

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON MAY 20, 2015
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	UPDATE ON RESPONSES TO UNSAFE HOUSING CONDITIONS OF VULNERABLE PERSONS

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Housing, Social Services, and Dearness Home, the following update report on responses to unsafe housing conditions of vulnerable persons **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

N/A

BACKGROUND

The provision of safe accommodation is important for all members of our community, especially for those who may be living in vulnerable health and housing conditions. The work of the municipality and community partners in providing supports to address homelessness, to create and maintain supportive housing options and to support individuals and families in advocating for safe accommodation continues to be a priority activity.

Over the past number of years, considerable attention has been paid to supporting the housing needs of vulnerable populations by a variety of service agencies and sectors that provide support. These include actions by agencies that provide in-home services, increased efforts at co-ordinating housing supports, and more focused attention on housing standards and safety.

On November 3, 2014, a fatal fire at 1451 Oxford Street heightened attention to the variety of housing, support, and service considerations that exist within our community, especially as they relate to persons living in poverty and with complex health related vulnerability. Prior to the fire, tenants in this building purchased and received supports for daily living (meals, assistance with medication) from a third party operator. After the fire, actions were taken to provide assistance to those impacted as well as to address safety issues both at the affected property and other locations across the city.

Initial City Response Activities:

- **Property** – On November 5th, the London Fire Department (LFD) issued an “Order to Close” the Oxford Street property until such time as a number of Fire Code violations were remedied.

LFD inspections have resulted in a total of 26 charges against the owner and the operator.

- **Investigated “Properties of Concern”** – LFD in concert with by-law officers and homelessness prevention staff have developed a list of “properties of concern.”

Inspectors from the LFD have conducted inspections of these “properties” and have taken action where necessary.



- **Public Education** – LFD have attended several community facilities, including the Men’s Mission, the Salvation Army Centre of Hope and Rotholme Family and Children’s Shelter, providing fire safety messaging.

They have established a partnership with the London Police, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams and Meals on Wheels to ensure they are identifying and reporting any fire hazards in properties to which they may enter.

LFD have arranged for meetings with other community agencies such as Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) and Middlesex-London Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to further develop these partnerships.

- **Community Discussions** - Civic Administration brought together key community stakeholders in April under the leadership of the City Manager. The group including the hospitals, the Southwest Local Health Integration Network (SW-LHIN), the CCAC, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Middlesex, the ACT team, Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT) to explore remedies and directions.
- **Council Resolution** – On February 24, 2015, Municipal Council received the 2nd Report of the London Housing Advisory Committee and directed that the following actions be taken with respect to licensing and policy considerations related to the operation and management of group homes:
 - i) the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to provide a presentation to the London Housing Advisory Committee with respect to the current Business Licensing By-laws and their enforcement;
 - ii) the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to consider licensing and policy inclusions related to the operation and management of group homes in the by-law review currently underway, including the best practices of other municipalities with respect to this matter; and,
 - iii) the Mayor BE REQUESTED to submit a letter to both the Provincial and Federal Governments addressing concerns and encouraging additional support and regulations with respect to the support needs of individuals in the community with mental health issues and financial limitations.

Establishing a Community Working Group:

In response to Council’s resolution and to the above noted activities and community discussions, City staff have established a Community Working Group on the Safety of Vulnerable Persons.

Working Group Membership:

The Community Working Group will work together to understand the nature of issues of unsafe housing for vulnerable persons. The initial group includes representatives of the following agencies and networks:

- Public Health (Middlesex London Health Unit);
- City Service Areas (Fire, Bylaw, Housing, Homeless Prevention);
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)-Middlesex;
- London Police Services;
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT);
- Hospital - Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team;
- Local Health Integration Network (SW-LHIN);
- South West Community Care Access Centre;
- London CAREs;
- Neighbourhood Legal Services;
- Private Landlords/Property Managers (LPMA);
- Social/Public Housing (London Middlesex Housing Corporation);
- Emergency Shelters and Supports (Salvation Army);
- Community Homeless Prevention and Housing Advisory Networks;
 - London Housing Advisory Committee and
 - London Homeless Coalition.



Working Group Strategy:

Although the issue of The Oxford Street fire brought specific attention to the existence of unregulated supports to congregate living; the city and agency experience has identified similar concerns with people potentially living in a variety of vulnerable and unsafe conditions.

