

Report to Corporate Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Corporate Services Committee
From: Patti McKague, Director, Strategic Communications and
Government Relations
Subject: City of London Strategic Advocacy Framework
Date: May 10, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Strategic Communications and Government Relations, the City of London Strategic Advocacy Framework **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The City of London Strategic Advocacy Framework responds directly to Council's 2019 to 2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London objective to "Increase the effectiveness of London's strategic advocacy", which is included under the "Leading in Public Service" strategic area of focus.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

N/A

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Context

The Government and External Relations Division works to advance the City of London's interests regionally, provincially, nationally, and internationally. Although there are numerous emergent advocacy needs that arise as a result of legislative and policy changes, the City of London's core advocacy priorities have historically been approved by Council on an annual basis, through the provincial and federal pre-budget submission processes.

The City's past advocacy approach has resulted in significant progress; however, there is an opportunity to advance the City's priorities with other levels of government by taking a more strategic approach that is more efficient, effective, and focused in the approaches taken.

As our city grows and political landscapes evolve, intergovernmental advocacy becomes both more complex and more crucial to London's continued success. The pre-pandemic advocacy environment was highly competitive. As governments at all levels begin transitioning their priorities toward economic and social recovery, this competitive environment for scarce resources is expected to become even more acute.

Every four years, Council approves a strategic direction and priorities for a four-year period, through Council's Strategic Plan and Multi-Year Budget processes. By developing a concrete and systematic approach to establishing advocacy priorities based on these foundational plans, Civic Administration can more effectively support and coordinate intergovernmental advocacy.

2.2 Strategic Advocacy Framework Development Principles

Through a review of past results, advocacy literature, and an environmental scan of municipal advocacy approaches, several best practices were identified to guide the development of the Strategic Advocacy Framework (see **Appendix A**).

1. **Have a System** – Take a consistent approach to choosing advocacy priorities. Having clarity around how priorities are chosen can eliminate or reduce the risk of spreading resources too thinly between multiple competing priorities. The approach should consider (among other things): organizational capacity and resources, themes and priorities identified by target governments, community backing, and potential alignment with key stakeholders and community partners.
2. **Make it Public** – Advocacy priorities should be clearly stated and publicly known. Involving stakeholders in municipal advocacy can help amplify a message and improve the likelihood of success.
3. **Provide Context** – Advocacy does not occur in a vacuum. Frame the advocacy development process, and the resulting priorities, within the local context. Establishing a baseline understanding of the factors influencing advocacy priorities strengthens positions and provides avenues for stakeholder engagement.
4. **Balance Short- and Long-Term Advocacy** – Policy advocacy is rarely a fast process. Consider opportunities to make incremental progress towards a longer-term goal, and how more achievable policy changes might ultimately lead to a desired outcome.
5. **Watch the Policy Window** – Be prepared to act when the time is right. Achieving desired results is highly dependent on the alignment of external factors, including wide-spread awareness of a problem, the feasibility of a solution, and the political will to act. This alignment is often referred to as the “policy window,” when policy change is most likely to occur. The best advocacy plans enable incremental progress, while ensuring contingencies to react quickly and meaningfully when the policy window “opens”.

2.3 Identifying Advocacy Priorities: Process

The development of the Strategic Advocacy Framework began with a detailed and systematic review of Council’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan objectives. All 159 Strategic Plan Strategies were evaluated to determine the importance of intergovernmental partnerships in achieving the corresponding Expected Results.

With a refined list of Expected Results from the Strategic Plan in hand, the next step was to consider the priorities within the political and social context. At a high level, this analysis considered priorities based on their position relative to the policy window, evaluating alignment with public sentiment, the political landscape, and the feasibility of the proposed policy change.

This evaluation resulted in the identification of nine Expected Results that form the core of the Strategic Advocacy Framework. Each step of the process was reviewed by Senior Leadership, with a particular eye to ensuring the Strategic Advocacy Framework is aligned with Council’s Strategic Plan and other key municipal plans and objectives. In addition, all projects identified for advocacy will first be developed with lenses that consider gender equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and anti-oppression.

2.4 Next Steps

With the Strategic Advocacy Framework complete, work begins on the implementation of this new approach to intergovernmental relations. Government and External Relations will first coordinate the identification of projects across Service Areas to achieve the identified advocacy priorities. Once projects are identified, implementation plans will guide the specific actions toward desired outcomes. Annual updates will be provided to Council to demonstrate progress through the life of the Framework.

