

January 6, 2016

London City Council, Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, London Police Services Board  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, ON N6A 4L9

**RE:** Public Participation Meeting for the City of London's Multi-year Budget, January 21, 2016

This letter is in support of the proposed London Police Services' request for funding to increase the complement of officers of the Downtown Community Foot Patrol Unit from 12 to 20 over the next 3 years. In our opinion, this move is well-considered and very necessary to the continuing renaissance of our downtown.

In this key part of our city, it is vital that the police have a very strong and *visible* presence. Deterrence and early intervention are generally less expensive in controlling crime than after-the-fact law enforcement. Having more officers on the streets will make them safer in fact and make them *look* safer, too, a key element in encouraging renewed public interest in the downtown.

I don't believe the complement of London Police Services officers has increased for several years, in spite of an increasing population and expanding demand for officers and although I have personally witnessed the effectiveness of the Foot Patrol, I know their efforts would be even more useful with more officers on the street.

Many of us remember how clean and safe our downtown felt during the 2013 World Figure Skating Championships. Many of our clients commented on this, and many people still do. Londoners deserve this feeling of safety downtown all the time, not just to impress visitors for a special event.

The Foot Patrol Unit was created as a separate entity within the London Police Service in 1993. At that time, officers were responsible for providing a consistent and visible presence in the downtown area. The Unit's complement of 12 full-time members and a Supervisor work from an office adjacent to Covent Garden Market and engage in problem-oriented initiatives to address prevalent concerns in the community. Officers who fulfill foot patrol duties are familiar with chronic offenders and troublesome areas, and they address quality of life issues like panhandling, intoxicated persons, loiterers and other nuisance-type offences.

They use the intelligence they collect to address problems and educate other LPS units. While also involved in the enforcement of Federal and Provincial legislation and bylaws, these officers engage in proactive initiatives, integrating with the community to identify and resolve specific problem areas and address them at their root. Foot Patrol officers also respond to assaults, disturbances, and other offences which had previously put a significant drain on police resources at a critical time of night. They work closely with the Community Oriented Response (COR) Unit, whose mandate is to increase the interaction between the public and the police in an effort to form partnerships to improve community life in general.

As a result of their proven effectiveness and increased demand, Foot Patrol now polices the Downtown, Hamilton Road, SoHo, Argyle and Old East Village business districts as well as a growing network of parks and bike paths. Thinking toward the future, they will likely also be policing the riverfront.

London has not seen an increase in the number of police officers since 2012, even though our city's population rises significantly every year – and *some of that population is very problematic*. People who live and work and dine and enjoy entertainment downtown know from first-hand observation that in spite of the proven effectiveness of the Foot Patrol, present staffing levels and competing priorities can restrict its ability to meet increasing demands. This is a significant and increasing concern for businesses and residents downtown.

There are only 12 officers assigned to Foot Patrol, and when they have to appear in court the number of officers on the street can decline even more. A 2014 Audit by Price Waterhouse Cooper found that London Police Services has 156 officers per 100,000 population compared to the average of 166 for Tier 1 Ontario Municipalities with populations greater than 100,000.

Foot Patrol officers are too often not close enough to attend when we have problems at our buildings, and we have to call 911. The officers that respond in such situations simply do not have the knowledge of downtown London that Foot Patrol officers do and in some situations their effectiveness may be compromised as a result. Sufficient staffing will enhance Foot Patrol's ability to develop and promote community-based initiatives, allow them to continue to deter and prevent crime through a consistent visible presence, and enable us to have a service level commensurate with our hopes for the future of the downtown in accordance with the City's Strategic Plan.

Changing needs in our growing community mean the current band-aid solution of calling 911 (which takes away from LPS front line operations) is simply not sustainable. We see an increase of people downtown who are suffering from mental illness and drug addiction. There are growing problems with human trafficking rings, street gang activity, organized crime, property damage, etc., that will impose increasing demands on police services in the core, and they must have the resources to meet them.

We support Chief Pare's recent statement that community safety is a community responsibility, and endorse his further comments as well.

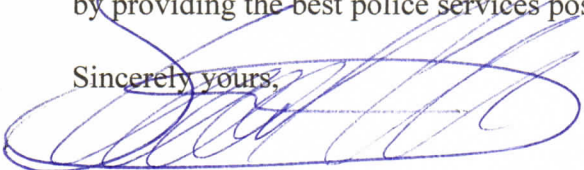
*"Together, we need to draw on multiple strategies, not only to prevent crime, but also to address social issues such as mental health, addictions, and homelessness, that continue to strain policing and social service resources. We need to develop long-term, community-based solutions that build safe and healthy communities. There has never been a time in our history where collaboration, community partnerships, and integrated policing initiatives are so necessary in order for us to resolve community issues and problems. This is especially necessary in economic times that require us to re-examine priorities, with the express purpose of continuing to ensure that we are a safe and secure community."*

The Chief and his entire force have our ongoing and enthusiastic support, and we respectfully ask London City Council to include sufficient additional funds in the police budget to allow for the much-needed expansion of the Downtown Foot Patrol over the next few weeks.

There is no question these are troubled economic times, and every tax dollar has to yield maximum value, but we believe increased funding to the Foot Patrol will be money very wisely spent.

Like many downtown property owners, Farhi Holdings Corporation has been working hard to bring our city centre back to life, and we respectfully ask that Council give the police the resources they need to assist in these efforts by providing the best police services possible.

Sincerely yours,



Shmuel Farhi

**Shmuel Farhi, President**

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