



February 2, 2024

City of London
Municipal Council
C/O Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

RE: Staff Report Housing Stability Services

I am writing to bring to your attention the invaluable work undertaken by Unity Project, an organization that has been supporting individuals experiencing homelessness in London for the past 22 years. As an active and contributing member of our community, Unity Project has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to providing emergency shelter, supportive housing, housing stability, and related supports to individuals of all genders facing homelessness in our community.

Unity Project has consistently been a leader in implementing best practices for service delivery, with a focus on the overarching goals of housing and stability for all who seek refuge in its services. Despite being an effective, respected and vital organization in our community, Unity Project has faced extraordinary challenges due to chronic underfunding throughout its history.

Currently operating on an annual budget of just over \$2,000,000 for emergency shelter services, Unity Project has reached its maximum capacity for fundraising, amounting to nearly \$600,000 per year to sustain basic operations (\$800,000 if we do not receive funding for food costs previously covered through donations). The burden of increasing this already significant amount to address rising costs associated with staffing, operations, and the loss of significant revenues is proving untenable, particularly in the current challenging economic climate where donors are struggling to contribute as they once did.

In consideration of these circumstances, Unity Project seeks increased annual funding in the amount of \$450,000 in year one and \$500,000 in year two. The allocation of these funds would serve the following critical purposes:

1. **Reducing Fundraising Pressure:** Alleviate the strain on Unity Project's already stretched fundraising capacity.
2. **Covering Food Expenses:** A generous donor has covered the food expenses for this fiscal year in the amount of \$200,000. A portion of the requested funds would ensure the continued coverage of these essential costs.
3. **Offsetting Event Loss:** A \$50,000 annual contribution from a third-party event, which has been a consistent supporter, will no longer be available. A portion of this request is intended to mitigate the loss of this crucial funding source.

4. **Competitive Staff Wages:** Enable Unity Project to increase wages for staff to more equitable and competitive rates, ensuring a dedicated and motivated team.
5. **Future Cost Increases:** A modest increase in funding for the following year will help cover rising costs and further alleviate fundraising pressures.
6. **Stability for Capital Campaign:** Provide stability to day-to-day operations, allowing Unity Project to focus on an upcoming capital campaign for a facility on recently purchased property.

We believe that supporting Unity Project aligns with the City Council's commitment to addressing homelessness and ensuring the well-being of all community members. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this funding request and the positive impact it will have on the vital services Unity Project provides to those in need.

Sincerely,



Chuck Lazenby
Executive Director
Unity Project