

## The Fallout from CERB

Fay Moore, CLW, Kenora

Many Canadians are facing reductions in income and changes in support programs because they received Canada Emergency Response Benefits (CERB) in 2020. This has caused a financial crisis for some low-income Ontarians.

In response to the COVID-19 lock-downs, the federal government quickly rolled out CERB to assist with lost wages during the pandemic. They made it easy to apply, and the rules very confusing. The \$2,000 a month benefit was received by 8.9 million people across Canada.

The consequences of receiving the CERB benefit were not made clear to those who receive income tested benefits and services such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Social Assistance Benefits (Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works), Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) and Rent Geared to Income (RGI). After filing their 2020 income taxes, many faced the devastating surprise of having benefits reduced or cut.

Legal Clinics across Ontario have been receiving calls from CERB recipients who are now in financial crisis because of this fallout. Advocacy groups have been reaching out to the government asking for help in hopes of finding some relief for people struggling to keep up with their costs of living.

If you or someone you know has received CERB and now faces reductions in income or services, the legal clinic may be able to assist. It is important to contact us as soon as possible as there are deadlines imposed in some situations.

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# February 28, 2022 Renewal

Yvonne Treffers, CLW, Atikokan

Ontario residents have until February 28, 2022 to renew their driver's licences, ID cards, health cards, accessible parking permits and licence plate stickers that expired during the pandemic.

The province had lifted renewal requirements starting in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began but now those requirements are being put back into place.

The province will temporarily allow people to renew their driver's licences online, instead of requiring they do so in person.

Heavy commercial vehicle owners will need to renew their documentation by Dec. 31 2021 and novice drivers with class G1, G2, M1 or M2 on their licence will have until Dec. 31, 2022 to requalify or upgrade their identification.

If you don't renew your licences/documents by the deadline, you will be required to pay the renewal fee for both 2020 and 2021.

To renew a driver's licence online and have the products mailed, go to: [ServiceOntario.ca/DriversLicence](https://ServiceOntario.ca/DriversLicence).

To renew licence plate stickers online and have the products mailed, go to: [ServiceOntario.ca/PlateSticker](https://ServiceOntario.ca/PlateSticker).

To renew a driver's licence and health card together online, go to: [Ontario.ca/renew](https://Ontario.ca/renew).

Or go to your local Service Ontario location for assistance.



## Annual General Meeting Notice

**NOTICE to the GENERAL  
MEMBERSHIP of the Northwest  
Community Legal Clinic Association and the  
PUBLIC .**

**Our Annual General Meeting will be held  
Saturday November 6, 2021 @ 9:00am  
at La Place Rendez-Vous in Fort Frances.**

**Agenda**  
*Reports of Clinic Activities  
President's Report  
Treasurer's Report  
Executive Director's Report  
MOTION to accept 2020-2021 Auditor's Report  
Election of 2021-2022 Board of Directors  
Other Business*

~EVERYONE WELCOME~

# The Borrowing Cupboard

Rebekka DeCorte, 211 North/Support Staff, Atikokan

The Borrowing Cupboard is a program that operates in Kenora from its own office at the St. Joseph Medical Centre and provides gently used mobility and home care equipment to community members free of charge. The equipment includes but is not limited to wheel-chairs, walkers, transfer chairs, shower seats, raised toilet seats, crutches, canes and bath safety bars. It is available for loan on a temporary basis and the length of time can vary from a weekend to several months during rehabilitation/convalescing periods.

The program runs on volunteer efforts and accepts donations of cash or gently used mobility and home care equipment. A refundable deposit is required on all equipment but returned after equipment inspection is completed. To book needed equipment call 807-456-9500 or use the contact page on the website to reserve equipment and make arrangements for pick-up/drop-off.

## Wear Orange

**Both the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day take place on September 30th.**

**Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led grassroots commemorative day that honours the children who survived Indian Residential Schools and remembers those who did not.**

**This day relates to the experience of Phyllis Webstad, a Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation, on her first day of school, where she arrived dressed in a new orange shirt, which was taken from her. It is now a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations.**

**On September 30, we encourage all Canadians to wear orange to raise awareness of the very tragic legacy of residential schools, and to honour the thousands of Survivors.**

# KENORA MOVING FORWARD

## What we are working on

- Better access to public washrooms
- A care-site/cooling station for the summer months
- An afterhours place of belonging for the winter months
- Nourishing dinners (7 days a week) in central accessible locations
- Communication and partnerships
- Supportive rent-gearred-to-income housing
- Lived experience leadership and participation



[KENORAMOVINGFORWARD@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KENORAMOVINGFORWARD@GMAIL.COM)

## About Us

We are an informal, open group of community members and organizations concerned about homelessness and underlying issues of racism, poverty, mental health, and addictions in the Kenora area.

