

February 24, 2016

London City Council
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, ON N6A 4L9

Re: City of London Draft Budget for 2016 and subsequent years

Statistics Canada reports that housing is the major component of Canadian household expenditures. Rising shelter costs include not just rent and mortgage expenses, but also basic utilities (water, gas, electricity). It is no surprise, then, that low income people, struggling to meet their basic living requirements, find shelter costs consume an increasingly higher proportion of their incomes.

Some 100 households each week are facing eviction at the Landlord Tenant Board in London. A survey by The Federation of Canadian Municipalities in 2008 shows that a lack of affordable housing is a priority public concern about municipal performance, especially in larger communities (FCM, 2008). According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2015 Rental Market Report, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in London is \$787. To make this affordable, a household must be making more than \$28,325 per year. More than 30,000 households—48% of all rental households in London—cannot afford average market rent. Clearly, affordable housing must have a central place in any serious poverty reduction program.

Summary of Key Elements of an Affordable Housing Strategy to Reduce Poverty in London

Any effective housing component of a poverty reduction strategy must address both the current unavailability of affordable housing stock and the gap between market rents and low household incomes. The major components of an affordable housing strategy promoted by knowledgeable housing advocates include public investment in the creation of affordable housing stock.

- Mandate a target of building 300 new affordable housing units yearly, in addition to increasing the number of Rent - Geared - to - Income units in existing housing co-operatives, and increasing broad-based rent subsidies for individuals/families. Unfortunately, this budget promises to reduce the number of rent supplements.
- Since the downtown revitalization planning may be allocated a significant budget, it would be reasonable for Council to institute inclusionary zoning that enables the city to make regulatory provision for private market housing developments that requires developers to set aside a certain number of affordable housing units in any new development (10% to 20% of units) in return for density bonuses or relief of development charges.
- Energy efficient upgrades and repair of existing City owned affordable housing stock should be a priority.

- Operating costs should be allocated to staff “supportive housing” being funded by the city. Warehousing those who cannot live safely and independently is not providing housing. These tenants need protection and programming to live safely with dignity.

- Full shelter allowances should be utilized when providing subsidized housing to individuals and families in receipt of social assistance. The additional funds can be directed to repairs and construction of new affordable housing.

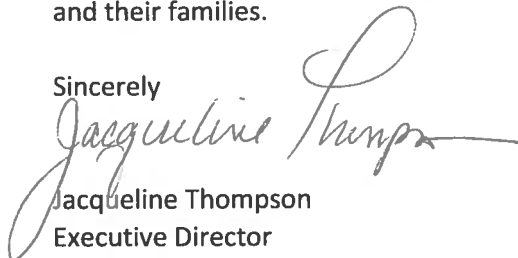
- Emergency short-term housing – ensure the continuing provision of short-term shelter relief to be phased out over time **only** as long-term solutions take effect.

- Housing and homelessness initiatives have three City administrative budgets, in addition to the administrative system that uses 18% of the Housing Stability Bank funding to deliver the program. The case study for the Housing Development Corporation promises to add an additional layer of administration. (Homelessness Prevention in Community & Social Services; Social Housing, and; London Middlesex Housing Corporation).

- The Ontario Renovates & the Home Ownership Programs should be implemented by April 1st. Last year the budgeted amount was redirected elsewhere as the administration mechanisms were never implemented for the allocated budget.

The provincial uploading of millions of dollars of social assistance programming not resulted in any visible nor tangible change in the lives of London’s most disenfranchised. We do not need to build more institutions of poverty, rather we need to compassionately build mechanisms that provide permanent affordable housing and empower folks to get back on their feet and build positive futures for themselves and their families.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacqueline Thompson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Jacqueline Thompson
Executive Director