



March 20, 2019

TO:

Lynn Livingstone, Managing Director, Neighbourhood, Children & Fire Serv. llivings@london.ca
Mayor Ed Holder, Mayor City of London mayor@london.ca
Members of London City Council (*delivered electronically*)

RE: City of London Strategic Plan – Recommendations for Addressing Gender-Based Violence from Anova

As London creates its next vision for the city, it is crucial for the voices of all Londoners, including those most marginalized, to be listened to. In working towards this new strategic plan, highlighting the work that all local organizations do to address gender-based violence is essential for the staff at the City of London to consider.

Last month, the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (LCCEWA) highlighted the reality of the situation for women and children in this region¹. **Housing, shelter and critical services for survivors of gender-based violence are stretched beyond their capacity.** Our community must have a response at all levels of government and assistance to ensure our most vulnerable individuals are protected and valued. At Anova, we see this need every day: Our 67 shelter beds have been full for the past year, the Crisis and Support Line has averaged 1,000 calls a month since fall 2017, and sexual assault survivors wait up to 16 weeks to begin their counselling through our services.

Even more recently, it came to our attention that city staff and council have undertaken steps to work with a local organization within the gender-based violence sector to support women-identifying people and girls. While commendable, it is important to highlight that there are several organizations who work to address gender-based violence in London, as well as experts in the field to stop this violence and individuals with lived experience who provide a comprehensive lens on this pervasive – and deadly – issue. In 2018 alone, 45 women and 2 children were murdered by intimate partners². Utilizing a trauma- and violence-informed analysis will allow London's next strategic plan to consider safety, choice, empowerment and collaboration in a truly meaningful way.

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¹ Snapshot 2018, London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse

² "Call It Femicide: Understanding gender-related killings of Women and Girls in 2018, Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA)

Anova calls on City of London staff to address four critical elements in the new strategic plan:

1. Ensure the diverse voices of women-identified people are paramount and included in discussions of the new strategic plan.

Removing barriers to participate in conversations about safety, security, equality and equity in our community is crucial to creating a fulsome and thoughtful strategic plan. This means a deliberate approach to include members of marginalized groups such as the indigenous communities of London, newcomer communities, Arabic and Muslim communities, and youth communities. Furthermore, considering recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee is integral to a successful strategic plan. Members of the post-secondary community, including students, Western University's sexual violence coordinators, professors and researchers from the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children should be consulted as well, as they offer a unique perspective of living and working in London. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are also important to consider and consult with, as their experience in London allows for better understanding of their vulnerability and strengths. Finally, we encourage the city to connect with those living with addictions and mental health challenges, plus those who support them in engaging with substance management and harm reduction, as gender-based violence is frequently related to these systemic issues.

2. Implement a gender-based lens and a trauma- and violence-informed analysis to the City of London's new strategic plan.

Ensuring that an intersectional, gendered lens is applied to the new strategic plan is an important step to address issues of inequity and violence in London. This will help guide city leaders to execute a plan that keeps those who are most vulnerable a priority.

3. Focus on improvements to transit and housing that prioritize women-identified people and children to ensure that safe, accessible shelter and transportation is available for all Londoners.

The feminization of poverty is a pervasive issue in this province, and London is not immune. Canadian rates of poverty increase dramatically for female-led single parents, indigenous women, disabled women and racialized women³. Further to the London Community Foundation's 2018 Vital Signs: What London Can Be Report identified that 70,000 Londoners, about 18% live in poverty, with 1 in 4 children living in poverty.⁴ Issues such as transit and housing are deeply linked to those living in poverty. The strategic plan should highlight these important issues and combat the barriers that exist.

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³ "Poverty Trends 2017", Citizens for Public Justice

⁴ "Vital Signs: What London Can Be", London Community Foundations, 2018, <http://www.lcf.on.ca/sites/default/files/LCF-VitalSigns-FINAL.pdf>

4. Include the voices of sex workers and those supporting individuals in the sex trade in the strategic plan. This recognizes the seriousness of human trafficking, but does not conflate it with sex work.

London has been identified as a hub for human trafficking⁵. The next strategic plan should include an acknowledgment of this issue and a commitment to ending the exploitation of those being trafficked. Alongside this should be an understanding of sex work, the need to not conflate sex work with human trafficking, and a view to reduce harm for those involved in sex work. By consulting with those who work directly with sex workers and those who advocate on their behalf, the plan can reflect sex workers' voices and better address the issue of human trafficking in this region.

Anova believes that charting the course for London is an important task and must take the adequate time, energy and resources to ensure that all voices, especially those most vulnerable in our community, have the opportunity to be heard.

Thank you,



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cc Dani Bartlett, Co-Chair, LCCEWA - dbartlett@unitedwayem.ca

⁵ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-sex-trafficking-1.4936600>