Conclusion

By clearly communicating intergovernmental priorities, building community partnerships, and acting strategically, the City of London can achieve success through an enterprise-wide approach to advocacy. The Strategic Advocacy Framework will form an essential component to deliver on the City of London's priorities.

Prepared by: Nick Steinburg, Specialist, Government and External Relations

Submitted by: Adam Thompson, Manager, Government and External Relations

Recommended by: Patti McKague, Director, Strategic Communications, Government Relations, and Community Engagement



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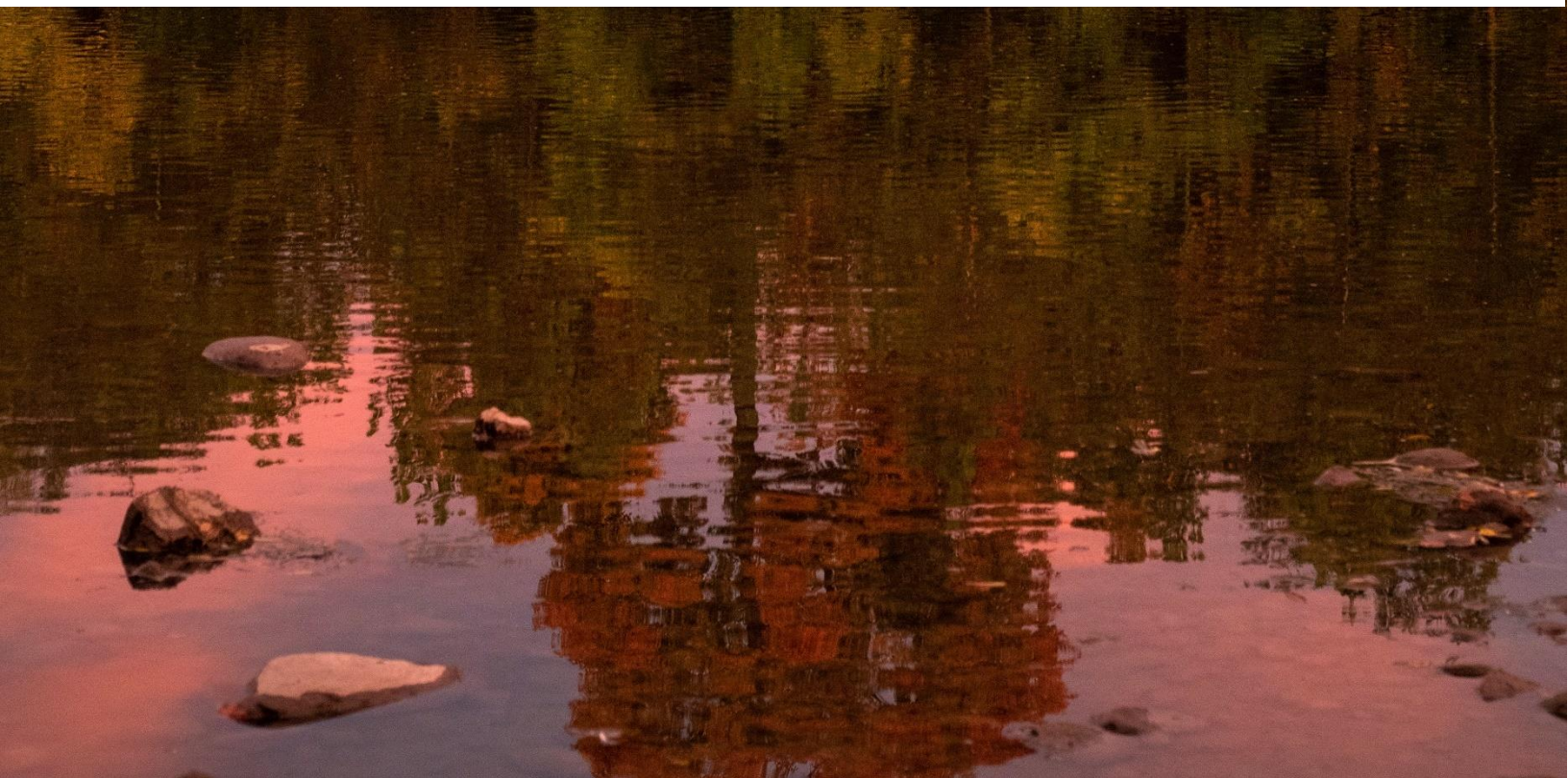
Strategic Advocacy Framework





