

October 3, 2023 | RE: Proposed HUBS Plan, London City Council

Please circulate and attach to agenda

I am writing to express my unequivocal support for London's hubs plan. The commitment to our city's first three hubs, run by experts at Atlohsa, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, and CMHA, represents a valuable and evidence-based approach to wrap-around and city-wide support for London's most vulnerable citizens. More importantly, they signify a more kind and ethical way of working with and for our homeless neighbours in order to combat stigma while providing life-improving and life-saving essential services, including housing, health care, and other crucial resources.

As a longtime London citizen, I am deeply concerned about the harmful and inflammatory rhetoric leveled against both the organizations providing these much-needed hubs and essential services, as well as the people who require them and have been ignored for too long. There are many on social media and in neighborhoods - including public figures - who are spreading fear about the people who will rely on these hubs as a tactic to prevent these projects from proceeding.¹ Drawing on common myths about homeless people as necessarily violent, drug abusing criminals deprives them of their humanity and does not paint an accurate picture of the people for whom the housing crisis has threatened their quality of life and their survival.² Meanwhile, the binary representation of this population as being in opposition to the families and businesses in neighborhoods (and on busy city thoroughfares) ignores the reality that our homeless neighbors have families. They are human. And they have needs in an economic and social climate that would write them off. That would corral them into only specific neighborhoods. That would - as some people prefer - force them into violating and ineffective coercive treatment programs and/or criminalize them for living a reality that is borne about by systemic, societal, and policy failures at all levels. I reject this polarization and misinformation and insist that we move forward ethically and with care. All people deserve housing. All people deserve access to robust wrap-around services. All people deserve to be seen as whole people. The hubs are the start of a long-overdue movement to acknowledge the people in our city who have, for far too long, been sleeping on the street. Finally, the hubs plan aligns with Canada's National Housing Strategy, which calls for "advancing the right to housing," "seeking...input from voices who know first-hand what it's like not to have a home," and "creating livable communities."³

As @mattixv on Twitter so clearly notes, "there is a difference between not wanting people to be homeless and not wanting to have to see people who are homeless." It is time to ask ourselves which of these very different positions we want to espouse? I am writing today to say that the hub at 705 Fanshawe Park Road West, which will serve women and children, should be given the green light. To not go ahead with this project will paint a picture of a city and its citizens that is not aligned with the London that I would like us to be - one that leads by compassion, evidence, and community, instead of fear, misinformation, and rhetorical violence.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Mandy Penney (she/her)

Ward 14

¹ For more on the most prevalent myths about people who are homeless, see "Myths about Homelessness." *Calgary Homeless Foundation*.

<https://www.calgaryhomeless.com/discover-learn/learn-about-homelessness/homelessness-in-calgary/myths-about-homelessness/>

² For the real and primary causes of homelessness, see "Causes of Homelessness." *Homeless Hub*.
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/causes-homelessness>

³ For more on Canada's National Housing Strategy, see "What is the Strategy?"
<https://www.placetocallhome.ca/what-is-the-strategy>