a. No problem b. Small Problem c. Serious Problem d. Extreme Problem

14. Is it easy to get drugs in Dawson Creek? a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

15. Where do people go to get drugs in Dawson Creek?

16. Where do people use drugs in Dawson Creek?

17. Would you like to participate in community action to help prevent drug abuse? a. Yes b. No c. Don't Know

18. Would you be afraid for your safety if you were involved in drug abuse prevention activities? a. Yes b. No c. Don't Know

19. Whose responsibility is it to deal with drug problems? Check all that apply.

a. the individual b. family c. community d. legal system e. health system

20. Do you drink alcohol? a. No b. Sometimes c. Often

21. Do you use tobacco? a. No b. Sometimes c. Often

22. How important are the following options in dealing with drug related problems?

Check one box for each option with '1' being very important, '2' important and '3' not important.

	1	2	3		1	2	3
a. Counseling services				h. Needle exchange programs			
b. De-tox facilities in the area				i. Signage (e.g. 'Drug Free Zone' signs)			
c. Education and awareness activities				j. Simplifying search warrant procedures			
d. Increased low income housing strategies				k. Safe injection sites			
e. Imposing more severe sentences				l. Treatment programs			
f. Legalize the use of substances				m. Youth programs and activities			
g. Community action plan				n. Other: (please specify)			

23. Additional Comments:

Please use this space to share any additional comments including: personal experiences, suggestions on how to deal with drug abuse related issues, information on which drugs you see being used and what you do or would do if you see drug related activities.

Thank you for your input. Please place your completed survey in the postage paid envelope provided and mail by March 30, 2007.
You may also return the survey by placing it in the drop box located at Dawson Creek City Hall.

**Dawson Creek
City**

1	General
Incorporated in 1936, Dawson Creek has a total land area of 20.66 square km (2001 Census). By highway the City is 412 km northeast of Prince George and 73 km southeast of Fort St. John. Dawson Creek is in the Peace River Regional District.	

2	Population Estimates				Age Distribution				
Annual Estimates					Age and Gender - 2001 Census				
(as of July 1, includes estimate of Census undercount)									
	Dawson Crk		BC		Dawson Crk		% Distribution *		
Year	Dawson Crk	% Change Prev. Year	BC	% Change Prev. Year	All ages	Male	Female	Dawson Crk	BC
2002	11,179	-	4,115,413	-	0 - 14	5,260	5,495	100.0	100.0
2003	11,175	0.0	4,155,370	1.0	15 - 24	1,240	1,170	22.4	18.1
2004	11,320	1.3	4,203,315	1.2	25 - 44	795	785	14.7	13.2
2005	11,393	0.6	4,257,833	1.3	45 - 64	1,605	1,680	30.6	30.1
2006	11,615	1.9	4,310,452	1.2	65 +	1,110	1,160	21.1	25.1
						510	685	11.1	13.6

