

Members of London City Council;

Choosing to volunteer with 519 Pursuit was about recognizing the need to help the vulnerable people. It is about human connection and justice. I felt a gap in the system and a call to step in, even in a small way. I noticed our friends on the streets, the increase in encampments, the increased drug use in open and public places. A cry for help. I witnessed their attempt to survive in a city where behavior against our fellow human beings was heartbreaking.

For our team its about respect for fellow human beings and letting them know that they matter. We see them. Learning about their stories, trying to offer solutions, connecting them with agencies, or even with places they can go to get something to eat, a place to get warm for a while.

There are so many experiences that stay with me; finding a gentlemen in a collapsed tent freezing to death. People in doorways crying because they are so cold, with no shelters open as it is **only** -15 c. Friends constantly being moved from one place to another, because residents don't want them living in their neighborhoods or in the surrounding area.

Consistent outreach for the individuals we serve, help them with needs that are currently unmet. Food, hygiene, warmth and safety are a daily struggle for them. Some feel isolated and alone. Taking time to connect with them and let them know we are here goes a long way to help those with depression, mental illness or maybe just loneliness. We develop a connection with them and they with us. They need to know we care.

I encourage you to join us on one of our routes to witness first hand the environment they are living in and the atrocity that we continue to let go on in our city.

Our work at 519 Pursuit needs to continue because without it, many people will have nothing to fall back on. This will increase Emergency services as basic care, wellness checks, etc.. Early intervention will go unnoticed. Minor health problems will become major. Police services will increase as there will likely an increase in crime because their need for food, clothing and resources will not be provided for them.

A healthy society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable. How do we treat ours?

Please consider a one-year contract extension through the reserve social services fund. Our friends depend on it. Our city has an obligation to our community for all our citizens.

For my friends who don't have a voice, I will speak for them.

Thank you for your attention:

Margaret Smith