Acknowledgement

The City of London aspires to be a diverse community which honours, welcomes, and accepts all peoples. We respectfully acknowledge that the City of London is located on the traditional territories of the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak, and Attawandron peoples, who have had longstanding relationships with the land and the region. The City of London also recognizes its relationships with the local First Nations Communities, including Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. We acknowledge the diverse histories, races, cultures, religions, and ethnicities of those who call London home. The City of London values the significant contributions made by all Londoners.



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Introduction

This document is intended to guide the advocacy efforts of the City of London both in its role as a single tier municipality in Ontario and as a member of a range of Local Government Associations. It is intended to be used as a resource for City Council, Civic Administration, community, and government partners alike.

Advocacy planning has traditionally occurred behind closed doors. The City of London believes strongly, however, that advocacy undertaken as a city is built on a foundation of effective partnership.

Strategic advocacy, like any successful partnership, requires that all parties understand the priorities and objectives and work together to achieve the best possible result. In the case of advocacy on behalf of a community, it also means bringing together voices from across the community to achieve shared goals.

Cities are the level of government closest to people, responding to some of the most basic needs of the community. Tackling a global pandemic has, however, underscored the deep need for intergovernmental cooperation, highlighting how all orders of government must support Londoners.

The purpose of this advocacy framework is simple: to make it easy for the City of London's partners to understand the needs of our community.

How this framework was prepared

This document integrates Council supported advocacy priorities identified throughout the 2019-2023 term with tangible outcomes. It does this by outlining Council's strategic advocacy priorities in a planned, coordinated, and resourced approach to facilitate action and results.

These priorities, pulled directly from Council's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, have been identified through a process of evidence-based research and consultation.

Initiatives highlighted within the framework will be reviewed and revised annually. Long-term initiatives will remain a priority over the life of the plan, while other priorities may be completed in the short-term.

Context

Council’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

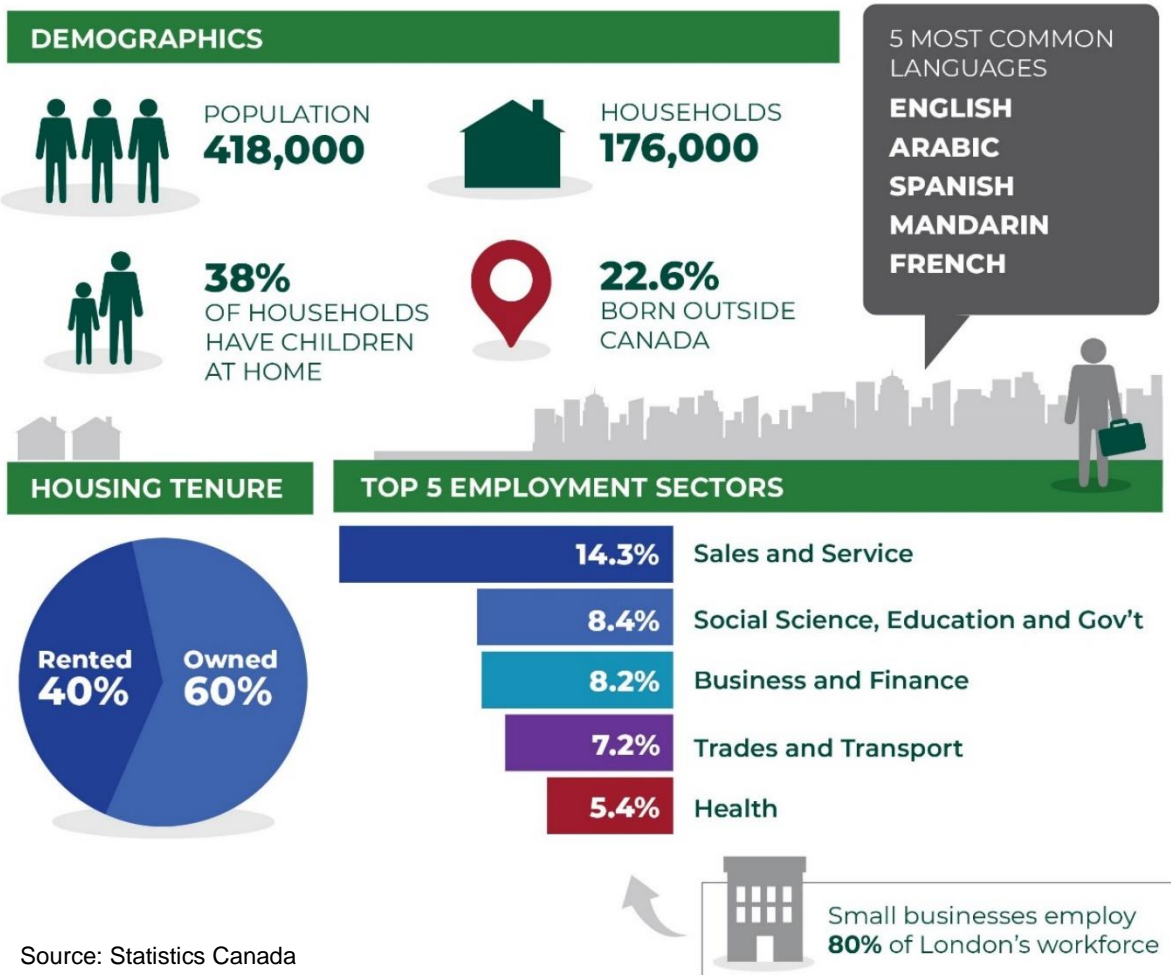
London City Council’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan identifies the specific strategies that Council and Administration will deliver on together over the next four years. This Advocacy Framework is firmly rooted in the Strategic Plan, identifying the priorities with the greatest opportunity to benefit from productive intergovernmental relationships.

