

To: The Members of City Council
London, Ontario

Greetings,

From time to time something happens which so grabs our attention and concern that it is necessary to speak, point out those concerns and urge a change in direction on the part of those charged with the responsibility of making decisions for our city.

The fact that in our western society there is a distinction between the state and faith communities enables the faith communities and individuals within those faith communities to respond to the actions of government. Both as a collective of tax payers and as a body of people who provide valuable service to the communities in which we find ourselves we are stakeholders in the life, vision and management of our city.

As members of the electorate, we have the duty to remind our elected officials when we believe that they have acted in ways that fail to serve our best interests both in the short and the long term.

In this context then we wish to express our deep concern for the decision recently taken to remove one million dollars from reserves designated for affordable housing. Specifically we are concerned that:

- While possibly creating short term solutions long term solutions are being put off with no guarantee that they will ever be accomplished;
- This will lengthen the wait time for those on the list for affordable housing in a time when more and more citizens of London are experiencing difficult times;
- That the lengthening of wait times and the shift from permanent to temporary housing will in fact cost the tax payer more in the long run
- That private sector organizations already picking up much of the work that the city is unable to provide will now be additionally burdened in a number of ways;
- That these additional burdens on private sector organizations may, in tight economic times, cause some of them to close and increase the number of people not being supported in our city.
- The transition from permanent to transitional affordable housing will lengthen the wait time when we should be seeking to reduce it.

We are concerned that in an apparent attempt to maintain a 0% tax increase the quality of life in our city has been reduced. While some of the services cut are ones that provide an inconvenience and with a little sacrifice could be accepted, cuts and changes to affordable housing do more than inconvenience families who are struggling and in transition. The trickle-down effect has the potential to impact those moving off the streets, the mentally ill, those on marginal incomes. Our organization which deals with these population groups on a daily basis finds itself concerned about what the next cut will be affecting the vulnerable in our city for the sake of political gain.

As intelligent people we fully realize that a politician can never make a 'promise'. All that anyone can state is their 'intention – all things being equal' to do something. A 0% tax freeze may have been possible, all things being equal. But all things are not equal and in our opinion a 0.3% increase was more than acceptably close to the stated intention. To then cut one million dollars from reserves intended to serve some of the more vulnerable families in our city sent the unfortunate message that political promises are more important than people and the quality of life of many.

We therefore strongly urge you to vote to reinstate the one million dollars to reserves for affordable housing and rethink the change in direction from permanent to temporary housing as a policy. If it mean a tax increase of 0.3% we will be the first to gladly pay.

The Rev'd Raemond Fletcher – rector
Pat Mitchell – warden
Dr. Regna Darnell – warden
On behalf of the people of Bishop Cronyn Memorial Church, London