



City Councillors  
London City Hall

January 15<sup>th</sup> 2018

### **Regarding Councillor Salih's Motion on the Paul Haggis Park**

In light of the four survivors who have publicly come forward in naming Paul Haggis as having perpetrated sexual violence against them, Anova wishes to support Councillor Salih's motion to rename Paul Haggis Park. The renaming of the park is a symbolic gesture seeking to ensure that those that we hold in high esteem do not themselves uphold rape culture and the condoning of sexual violence. Nevertheless, it is symbolic and should be a part of the larger effort that this City Council has undertaken to ensure London is a 'Safe City', as part of the United Nations Safe Cities Initiative. Symbolic gestures hold clout, but they cannot be where the action stops.

The occurrence of sexual assault is as high as it has ever been – rates having remained unchanged for the past two decades at 1/3 Canadian women and 1/6 Canadian men. Rates of sexual harassment are estimated to be much higher than 50% for Canadian women. Recent attention to sexual violence –both assault and harassment –in the numerous high-profile cases we have seen has followed alongside a quadrupling of our helpline calls at Anova, with a similar pattern seen across the province. Increased media attention to local London cases of sexual violence has spurred on important conversations about dynamics of sexual violence, what 'counts', the breadth of those who perpetrate sexual violence, and the need to shatter the silence.

In light of all of this momentum, it is an opportune time for City Councillors to re-commit to the Safe Cities Initiative, and look at what our community and our municipality can do to respond but further, to prevent sexual violence. The actions that will come from Safe Cities cannot stop at the symbolic. Linking Councillor Salih's motion to Safe Cities ensures that Council is not stopping at the symbolic, that the public knows that community agencies and city staff are taking actions to better support survivors and help prevent sexual violence in London Ontario.

Sincerely-

Anova