

City of London
Community and Protective Services Committee
Chair, Councillor Elizabeth Pelosa

September 1, 2023

RE: Security Needs for London Cares Homeless Response Services

Over the past few years, the City of London has experienced a dramatic increase in homelessness putting significant pressure on an already strained system. This spring and summer, we have experienced the highest level of violence, aggression and desperation we have ever seen. The level of risk experienced by frontline staff is unprecedented.

London Cares operates programming in two brick and mortar locations at 602 Queens Ave and on Horton St. as well as Street Outreach throughout the city and in encampments. London Cares has experienced a significant increase of violence towards staff members including physical assaults from participants and neighbors in the community including pepper spray, bear mace, physical assaults and threats with weapons. This level of tension has created unsafe working conditions for staff; without the support of security, they will be forced to stop providing the services. Stopping these vital services would be a detriment to the individuals experiencing homelessness they support which prioritizes supporting those most marginalized, with the highest levels of acuity who are often restricted from other services within the community. Stopping these vital services will further increase the level of desperation on the streets, leading to an even higher increase of escalation and violence.

From January 16 2023 to August 30 2023, the London Cares Resting Space has supported 752 unique individuals and the service at 602 Queens St has supported 810 unique individuals. Approximately 25% of these individuals are restricted from other services in the community.

Having security available not only protects both staff and clients but also has led to deterring criminal activity, both on the property and in the immediately surrounding neighbourhood and also reduces noise complaints especially in the overnight hours. Being trained in trauma informed service delivery and naloxone has saved lives.

Without the support of security, vital services will be lost at a time when London is at the peak of a crisis and working diligently to transform to the new Health and Homelessness whole of Community Response. As the new system comes online, the need for protective services will decrease. Until then we believe it is essential to continue to protect the staff, the clientele and reduce the criminal activity in the surrounding neighbourhood for the betterment of all.



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