In order to address this issue in a broader and more holistic manner, the intended approach of the Community Working Group will not be limited to licensing activities but rather will look more broadly at situations and supports to vulnerable persons living independently (i.e. outside of supportive housing services of a licensed agency) within our communities.

Goal Statement: Creating a sustainable community-based response to support the safe housing conditions of vulnerable persons living independently in our communities.

Outcome Focus: Increasing safe housing conditions for vulnerable persons.

Approach: Establish a Community Strategy and Sustainable Action Plan

This work will be inclusive of Council's direction to consider licensing and policy inclusions related to the operation and management of group homes within the existing by-law review. It will also be inclusive of recommendations for advocacy to other orders of government for changes that fall within their jurisdiction and control.

Draft Community Framework:

The initial meeting of the Community Working Group held May 7, 2015 included informal discussion exploring existing services, strengths, and gaps that will be mapped within a community framework reflecting activities and needs within the following five areas:

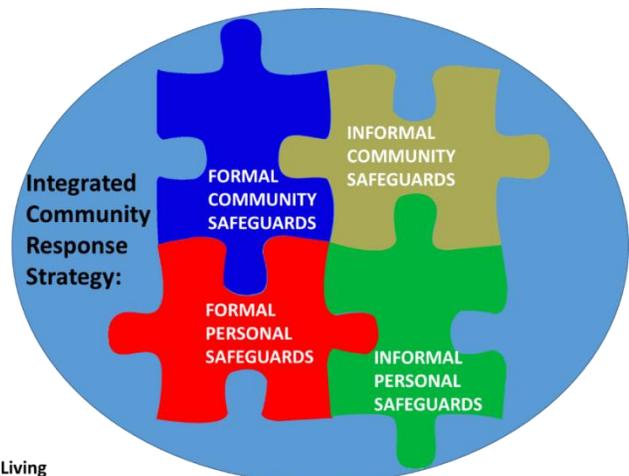
Formal Community Safeguards: These include laws, regulations, and standards that exist or that may be required related to increasing the safety and reducing the vulnerability of populations at risk.

Informal Community Safeguards: These include agency protocols, neighbourhood-based practices and resources and supports to reduce vulnerable living conditions for target populations.

Formal Personal Safeguards: These include laws and practices related to intervention and individualized support plans for persons or households at risk.

Informal Personal Safeguards: These include self-care practices, safety devices, and resources to support individual tenants, neighbours, families, and friends in their awareness and support of safe living conditions.

Integrated Community Response: The integrated community response approach strives to create the “backbone” structure of aligned agencies and partners to focus on project management, continuous improvement, and sustainability of the goals.



Borrowed from BC Community Living

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Terms of Reference:

The initial group will be responsible for guiding work towards a community action plan which will include key actions, timelines and required resources.

The group team may establish work teams with technical expertise from other community resources to work on specific actions. This will include the perspectives of individual tenants, families, friends, and neighbours.

The group will also explore a deeper understanding of existing by-laws, standards, licensing requirements, and regulations that already govern the protection of vulnerable persons and address the need for safe living conditions.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no current budget or financial impact with this report.

CONCLUSION

The draft timelines include a series of community working group meetings leading to an action plan which will be presented to the Community and Protective Services Committee by fall 2015.

The action plan will highlight priorities, advocacy strategies, new requirements, and associated timelines and goals.

These activities will be further aligned within Council's Strategic Direction under "Strengthening Our Community through Caring and Compassionate Services" as this work directly contributes to the goals of:

3A "Eliminate barriers for individuals facing poverty, mental health, and addictions and help them find pathways to be successful"; and

3B "Working with community agencies to help tenants keep their existing affordable housing and avoid homelessness".

Acknowledgments:

This report has relied on the contributions of numerous community advocates, agencies, and individuals who have directly and indirectly provided their comments, interests, and concerns to city staff and other community work group members.

City staff are grateful for the support and engagement of the members of community work group.

PREPARED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
STEPHEN GIUSTIZIA MANAGER, HOUSING SERVICES	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND DEARNESS HOME

- c. Community Work Group Members
London Homeless Coalition
London Housing Advisory Committee