Source: BC STATS

Source: Statistics Canada

* distribution based on published totals, both sexes

3	Selected 2001 Census Characteristics					
Labour Force by Industry (NAICS)			Summary Characteristics			
	Dawson Creek	%	BC %		Dawson Creek	BC
Total labour force	5,755	100.0	100.0	Population, 2001	10,754	3,907,738
Industry - Not applicable	80	1.4	2.2	Population (by citizenship)	10,690	3,868,875
All industries (Experienced LF)	5,680	100.0	100.0	Non-immigrant	9,940	2,821,870
111-112 Farms	70	1.2	1.9	Immigrant	735	1,009,820
113 Forestry and logging	60	1.1	1.2	Labour force (15+ yrs.)	5,755	2,059,950
114 Fishing, hunting and trapping	-	-	0.3	Employees	5,150	1,715,600
1151/2 Support activities for farms	10	0.2	0.1	Self-employed	150	95,185
1153 Support activities for forestry	25	0.4	0.5	Participation rate	%	69.5 %
21 Mining and oil and gas extraction	270	4.8	0.7	Unemployment rate	%	10.4 %
22 Utilities	50	0.9	0.6	Population, 20 yrs. & over	7,470	2,890,730
23 Construction	435	7.7	5.9	Less than grade 9	725	190,905
31-33 Manufacturing	390	6.9	9.6	Some high school	1,680	511,600
311 Food manufacturing	35	0.6	1.1	High school graduate	920	354,130
321 Wood product manufacturing	190	3.3	2.3	Trades certificate	1,235	370,170
322 Paper manufacturing	45	0.8	0.8	College without diploma	730	208,385
41 Wholesale trade	160	2.8	4.1	College diploma	1,145	482,050
44-45 Retail trade	830	14.6	11.6	Some university	480	264,450
441 Motor vehicle and parts dealers	135	2.4	1.1	University degree	560	509,030
445 Food and beverage stores	205	3.6	3.0	Census families	2,945	1,086,030
448 Clothing & clothing accessories	45	0.8	1.2	Lone-parent families	615	168,420
452 General merchandise stores	100	1.8	1.3	Households	4,410	1,534,335
48-49 Transportation & warehousing	410	7.2	5.7	1-family households	2,840	1,012,925
51 Information and cultural industries	100	1.8	3.1	Multi-family households	55	35,050
52 Finance and insurance	125	2.2	4.0	Non-family households	1,510	486,355
53 Real estate & rental/leasing	115	2.0	2.1	Median Income	\$ 20,322	\$ 22,095
54 Prof'sonal, scientific & tech. serv.	175	3.1	6.8	Males	\$ 30,065	\$ 28,976
55 Mgmt. of companies/ent'prises	-	-	0.1	Females	\$ 15,134	\$ 17,546
56 Admin+support, waste mgmnt srv.	240	4.2	4.0	Median Family Income	\$ 53,155	\$ 54,840
61 Educational services	440	7.7	6.9	Economic Families	2,950	1,044,850
62 Health care and social assistance	625	11.0	9.9	Incidence, low income	%	12.0 %
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	90	1.6	2.3	Unattached persons, 15+	1,680	576,825
72 Accommodation and food services	545	9.6	8.3	Incidence, low income	%	37.9 %
721 Accommodation services	130	2.3	1.9	Population in private hh.	10,585	3,785,270
722 Food services & drinking places	410	7.2	6.4	Incidence, low income	%	16.5 %
81 Other services (excl. public admin.)	245	4.3	4.9	Dwellings	4,405	1,534,335
91 Public administration	280	4.9	5.6	Owned	2,865	1,017,485
Agriculture, Food and Beverage	115	2.0	3.0	Rented	1,535	512,360
Fishing and Fish Processing	-	-	0.5	Average gross rent	\$ 563	\$ 750
Logging and Forest Products	320	5.6	4.7	Average owners' payments	\$ 725	\$ 904
Mining and Mineral Products	290	5.1	2.0	Avg. value, owned dwell.	\$ 95,507	\$ 230,645

Source: Statistics Canada. Notes: incomes are for 2000; rent/owner's payments are restricted to non-farm, non-reserve private dwellings.

Dawson Creek
City

Year	Values of Building Permits								Year
	Residential				Non-Residential		Total		
	Number of Units		Value \$'000		Value \$'000		Value \$'000		
	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	
2002	18	24,772	2,941	3,888,147	5,447	1,771,268	8,388	5,659,415	2002
2003	26	27,163	4,190	4,514,185	15,004	1,880,053	19,194	6,394,238	2003
2004	33	34,898	5,333	5,868,937	9,559	2,069,790	14,892	7,938,727	2004
2005	38	37,452	6,882	6,978,962	42,030	3,212,137	48,912	10,191,099	2005
2006	51	38,835	13,360	7,620,696	24,293	3,920,836	37,653	11,541,532	2006

Source: Statistics Canada

Note: Detailed non-residential permits data can be found on our Website: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca
A dash can indicate a nil report, a value of less than \$500, or non-reporting.

Year	Personal Taxation Statistics					Percent Change in Avg. Income	
	Total Income of Taxable Returns						
	Taxable Returns (#)		Average Income (\$)		% Change avg. income		
	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	
1998	6,930	1,915,220	36,317	38,398	n/a	n/a	
1999	6,740	1,937,520	36,643	39,758	0.9	3.5	
2000	6,650	1,928,560	38,401	42,121	4.8	5.9	
2001	6,920	1,981,530	39,560	42,095	3.0	-0.1	
2002	6,820	1,994,810	40,533	43,096	2.5	2.4	
2003	6,850	1,993,800	43,482	44,371	7.3	3.0	

Source of Total Income 2003				% Distribution, Total Income						
	Dawson Crk		BC							
	\$Thousands	% of Total	% of Total							
Employment	236,369	72.2	66.4							
Pension	32,587	10.0	13.0							
Investment	12,576	3.8	7.2							
Self-Employed	18,829	5.8	5.8							
Other	16,610	5.1	5.3							
Tax Exempt	10,205	3.1	2.2							
Total	327,180	100.0	100.0							

Source: Canada Revenue Agency. Areas are defined by postal codes and may not match municipal boundaries.

