

34TH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Special Meeting held on October 28, 2011 commencing at 4:02 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor J. Fontana and Councillors W.J. Polhill, J. Swan, S. Orser, J.L. Baechler, N. Branscombe, M. Brown, H.L. Usher, J.P. Bryant and S. White; and L. Rowe (Secretary).

ABSENT: Councillors W. J. Armstrong, D. Brown, D. Henderson, P. Hubert and P. Van Meerbergen.

ALSO PRESENT: J. A. Fielding, J. P. Barber, G. Belch, B. Duncan, E. Gamble, D. O'Brien, R. Paynter and B. Shae.

I YOUR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS:

Occupy London

1. That comments from the three designated representatives of Occupy London, as well as the additional comments from various other individuals invited to come forward and speak at the October 28, 2011 Special Meeting of the Committee of the Whole, **BE REFERRED** to the Civic Administration for consideration and report back at a future date:

Comments from Designated Representatives of Occupy London:

Courtney: Thank you to the Committee for giving Occupy London an opportunity to be heard by the Council Members; there are a myriad of reasons why the occupants are in Victoria Park in political protest; City Council needs to ensure the safety of the occupants; the occupants are maintaining a family-friendly area, they have consensus on a safe-space statement and are committed to ensuring the occupied area is kept clean; Council Members should withhold making a decision for two weeks about removing the occupants from Victoria Park so that careful thought can be given to making such a decision.

Daniella: The safety and security of the occupants is important; occupants are in Victoria Park to take a stance for individual reasons; they are keeping the occupied area clean; they have the support of the community and small business; London is the first City to offer dialogue with the Municipal Council; the occupancy should be allowed to continue; City should guarantee the safety of the occupants and keep the lines of communication open; while the media has portrayed the occupants as homeless and dirty, there are well-educated people who are occupying the Park; some of the issues include homelessness, poverty and sheltering, but the movement itself is a global one about global issues.

Matthew: Thank you to the Committee for allowing the Occupants to attend the meeting; the occupants feel they have a legal right to occupy Victoria Park; they have regular general assembly meetings, twice daily and the tents are there for their safety and protection; a key issue is the "trickle down" economic effect and also corporate accountability is at an all time low and there is a great need to manage debts and loans.

General Summary of Comments from Other Audience Members Invited to Speak:

- the London District Labour Council (LDLC) recognizes and supports the local, national and international significance of the "Occupy" movement;
- the LDLC is concerned about youth unemployment, poverty, and homelessness;
- the LDLC supports the activists rightly challenging greed;
- community-based health care is not working to address mental health issues;
- London is the best place to be if you are homeless, however monies are going to shelters rather than to the people;
- women should be moved from the Men's Mission as they are not in a safe setting there;

- there should be legislative tools for civic engagement;
- elected officials need to be held accountable;
- there needs to be legal recognition of petitioners and referendums for such things as the future of London Hydro;
- a strong citizen voice would eliminate the need for political representation;
- federal issues are a concern, including monetary reform (e.g. controlling national debt, reducing interest paid to banks)
- we should be concerned about peace;
- public apathy is a concern;
- the Mayor should be bringing the voice of Occupy London to Ottawa;
- the rising cost of education is making it inaccessible to many individuals;
- there is a need for a fair society where tax dollars are distributed based on ability to pay;
- there is a need to be aware of and address common themes throughout the international "Occupy" movement;
- political institutions have failed the people;
- the occupation should be allowed to stay for another 20 days or so until the Park needs to be vacated for holiday celebration purposes;
- City Hall needs to step out of the way; the occupants don't want to have to fight with City Hall;
- the "Occupy" movement is a huge endeavour and needs time and space to build momentum;
- the City should commit to not having the local participants moved from Victoria Park;
- there is a benefit to taking a stand in a public space, but the participants need to be dealt with humanely;
- the best way to earn a living is by owning your own business;
- people's use of resources is abominable, there is too much unnecessary waste;
- in the short time this movement has occurred, it has had more impact than a long teaching career in the area of social ethics;
- monetary issues are a concern, the Bank of Canada should examine the potential for interest free loans;
- the Government of Canada does not support the hiring of individuals with mental illness;
- all people are suffering as a result of the global recession;
- the City of London has the ability to make or break laws, they should let the occupants stay in Victoria Park;
- the greatest step in addressing national and global problems is through dialogue;
- self worth issues result in social costs;
- business should not be at the price of affordable housing;
- there is bias in the system and the current hierarchy is unworkable;
- the occupation of Victoria Park should be allowed to continue so that the occupants can continue their work;
- too many children are placed in Crown wardship because of failure in the system, this needs to stop;
- there is insufficient legal aid for people whose children have been placed in Crown wardship;
- there needs to be active and ongoing review of the safety of children;
- jurisdiction needs to be applied where it is most needed;
- this movement is the beginning of the Third World War---we are occupying the World;
- governments should not be subverts of the truth;
- this movement needs to continue throughout the world;
- we are all human beings with an obligation to world-wide betterment that begins at home;
- it should be remembered that the occupants of Victoria Park are people, just like the Council Members;
- violent removal of the occupants of Victoria Park would be a huge step backwards;

- there is income and wealth disparity, which is one of the major reasons for societal problems;
- while the London Mayor only oversees a small town and can't change things himself, he can influence others to make change;
- Canada has the fastest growing disparity and it is unsustainable; and
- if Victoria Park occupants are forcibly removed, it could result in a bad reaction by some individuals with mental health issues.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.