

Budget Committee, Mayor Josh Morgan, and London City Council  
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To the Budget Committee, Mayor Josh Morgan, and London City Council,

Please note this letter is for the Public Participation Meeting regarding the City of London's Multi-Year Budget for 2024-2027. I consent to the inclusion of this letter in the public agenda. This letter indicates my request for the Mayor's Multi-Year Budget to reallocate funding from the inflated police budget to further fund public transit, libraries, the arts, public washrooms, and affordable housing to develop a strong and vibrant community.

Firstly, as a constituent of London, ON who is unable to drive, I primarily use public transit as a means of mobility in the city, however the lack of frequency of buses on route result in long wait times, upwards of an hour for a bus to arrive at a stop. This results in me arriving late to destinations, missing transfer buses, or entirely opting out of transit. As London expands in density, in order for it to be a destination of choice, we need well-running transit.

Secondly, as a working individual, creative, and community member, I request the council and mayor to consider allocating more funding to the London Public Library. The library exists as an essential third space, providing access to equipment and programs which I cannot utilize elsewhere, including but not limited to printers, Adobe programs, button makers, and research materials. As a working visual artist in this city, funding the London Public Library would result in myself being able to work with them more often, as they would be equipped to pay CARFAC recommended artist fees. Councillor Shawn Lewis included in his previous email response to me that *"In fact, the library increases in the Mayor's budget are the largest increases they've ever received in the past 15 years"*. To include this fact is incredibly disappointing when two library branches (Carson and Glanworth) are at risk of permanent closure, and multiple locations experiencing leaks due to poor infrastructure translates that **the libraries budget is not enough, and has actively not been enough for years.**

To further speak to visual arts funding, I would find it beneficial to see more funding allocated to the London Arts Council's Community Investment Arts Program (CAIP). As a past recipient of CAIP, receiving this funding means I am able to thoughtfully develop and deliver creative artwork / visual art experiences in the city, and be paid a living wage as an artist. Properly funding this programming would communicate to me that the city sees value in the arts, and artists being in London, which currently I do not feel is true; I believe this is a common reason why many creatives move onto other cities where more funding opportunities are available.

I additionally speak to the request to fund public washrooms in order to have longer operational hours at the current public washroom facilities and/or reopen and maintain existing public washrooms around the city. I personally have experienced unhoused people utilizing my home's doorway and studio's doorway as public washrooms on numerous occasions, and I do not feel disdain towards them as there are so few open public washroom facilities to use in the city. It is painfully clear the city only includes unhoused community members as an afterthought in city planning. In addition to public washrooms, I encourage

the city to allocate more funding to low-income housing in order to provide support and safety for our most marginalized residents.

Lastly, I advocate for and request that city council votes NO on the current police budget increase. I firmly believe that redirecting even a fraction of the increase to other essential services would benefit our community significantly more than policing the public. I do not support the city including an increase to fund the London Police Services training campus. I feel doubtful of how that money is appropriately allocated, seeing as the London Police Services recently participated in a five-day SWAT competition in Dubai. It is incredibly unfortunate that the city prioritizes the militarization of our police force, when it is statistically proven that police cause more harm to communities than safety. Additionally, to speak specifically to what Shawn Lewis also included in his email to me: *"We have code 3 911 calls that are taking up to 4 days to respond to. Imagine for a moment you were sexually assaulted, but the person who assaulted you is no longer around. You call the police, and the response is "we will send an officer when we can" and that officer shows up 4 days later...that's a reality in London currently"*; Unfortunately most female-presenting people, including myself do not need to "imagine" being sexually assaulted, according to the Government of Canada *"1 in 3 women experienced unwanted sexual behavior in public which can include unwanted sexual attention or unwanted physical contact"*. Additionally, sexual assault is more often committed by someone the victim already knows, rather than a stranger. And people who have experienced sexual assault commonly do not report it to the police because ***They do not trust the police or the criminal justice system: the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls notes that "families and survivors talked frankly about their reasons for not reporting violence to the police or not reaching out to the criminal justice system – even in cases where there had been severe acts of violence perpetrated against them" (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019)***. I do not think Shawn's point is appropriate in advocating for increasing funding to the police, if anything it communicates that **police are incredibly substandard first responders**. I would much rather see funding allocated to mental & physical health support organizations.

I sincerely hope that the Budget Committee, Mayor Josh Morgan, and London City Council will see how funding various community services including public transit, libraries, the arts, public washrooms, and affordable housing can lead to supporting the wellbeing and safety of Londoners, and in turn a well-run city.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sincerely,

Monica Peeff