Age Group	Dependency on the Safety Net						Total Beneficiaries by Age Group, % (Basic BC Assistance & EI)	
	Percentage of Population by Age Receiving Benefits - September 2006							
	BC Basic* Income Assistance Recipients (%)		Employment Insurance Beneficiaries (%)		Total of BC Basic Income Assistance & EI Beneficiaries (%)			
	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC	Dawson Crk	BC		
Under 19	2.1	2.0						
19-24	1.7	1.2	4.2	1.9	5.7	3.1		
25-54	1.7	1.2	3.3	2.6	4.9	3.8		
55-64	1.1	0.5	3.0	1.2	4.1	1.7		
19-64	1.6	1.1	3.4	2.3	4.9	3.3		

* On temporary assistance only. Excluded are those on Continuous Assistance, aboriginals living on reserve, seniors/OAS, & children living with relatives.
Source: BC STATS (using administrative files from the BC Ministry of Employment & Income Assistance, and Human Resources & Social Development Canada)

Year	Business Formations and Failures							
	Incorporations		Bankruptcies					
	Number		Dawson Crk		Ft St John		BC	
	Dawson Crk	BC	Business	Consumer	Business	Consumer	Business	Consumer
2002	55	20,987	6	32	11	73	1,105	9,527
2003	77	22,531	7	27	13	92	1,002	9,394
2004	114	24,703	4	28	14	80	921	8,386
2005	180	30,937	0	29	9	72	786	8,179
2006	207	33,273	1	15	7	56	587	7,022

Source: BC Ministry of Finance

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy, Government of Canada

Incorporations are counted in municipality of the registered office address which may differ from the actual business location.

Note: Bankruptcy is counted where it is filed. Bankruptcy data is available for urban areas only.

Appendix C: Other Occupations by Gender as Listed in Question 7

7i-Occupation other	Total	Female	Male
Accountant	2	2	
Agriculture and Retail Service	1	0	1
Apartment/property manager	2	2	0
Attorney General	1	1	0
Banking/Financial	4	4	0
Bartender	2	2	0
Beauty Industry/Hairdresser	2	2	0
Bookkeeper	7	7	0
Business	2	2	0
Business Development	1	1	0
Caregiver	1	1	0
Carpenter & cabinet maker	4	0	3
Cashier	1	1	0
Childcare	2	2	0
City	1	1	0
Construction	4	2	2
Contractor	1	1	0
Cooking	1	1	0
Crossing guard	1	0	1
Day care	2	2	0
Day-Care Owner	1	1	0
Decorator	1	1	0
Disability	7	6	1
Dish washer	1	1	0
Education / health	4	3	1
Electrician	1	1	0
Employment consultant	1	0	1
Equipment Rental	1	0	1
Foster Parent	1	1	0
Government	14	12	2
Health services	4	3	1
Home care	1	1	0
Homemaker	19	19	0
Hospitality	2	2	0
Human services	1	1	0
Insurance	1	1	0
Ironworker	1	0	1
IT	2	0	2
Janitor	5	4	1
JCP Film Making	1	1	0
Law	1	0	1
Manage shelter + rooming complex	1	1	0
Management	1	1	0
Maternity leave	1	1	0
NA	12	8	4
Nawican Friendship Centre	1	1	0

Appendix C: Other Occupations by Gender as Listed in Question 7, Page 2.

7i-Occupation other	Total	Female	Male
Non-profit	1	1	0
Office work	17	16	1
Oil & gas (Second job)	15	6	9
Paving Company	1	0	1
Pharmacy Tech	1	1	0
Post office	1	1	0
Professional	2	1	1
RCMP	1	0	1
Receptionist	2	2	0
Recreation	3	2	1
Renovations	1	0	1
Research	1	1	0
Restaurant	1	0	1
Retail/Sales/Service	19	13	6
Road maintenance	1	0	1
Self employed	17	15	2
Sell weed	1	0	1
Social work	16	15	1
Student	6	3	3
Taxi driver	1	1	0
Teacher aide	1	1	0
Technology	3	2	1
Tradesman	1	0	1
Transport	3	1	2
Utility	1	0	1
Veterinarian	1	1	0
Volunteer work	2	1	1
Welder	1	0	1

