

October 4, 2023 | RE: Proposed HUBS Plan, London City Council

Please circulate and attach to the 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 to combat stigma while providing life-improving and life-saving essential services, including housing, health care, and other crucial resources.

I am deeply concerned about the harmful and inflammatory rhetoric levelled against the organizations providing these much-needed hubs and essential services and the people who require them and have been ignored for too long. Some outspoken people are spreading fear about those who will rely on these hubs as a tactic to prevent these projects from proceeding. 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. Meanwhile, the binary representation of this population as opposed to the families and businesses in neighbourhoods (and on busy city thoroughfares) ignores the reality that our homeless neighbours have families.

People experiencing homelessness and addiction are human. They have needs in an economic and social climate that would write them off. That would corral them into only specific neighbourhoods. 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."

I am writing today to support the proposed hub locations around the city. Failing to move forward 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.

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