The 2020 Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought dramatic changes to all aspects of life and shone new light on systemic challenges. While the specific projects and approaches will take into account this new reality, this framework recognizes that the key Strategic Plan priorities reflected here –safe housing, mental health supports, employment, a clean environment, and a healthy community – are more important now than ever.

Demographics

Ultimately, strategic advocacy is about delivering the best for Londoners, and priorities must reflect the community. London is the largest city in the Southwest Ontario region, with an increasingly diverse population and an evolving economy, and this framework reflects who Londoners are and where London is headed.



Source: Statistics Canada

What is Strategic Advocacy?

Advocacy is representing London's views and needs to decision makers to achieve desired outcomes. A Strategic Advocacy approach focuses efforts on achieving outcomes identified in Council's Strategic Plan.

To support policy change and positive results, London must have a well-planned, evidence-based approach. Success requires clear priorities, supported by data, with outcomes reflecting the needs of the community.

Advocacy is not undertaken by the City of London alone; it requires close relationships with community partners, working together to accomplish shared objectives. Through open lines of communication and a Team London approach, the needs of the entire community can be elevated.

At the City of London, Strategic Advocacy is driven by Government and External Relations, who provide guidance directly to the City Manager, members of the Senior Leadership Team and Members of Council on London's advocacy agenda based on the objectives and actions in this Framework.

Strategic advocacy features:

- Representing our community
- Delivering clear, consistent messages about key issues and needs
- Attracting and securing investment
- Enabling and supporting strategic partnerships
- Building community capacity for advocacy
- Research to inform decisions and funding applications
- Strengthening London's reputation as a leader in local government and an advocate for our community

Successful advocacy results in:

- Funding to implement priority projects and initiatives
- A positive change in government policy
- Promoting a diverse, inclusive community
- Stronger ties with our strategic partners
- Greater confidence and trust in local government
- A more capable and resilient community
- Strong leadership locally, provincially, and federally

City of London

Strategic Advocacy Framework 2019 – 2023



Partners in Advocacy

Identifying new partnerships and building existing networks are foundational to this plan. Over the life of the framework, the City of London will continue to develop strong and resilient relationships with decision makers and community partners to identify and seize upon opportunities for shared success.

Community Partners

Local advocacy involves building stronger relationships with community partners, including residents' associations, local businesses groups, post-secondary institutions, environmental organizations, emergency services and community leaders.

Examples of local projects include: the London Community Recovery Network, Environmental Action Programs, planning issues, the Safe Cities Initiative, community and affordable housing, public health, and public education initiatives, to name just a few.

