

From: Vicki Van Linden

Sent: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 12:46 AM

To: Council Agenda <councilagenda@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please include on October 5th council agenda regarding Homeless Hubs

Note: I give permission for my letter to be displayed in the public agenda.

Dear Members of Council:

I strongly urge you to approve the much needed transitional housing for women at the location of the former Lighthouse Inn on Fanshawe Park Road.

This is a moment of truth for our community. We all know that we have an urgent crisis involving homelessness exacerbated by addiction, mental illness and poverty. There has been more than enough discussion and it's time to move ahead with speed and resolve.

Of course dealing with this long-standing crisis will cost money. Of course more services will need to be provided, and this will mean that some Londoners will have new services located near them. Of course there will be push back. Nimbyism is always an issue. Push back is no surprise. I urge you all to stand firm against the voices of Nimbyism, to show that our fine words about concern for homeless citizens will be backed up with action.

Let's note that the Fanshawe Park Road location will be **transitional housing for a relatively small number of women who will be referred to the program**. They will be established residents of the location, as this hub will not be a drop-in offering respite beds. This is an extremely significant detail.

This location will serve specific women who have been approved for the program and have been assigned housing there. They will have indoor areas available to them at all times of the day, and will not need to roam the streets while they wait for shelter beds to open in the evening as takes place around traditional shelters. The women being assisted will have several layers of support provided at the hub, including mental health support.

There is no reason to believe that unhoused people who have not been assigned to this location will travel to Fanshawe Park Road once it's understood that this is not a respite shelter, and that no drop-in services will be provided there. I understand that business owners on Richmond Row and downtown have encountered problems with the behaviours displayed by some unhoused people who do not have access to 24 hour support. There is nothing in the plan for the transitional housing for women at the former Lighthouse Inn that would suggest that this kind of activity will take place at that hub location.

There has been opposition to this location from some in the surrounding community of the former Lighthouse Inn. Homes in that area do cost more, and residents therefore pay more taxes. This surely does not mean that they should be exempted from participating in the 'Whole of Community' solution to homelessness. It should not need to be stated that all London citizens deserve equal respect and consideration, regardless of how much we pay for housing, or even if some have no housing at all.

Waiting for people who are fortunate to get used to a new idea means that those who are extremely unfortunate will wait even longer for the basic relief of a reliable bed. Let's keep in mind who it is who is truly at risk, and who it is that experiences daily distress and hardship. It's the unhoused.

The belief that 'housing is a human right' must be defended. I urge you to lead our community with courage and compassion and vote to move all five of the proposed hubs forward.

Respectfully yours,
Vicki Van Linden
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