

I'm writing in regard to item 4.2 Report Back: Basic Needs and Pathway Options Feasibility of Contract Extension - 519Pursuit Umbrella Relief Programs Inc., and ask that this Committee votes in favour of funding through March 31, 2027.

I resent that I have to spend time urging politicians and City employees to fund outreach teams, in the midst of a deepening homelessness crisis. I resent that I need to remind you all that at least 25 unhoused people have died in this city since November 2025, and none of you are mourning them. You know who mourns them? Outreach teams. You know who often finds folks dead or in need of life-saving care? Outreach teams. At 519 Pursuit, most of the team are volunteers. They see the need and want to help - they're not asking for any wages, they're definitely not asking for a 35% pay increase, like London City Council voted for themselves.

Outreach workers are under no illusion that they're saving lives out there - they are a witness and a support; a friendly face - sometimes the only people our unhoused people may speak with that day - providing one meal and one bottle of water for 24 hours. These staff & volunteers also provide connections for other services and resources, including making phone calls with folks living without a cell phone, and support our unhoused neighbours to help adhere to by-law notices. And, if you remove those witnesses and those supports, what happens?

It is shameful that 519 Pursuit and its supporters are begging for a few hundred thousand dollars when the City just assessed that it would receive \$20M in new taxes, and from that gave another \$3.7M to London Police Services. These choices show us clearly where your priorities are. You won't fund these crucial, band-aid solutions, never mind take real action to eliminate homelessness. I see that there is endless funding for criminalizing the poorest of our neighbours, while the provincial government has defunded overdose prevention sites, like CarePoint here in London - life-saving services. I see my city councillor trying to block the availability of needle exchange and clean, drug paraphernalia which is basic healthcare, backed by three decades of research, the elimination of which will kick-off a crisis of new HIV and Hepatitis C infections, which are costly and deadly. I understand that by eliminating budgets to provide basic healthcare, as well as defunding outreach teams who help our unhoused neighbours meet their basic needs - their human rights - it means these folks will be pushed to break the law to eat, to survive. The City of London is defunding shelters and outreach teams like 519 Pursuit - who help provide basic care - to replace them with CiR, who provide incarceration.

I see all levels of government defunding social services, and violating human rights, in order to fund new jails and to militarize local police forces. I see you, and I am disgusted.

I urge you to vote yes to item 4.2.

With all my heart,

Bernice

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