Regional Partners

London's City Council represents London on a wide variety of regional groups and organizational bodies and is leading or has championed a number of important regional issues including, social and affordable housing, public health, broadband (through the Southwest Integrated Fiber Technology (SWIFT) partnership), and regional transportation, to name a few.

Provincial and Federal Partners

Council advocates directly to government partners on behalf of the community, maintaining a wide range of important intergovernmental partnerships with provincial and federal government members of parliament, ministers, and public servants on matters of policy and programming.

The City of London also actively contributes to advocacy campaigns coordinated by municipal associations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and other bodies such as the Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM) and the Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC).



Priorities and Approach

This section outlines the expected results from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan which have been identified as priorities for intergovernmental advocacy. These expected results cover a broad range of municipal priorities, including affordable housing, transportation, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The expected results are listed below, organized by the Strategic Plan key areas of focus.

Narrowing in on specific priority outcomes will ensure the City's advocacy is focussed, while providing the necessary flexibility to ensure responsiveness to the ever-changing advocacy landscape.

Turning this plan into action means identifying projects and initiatives that will advance the Strategic Plan expected results below. Projects may be at different stages in development, and the advocacy approaches will continue to evolve based on both internal and external factors.

Next Steps

With the City's strategic advocacy priorities identified, specific projects and initiatives will be identified to deliver on the commitments outlined in this framework. Annual updates will be provided to Council and the community, demonstrating the progress made towards the strategic advocacy priorities

2019-2023 Advocacy Priorities

Strengthening Our Community:

The health and well-being of Londoners is always the first priority for any initiative undertaken by the City. The *Strengthening Our Community* area of focus aims to ensure Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful, building a welcoming community, and providing services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety for all. The expected results that rely most on intergovernmental partnerships are:

- Increase affordable and quality housing options.
- Reduce the number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Support improved access to mental health and addictions services.
- Increase opportunities for individuals and families.
- Improve the health and well-being of Londoners.

Building a Sustainable City:

Preparing London for the future requires deliberate planning and a forward-thinking approach. The *Building a Sustainable City* area of focus prioritizes the long-term sustainability of London, including well planned development, infrastructure that is prepared for evolving community needs, and a strong and healthy environment. The expected results that rely most on intergovernmental partnerships are:

- Increase access to transportation options.
- Protect and enhance waterways, wetlands, and natural areas.

Growing Our Economy:

In a competitive global market, no city can thrive without a diverse economy with a broad range of opportunities for both business and talent. The *Growing Our Economy* area of focus aims to develop London's top-quality workforce, attract new jobs, and create a supportive business environment. The expected results that rely most on intergovernmental partnerships are:

- Increase access employers have to the talent they require.
- Maintain foreign investment attraction, local retention, and growth and entrepreneurship support programs

A Safe City for Women and Girls

One of the key areas of focus in Council's Strategic Plan is making London "A Safe City for Women and Girls". This key area of focus centres on actions the City can take independently and, as a result, does not rely heavily on intergovernmental advocacy. At the same time, it is recognized that all the priorities identified for advocacy have disproportionate impacts on women and girls; issues like affordable housing, quality transit, supports for families, and vibrant community spaces.

To ensure this framework can deliver on Council's commitment to creating a Safe City for Women and Girls, all projects that are advanced through intergovernmental advocacy must first be developed with lenses that consider gender equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and anti-oppression. The same is true of materials and messaging developed in support of London's advocacy.

By combining a more coordinated advocacy approach with an organization-wide commitment to inclusivity, this framework will make it easier to seize on opportunities to further support all of Council's strategic plan priorities, including the Safe City key area of focus.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression:

Municipal Council has affirmed its commitment to eliminating systemic racism and oppression in our community. As individuals who serve the public, facing this troubling reality is both daunting and uncomfortable – and, for many, deeply personal. While this work demands urgency, the actions needed to deconstruct systems of racism and oppression will require sustained commitment and courageous action to drive transformative change.

It is a sombre obligation. It is also an important opportunity. Londoners in the community and within the organization provided valuable insights on how the City of London can use its strength and position as an influential leader to drive anti-racism and anti-oppression work. As opportunities to support anti-racism and anti-oppression efforts through strategic advocacy arise, they will be pursued in full.