We team up and creatively use community resources to make things happen.

Coalition members and volunteers bring with them a wide range of connections, skills and experience. Our priorities are awareness, safe places of belonging and housing.

## What We've Done So Far

- Defeated the Loitering By-law proposed in 2020
- Hosted a 4 day sacred fire to gather community and listen to needs on the street
- Opened two warming spaces from 4-9 pm seven days a week over the winter months when other community services were closed
- Provided daily dinners and a 'Keeping it Cool' station from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Harbourfront, offering a safe and welcoming space with refreshments and respite from the heat
- Advocated and networked for more collaborative and effective services





## WHAT WE HEAR & WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

**If you just stop feeding and caring for “these people”, they will go somewhere else.** The majority of people we encounter on the street have neither the means nor anywhere else to go. Kenora is their home. Everyone has the right to live where they choose. Many have deep ties to the area. What we provide are small things that help make life a little more bearable—a safe, welcoming space for a few hours a day, with food and water.

**“These people” are a burden to the community.** When people are housed, supported, and connected they become healthier, more stable and contribute back to the community.

**“These people” choose to be on the street.** Most of the individuals we support have been on housing lists for many years - their homelessness is not due to a lack of trying. According to statistics kept by the Kenora District Services Board, Kenora has the most severe housing shortage in the district.

90% of the homeless population in Kenora are Indigenous people from our Treaty area. ‘Street people’ living with addictions, mental illness and trauma have been a grim reminder in Kenora for the past 70 years of the the complex and ongoing effects of colonization, residential schools, the child welfare system, poor health care, overrepresentation in the Canadian justice system and racism.

**“These people” have no respect; they litter and leave needles lying around.** Staff, volunteers and patrons do a walk-around cleanup before we leave in the evening. We see little evidence of needles or drug use in these safe spaces

**“These people” just abuse whatever you give them;** We have watched individuals we are supporting transcend from distrust and disrespect to stewardship and ownership of the safe spaces being provided.

**The presence of “these people” downtown discourages tourism.** We have had many tourists and residents stop by the Keeping It Cool site to say hello and ask about what we are doing, some express their appreciation and even donate. The City’s 2019 Harbourfront Business Development Plan recommends *Inclusivity and Embracing Anishinaabe & Metis Culture*.

**“These people are all addicts”.** It’s true that many people on the street have addictions and mental health issues. Other jurisdictions have seen remarkable success by ensuring that people experiencing homelessness have access to mental health services, safe injection sites and other harm reduction supports. Kenora is taking steps in this direction.

**Harm reduction doesn’t work for “these people”.** Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies aimed at reducing negative consequences of substance use. It recognizes that full abstinence can be an unrealistic goal in many circumstances. Harm reduction focuses on helping people stabilize their activities in as safe a way as possible. Until our community can provide adequate housing and addictions treatment, meeting them “where they are at,” offering safety and support, is critical and does work. We cannot resolve decades worth of trauma overnight, but we can start reducing the harmful impacts now.

You could look at it this way: We put on a lifejacket knowing that it will not solve or prevent a crash, but that it will reduce the harm of a severe incident. Harm reduction for those experiencing addiction is much the same. It could be the difference between life and death in a bad situation.





**Supporting individuals and our community  
by providing quality legal services.**

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**[www.NorthwestCommunityLegalClinic.ca](http://www.NorthwestCommunityLegalClinic.ca)**

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## Office Closures

Monday October 11th - Thanksgiving Day  
Thurs November 11th - Remembrance Day  
December 24th - reopening January 3rd

## Sub-Offices

We are not travelling to Red Lake and Ear Falls at this time. If you have any questions, please call our toll free number 1-800-403-4757.

# Healthy Smiles Ontario

Rebekka DeCorte, 211 North/Support Staff, Atikokan

Functions as a government-funded dental program that provides free preventive, routine, and emergency dental services for children and youth 17 years of age and younger from low-income households.

Services include;

- Visits to a licensed dental provider, such as a dentist or a dental hygienist
- Regular check-ups, cleanings, fillings, x-rays, scaling, and tooth extraction
- Urgent or emergency dental care

Check the website ([www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/dental/hso\\_phu.aspx#](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/dental/hso_phu.aspx#)) to find a Public Health Unit location to help find a dentist participating in the program.

**DISCLAIMER:** These articles provide information only and are not to be considered as legal advice. Content reflects the laws that were current at the time of publication and the law may have since changed. Consult your community legal clinic or legal representative for legal advice on your specific situation.



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