

September 12, 2017

Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee, 4pm**Subject: Letter of Support for London Becoming a ‘Safe City’**

We are writing to express our support for the project being proposed by the Mayor’s Office of the City of London alongside Anova, to take part in the UN Women’s Safe City Initiative.

As Scientists at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) located at Western, we have a long history of conducting research on bar violence, including women’s experiences of sexual harassment and aggression in bars and nightclubs. We have also studied gender roles and norms, including research on masculinity and men’s beliefs and attitudes about the normality and acceptability of bar violence.

We have led large community and national surveys on gender, substance use, mental health and violence. In collaboration with international colleagues, we have pioneered novel research methods, including street intercept recruitment of young bar-goers and developing new approaches to understanding barroom aggression. We work closely with community partners and stakeholders to ensure that our research informs policy and practice. For example, based on our early work on male physical aggression in bars, the *Safer Bars* program was developed to train bar staff to prevent physical aggression in bars.

Sexual violence is a significant public health problem. Recent evidence shows that public spaces are not immune to this problem. Our recent research, involving the collection of data from young adult bar-goers on their way to and from bar districts, indicated that more than 50% of women had experienced sexual harassment and/or unwanted touching on a single night out at a bar or club. In follow-up online surveys, we found that many women were negatively affected by these types of incidents. Yet, very little is currently being done to prevent or stop sexual aggression in bars and clubs.

Recent media reports indicate that sexual violence is also a problem in our city’s public transit system. Also alarming is the high rate of categorizing alleged sexual assaults as ‘unfounded’ by police services in London and across Canada. We believe there is a key role to be played by Council and the Mayor’s Office in calling attention to the issue of sexual violence in London, particularly to sexual violence and harassment in public spaces. Our City has taken progressive stances on many social justice issues. It is now time to take leadership on addressing gender-based sexual violence.

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We are very encouraged by the pledge from the Mayor's Office and Anova to take on becoming a 'Safe City'. , and we are fully committed to supporting this initiative.

We are pleased to provide this letter of support and we look forward to getting started on making London a 'Safe City'.

Yours Sincerely,



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