

Submission to the Public Participation Meeting - 2024 to 2027 Multi-Year Budget.  
February 27, 2024.

My name is Norah Fraser and I am a co-chair of the Council of Canadians London Chapter.

The Council of Canadians is a national organization. We campaign for universal public pharmacare. We want the federal government to build affordable housing. We agree that federal tax revenues should be shared more fairly with municipalities.

On the provincial level we protest against Bill 23, the "More Homes Built Faster" Act that has added to the city's expenses. We work with the Ontario Health Coalition for full funding of public health care. We agree that ODSP rates should be doubled. Certainly the province should do more to address the housing and homelessness emergency.

You may know that I spoke at a press conference about public transit. We are encouraged that you voted for London Transit to get the funding for added service hours. That will help current and future transit users and the climate.

Of course we are not happy that the money for transit was then taken from the Climate Emergency Action Plan reserve fund. As climate change continues to affect our city we will need more money in the reserve fund for adaptation and mitigation in the near future. As Brendon Samuels explained so well, spending less now will cost more later.

But today I want to draw your attention to a really bizarre moment in the budget debate, and that is the discussion of Business Case P-16, the Housing Stability Bank Expansion.

A few years ago our Blue Community committee worked with city staff and asked Council to declare London a Blue Community. One of the commitments of a Blue Community is to ensure that nobody's municipal tap water is cut off because of inability to pay their utility bill. London was able to make that commitment because we have the Housing Stability Bank.

As the draft Multi-Year Budget explains, the Housing Stability Bank program currently supports approximately 1,900 individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. The bank helps them to secure permanent housing and to stay housed, through the provision of grants and interest free loans to cover the cost of rent, and to pay utility arrears.

Of all the business cases that address housing and homelessness, surely this is the one that most immediately and effectively prevents people from being forced from their homes by unaffordable expenses. They can get a loan or a grant from the Housing Stability Bank. The Bank needs more funding so it can help more people. I thought it would be obvious that councillors who are worried about people losing their homes would vote to fund this program.

But to my astonishment I heard Councillor Lewis say this. "Yes another \$700,000 expansion would help more people, but how many more people does that added 0.1% tax hike add to the back of the line for help? It's an infinite feedback loop," he said.

The correct answer to the question is, "none". Business Case P-16 would add **\$3.13 per year** to the average residential tax bill. Nobody is likely to be driven into homelessness, and need the help of the Housing Stability Bank, because of a \$3.13 increase in taxes. The feedback loop in this case is not "infinite". It stops when we help our neighbours.

But a majority of councillors apparently didn't question the "infinite feedback loop" fantasy. With the best of intentions and not enough time to look at the actual numbers, they voted against funding P-16. The Housing Stability Bank will not have enough funds to meet the needs of some Londoners who are in fact facing the possibility of homelessness.

Mayor Morgan, please consider raising our taxes by an average \$3.13 a year, so that the Housing Stability Bank will have enough funds to help more Londoners who are at risk of homelessness. I think we can afford it.

Thank you.

Business Case P-16 would add **\$3.13 per year** to the average residential property tax bill

Business Case #	P-16	Housing Stability Bank Expansion	
Strategic Area of Focus	Housing and Homelessness	Service	Housing Stability Services
Operating Expenditure	\$2,800,000	Capital Expenditure	\$0
Non-Tax Levy Revenue	\$0	Total 2028-2033 Capital Expenditure	\$0
Net Tax Levy Required	\$2,800,000	Capital Sources of Financing	N/A
Average Annual Tax Levy Impact %	0.02%	Average Annual Taxpayer Impact (Dollars)	<b>\$3.13</b>

The Housing Stability Bank (HSB) program supports approximately 1,900 individuals and families in London who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness to secure permanent housing, to stay housed through the provision of grants and interest free loans covering the cost of rental and utility arrears for those at risk of losing their housing due to these arrears. This business case is requesting additional investment to increase the number of households accessing the HSB, offset the reduction in loan repayments to the HSB, as well as to offset the increase in rental and living costs over the past few years.

As Councillor Lewis later posted on Facebook, he speculated during the debate on P-16 that **adding 0.1% to the tax bill might create more need for help from the bank in an "infinite feedback loop"**. Council voted not to fund P-16.

#### Shawn Lewis, London Politics's Post

hockey for example) and more belt tightening to come. I had to point out in debate on the Housing Stability Bank expansion, "yes another \$700,000 expansion would help more people, but how many more people does that added 0.1% tax hike add to the back of the line for help? It's an infinite feedback loop".

(Facebook Feb 19, 2024)