

July 21, 2023

City of London
Municipal Council
c/o Community and Protective Services Committee

Re: Rationale for Funding Request for Security for 602 Queens Avenue, London

Background of 602 Queens Ave:

602 Queens Avenue is operated by a collaboration of 4 agencies: St. Joes Café (through the Sisters of St. Joseph); Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC); Thames Valley Family Health Team; and London Cares Homeless Response Services. St. Joe's Café, RHAC and London Cares all have services and staff/volunteers on site. London Cares staff are on site over 20 hours per day including weekends and holidays, and RHAC and St. Joe's Café operate Monday to Friday with some evening and weekend activities. In total, there are approximately 78 staff on site in this location, plus more than 120 volunteers with various other community agency partnerships and vendors on site at various times. There are also many clients that access the site for services through RHAC and London Cares, as well as food security through St. Joe's Café.

Over the past few years, we have experienced a dramatic increase in homelessness, desperation and violence, and this spring was recognized as the highest level of desperation and aggression yet. The new Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response has been established and is moving quickly to address this crisis, yet both the services and the people experiencing homelessness are caught in the transition time, trying to manage the crisis as best we can until the new system can be stood up. On March 31, 2023, 70 beds that were available through the temporary winter response solution were closed. In April, we experienced the impact with as many as 50 people congregating on the front lawn to access basic needs (such as food security, bathrooms, showers, and laundry) and to get in from the elements for a period of time. It is well known that the many people currently experiencing homelessness do not have housing or access to indoor space and struggle to find a place to be. Over the Easter Weekend, the closure of most basic needs services across the community, for at least 48 hours left no access to food security or bathrooms. The level of aggression and frustration increased. With 50 people on the property it was well beyond what London Cares Outreach service could manage. Multiple calls were made to LPS, EMS over the long weekend and CIR by-law were unavailable. The following week 3 staff were assaulted. These circumstances created an unsafe situation for staff, volunteers, clients, and others accessing the building. The 4 partners met immediately to manage this situation and it was decided that we needed to implement security quickly to provide a safe workplace for all. This cost was beyond all our agencies' capacity, but creating safety was paramount or make the decision to stop providing service.. We also had concern for the neighbourhood.

As a result, we have continued with security and therefore the funding request you see presented to you. Of particular note, the security company we chose is familiar in working with this population and is well-trained. All the tents and people were cleared within 90 minutes the first night that security was in place. Our lease does not permit tents to be on the property.

Of note for those who access services:

- St Joe's Café: Approximately 60% of people are housed and providing food security helps them to remain in their housing.
- For the shared service space, approximately 80% are experiencing homelessness (including approximately 25% that would be restricted from other services).
- Shared services have supported 706 unique individuals with very basic human rights needs since mid-January 2023 to the end of June.

Although neighbours still have concerns, we are encouraged by other neighbour responses. The feedback we have had from neighbours, security, LPS and by-law are as follows:

Quotes from neighbours:

- *"It's so wonderful of you to have sent me this email. I love what you have done with the security detail. It has improved the whole area".*
- *"Having a clear and compassionate security presence around the clock is crucial for your organization. This allows the neighbourhood to see that you are accepting a responsibility for ensuring that things are looked after. It is very clear that once you brought the security team onto your property things started to improve."*

Security feedback:

Security engages with neighbours and passersby with an average of 10-12 compliments received per week with occasional complaints. The majority of community members appreciate the significant improvements in safety and concern.

During April 2023, there were approximately 35 calls to LPS and an additional 35 calls to EMS. Almost daily there was input into the CIR system asking for reinforcement in the removal of tents that would require both by-law and LPS. Since security has been on site they have been recognized and appreciated by LPS, by-law enforcement and EMS, indicating a significant reduction in the number of support calls required. Having security on site takes pressure off an already overtaxed policing and EMS service.

Although security cannot venture far off our property, their diligence has led to deterring criminal activity, such as human trafficking both on the property and in the immediately surrounding neighbourhood. When they observe suspicious activity, they call LPS. Having security on site also deters noise complaints, especially during the overnight hours. The security team is also trained with naloxone and has responded to overdoses both on the property and in proximity, which is saving lives.

With regards to needing 2 guards after regular business hours and on weekends, this is best practice and is a safety protocol. It is known that corporate security won't get out of their vehicle unless there are 2 security present and therefore considered a best practice. We also know that those who are unhoused and living on the streets often carry a weapon and travel in small groups for their safety so 2 guards are required.

Security is required after hours and on weekends and holidays as there continues to be engagements with people on the property. During the evening shift (4PM-12 AM) they average 30-35 interactions per shift, while overnight (between 12-8 AM) about 15 interactions, as well as providing safety for London Cares Outreach Staff to safely access the building and their vehicles.

For the level of activity and to support the safety of staff, volunteers and clients for 3 highly service-oriented organizations during the homelessness crisis, while the system transforms into the new Health and Homelessness Whole of Community Response, we request that the cost of security be provided until the new system gets stood up. We are proactively preventing more people moving into homelessness by providing food security, as well as providing very basic human rights needs for those who are unhoused and living on the streets. I have provided the latest data for the month of June for the 602 Queens shared service demonstrating the high usage of the services offered.

With warm regards,

Anne Armstrong
**London Cares Homeless
Response Services**



Martin McIntosh
**Regional HIV/AIDS
Connection**



Sister Margo Ritchie
**Sisters of St. Joseph
in Canada**



Mike McMahon
**Thames Valley Family
Health Team**