Appendix D: Drug Use Summary by Occupation

Number	Total	Drug Use					NA	
		None	Some	Heavy	Marijuana only			
Occupation								
Agriculture	54	44	4	1	3	2		
Education/Health	204	183	4	1	11	5		
Forestry	28	23	1	1	2	1		
Gas/oil	98	76	9	3	6	4		
Other	206	175	14	2	13	2		
Retail/Sales/Service	238	197	10	4	21	6		
Retired	185	174	3	0	1	7		
Student	34	17	3	4	9	1		
Unemployed	44	29	9	3	0	3		
No Answer	35	15	2	0	1	17		
Totals	1126	933	59	19	67	48		
Percent down								
	Total	None	Some	Heavy	Marijuana only	NA		
Occupation								
Agriculture	5	5	7	5	4	4		
Education/Health	18	20	7	5	16	10		
Forestry	2	2	2	5	3	2		
Gas/oil	9	8	15	16	9	8		
Other	18	19	24	11	19	4		
Retail/Sales/Service	21	21	17	21	31	13		
Retired	16	19	5	0	1	15		
Student	3	2	5	21	13	2		
Unemployment	4	3	15	16	0	6		
No Answer	3	2	3	0	1	35		
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100		
Percent across								
	Total	None	Some	Heavy	Marijuana only	NA	Number	
Occupation								
Agriculture	100	81	7	2	6	4	54	
Education/Health	100	90	2	0	5	2	204	
Forestry	100	82	4	4	7	4	28	
Gas/oil	100	78	9	3	6	4	98	
Other	100	85	7	1	6	1	206	
Retail/Sales/Service	100	83	4	2	9	3	238	
Retired	100	94	2	0	1	4	185	
Student	100	50	9	12	26	3	34	
Unemployed	100	66	20	7	0	7	44	
No Answer	100	43	6	0	3	49	35	
Totals							1126	

In reading percent down we are saying for example that of the 19 reporting heavy drug use, 5 percent worked in forestry, 21 percent were students, etc.

In reading across we are saying of the 50 people who were students 12 percent used reported heavy use of drugs.

Appendix D: (Continued) Cocaine Use by Occupation

Occupation	Total	Cocaine Use				
		No	Some	Often	NA	
Agriculture	54	49	3	0	2	
Education/Health	204	196	0	1	7	
Forestry	28	24	2	1	1	
Gas/oil	98	85	3	6	4	
Other	206	195	5	3	3	
Retail/Sales/Service	238	224	6	2	6	
Retired	185	181	0	0	4	
Student	34	27	3	2	2	
Unemployed	44	33	6	5	0	
No Answer	35	16	1	0	18	
Totals	1126	1030	29	20	47	
Percent Down	Total	No	Some	Often	NA	
Agriculture	5	5	10	0	4	
Education / Health	18	19	0	5	15	
Forestry	2	2	7	5	2	
Gas/Oil	9	8	10	30	9	
Other	18	19	17	15	6	
Retail /Service/Sales	21	22	21	10	13	
Retired	16	18	0	0	9	
Student	3	3	10	10	4	
Unemployed	4	3	21	25	0	
NA	3	2	3	0	38	
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	
Percent Across	Number	No	Some	Often	NA	Total
Agriculture	54	91	6	0	4	100
Education / Health	204	96	0	0	3	100
Forestry	28	86	7	4	4	100
Gas/Oil	98	87	3	6	4	100
Other	206	95	2	1	1	100
Retail /Service/Sales	238	94	3	1	3	100
Retired	185	98	0	0	2	100
Student	34	79	9	6	6	100
Unemployed	44	75	14	11	0	100
NA	35	46	3	0	51	100
Totals	1126					

Appendix D: (Continued) Marijuana Use by Occupation

Numbers	Total	No	Some	Often	NA	
Agriculture	54	46	3	3	2	
Education/Health	204	188	9	4	3	
Forestry	28	23	3	1	1	
Gas/oil	98	78	11	7	2	
Other	207	178	17	9	3	
Retail/Sales/Service	238	201	18	14	5	
Retired	185	181	0	1	3	
Student	34	17	7	9	1	
Unemployed	44	32	1	9	2	
No Answer	34	15	2	0	17	
Totals	1126	959	71	57	39	
Percent Down	Total	No	Some	Often	NA	
Agriculture	5	5	4	5	5	
Education/Health	18	20	13	7	8	
Forestry	2	2	4	2	3	
Gas/oil	9	8	15	12	5	
Other	18	19	24	16	8	
Retail/Sales/Service	21	21	25	25	13	
Retired	16	19	0	2	8	
Students	3	2	10	16	3	
Unemployed	4	3	1	16	5	
No Answer	3	2	3	0	44	
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	
Percent Across	Number	No	Some	Often	NA	Total
Agriculture	54	85	6	6	4	100
Education/Health	204	92	4	2	1	100
Forestry	28	82	11	4	4	100
Gas/oil	98	80	11	7	2	100
Other	207	86	8	4	1	100
Retail/Sales/Service	238	84	8	6	2	100
Retired	185	98	0	1	2	100
Student	34	50	21	26	3	100
Unemployed	44	73	2	20	5	100
No Answer	34	44	6	0	50	100
Totals	1126					