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**Margaret Richings**

**Founder**

**Red Tent Women's Peer Support Network**

10-364 Talbot Street  
London, On N6A 2R6

26th April 2018

**CITY OF LONDON  
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

300 Dufferin Ave, London, ON N6B 1Z2

Attention: City of London Planning and Environment Committee Members,

I was asked to write a letter of support by Chris Mackie, who currently works for M.L.H.U..

I understand that certain policy changes and requests are being made regarding T.O.P.S sites..

I am founder of Red Tent Womens Peer Support Network for 2 years, and have been an independant Peer Support Worker for the last 10 years within City of London area. Working with Mental Health and Addiction, Poverty, and Homelessness issues. I provide communications as a liason across London as well. Their are also four partners within the organization providing administrative, and expert support.

I recently was appointed a voting member of The London Homeless Coalition Steering Committee.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Planning and Environment Committee:

1. ENDORSE both 241 Simcoe Street and 446 York Street as appropriate locations for permanent

Supervised Consumption Facilities; and

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2. COMMIT that, when a bylaw is put in place to establish specific zoning criteria for Supervised

Consumption Facilities in London, the endorsed locations automatically be deemed zoned for such use.

I understand approximately 400 people who are considered part of the community family attending drop-in centers and community meals have lost their lives to addiction in London and Middlesex over the past 10 years.

The support that my grass roots organization, endorses and encourages help to prevent fatal overdoses; reduce the spread of life-threatening infections, harm reduction behaviors, steps, as well as safe disposal of injection materials.

Indigenous individuals, and people who inject drugs are a part of the community we assist in the affected neighbourhoods.

This includes Downtown, and Old East Village (OEV), as well as the core list from The Community Meal Program, My Sisters Place, and Sanctuary Church Drop-In.

We commend City Council and the Committee for having “endorsed recently, MLHU and RHAC collaborated with several other agencies to open the first provincially sanctioned Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS).” put forward by Middlesex London Health Unit and many other stakeholders involved in the health of citizens of London, On.

The partners of the organization, along with myself understand the urgent need for these sites to provide safety, harm reduction and dignity to those suffering with addiction, and mental health issues, along with a strong need of support from the outer service providers, the communities they affect and the city in general.

We will continue to endorse, support and communicate the positive measures of many people within London, especially those Council, and Committee members who recognize the need of these types of resources.

Thank you to those who tirelessly work towards positive solutions to the addiction, and mental health of those citizens of our forest city.

Three members of the communities lives were saved as a result which in our view is an invaluable step forward from the tragedies that have occurred. The mental health stress alone on the community regarding death is sizeable, and palpable.

The community members are currently educating others regarding the current site which is open, and supporting those who need direct access, and the linked harm reduction services available to them.

The organization has already seen marked, sizeable positive encouragement, and actions in targeting, supporting, peer driven escorting to facilities.

The issues surrounding addiction permeate all classes, incomes, cultures, races, and genders within the London boundaries. I and the organization are hopeful that the Planning and Environment Committee, as well as City Councillors will continue to endorse, and make possible access to these urgently needed resources through out the city.

The two sites recommended are by us known areas of concern, and we support the policies of London Middlesex Housing Corporation, My Sisters Place, and the Community churches providing outreach, meals, directive addiction support, harm reduction services in both areas.

Due to the fact that people have died from homelessness, health issues that associate with addiction, coexisting with mental health as well we encourage committee members and City Council members to take a strong stand and recommend/implement the recommendations which have been submitted by M.L.H.U.

Sincerely,

**Margaret Richings**

**Founder**

**Red Tent Women's Peer Support Network**