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Office of the Mayor

London
CANADA

April 24, 2013

Dr. Amit Chakma, President
Western University
Stevenson Hall, Suite 2107
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Dear Dr. Chakma:

Thank you for the invitation to provide input to Western's Senate Committee on University Planning regarding Western's strategic plan.

Western is recognized as an international leader in research, innovation and education. Western's brand is increasingly recognized around the world because of the University's many accomplishments. We celebrate and commend Western's continued success.

We are very proud that Western calls London home and has for the past 135 years.

Western plays on a global stage but its local role is also more important than ever before. Western is an essential part of the City of London and makes significant contributions to our economy and community. Western is one of London's most prominent institutions and largest employer and a primary magnet of talent into our community. Western has played a strong part in building London's reputation as a leader in key economic sectors.

Western also plays a key role in achieving all five of the results identified in the City of London's 2011-2014 Strategic Plan: a strong economy; a vibrant and diverse community; a green and growing city; sustainable infrastructure; and a caring community.

The City of London and Western continue to be strategic partners with each relying on the other for success. The London community factors into recruitment, application and retention decisions of Western students and faculty and is considered in annual university rankings.

We believe that the City of London plays an important role in all four themes in Western's strategic plan and there is more we can do to assist Western in achieving continued success in these areas.

1. Providing Canada's best student experience among research intensive universities

We are pleased to see that Western continues to focus on providing exceptional student experiences. This significant commitment has become one of Western's best known features and is an important part of a student's overall education.

The City of London is equally committed to ensuring a positive experience for Western students and plays an essential role in delivering on this promise. London's downtown, neighbourhoods, community facilities, amenities, housing, service providers and other aspects of community life contribute to students' experiences in London and at Western.

We continue to be Western's partner in delivering on this commitment, but we believe there are areas where we could strengthen this relationship.

1. **Building a vibrant downtown** – London's downtown is a vital part of most Western students' experience in London. We encourage Western students to experience all of what London has to offer and this includes a vibrant and healthy downtown. The downtown continues to be a top priority for the City of London and we are working to encourage the establishment of more 'institutional anchors' in our downtown core. We are excited about Fanshawe College building a stronger presence in the downtown and are pleased Western has a continued presence through Continuing Studies. The City of London would welcome Western at any point in time to become a more prominent part of London's downtown. A stronger Western presence would have a transformative impact on London's downtown and would strengthen a part of the community that is already integral to the student experience.
2. **Community placement opportunities** – the City of London provides many volunteer, work and pre-service opportunities for Western students. Meaningful work experience is a key learning and development opportunity for students and represents a valuable resource for the City of London and other local organizations. The City is a leader in many areas of service delivery and we value the partnerships we have with respective faculty areas. We encourage Western to acknowledge the importance of these partnerships in its strategic plan and to invest in university-wide programs that encourage and support students in obtaining practical work and volunteer experience.
3. **Near campus neighbourhoods** – the environments in which students live influence their overall experience at Western. Much work has been done in this area to build stronger relationships between Western students and their neighbours. We believe that this continues to be an important issue and encourage Western to identify this as a continued priority.
4. **On campus housing** – we commend Western's recent efforts to increasing on-campus housing options for students. These developments not only have positive impacts for students but also generate employment and investment in the local economy. We believe that the community value of these projects is significant and should be celebrated.

2. Expanding and enhancing graduate programs

Graduate-level education is increasingly important in today's workforce. Many sectors rely on specialized expertise and advanced degrees and we are pleased that Western is expanding its capacity to provide these programs.

Western attracts some of the brightest masters, doctoral and post-doctoral students in Canada. We believe that our community could do more to engage these students and obtain a greater benefit from having them in London.

1. **Community integration** – graduate students often have different housing, community and neighbourhood requirements than do undergraduate students. Many bring children or partners with them to London. We want to ensure that graduate students and their families feel welcome and can easily find what they need in our community. We believe there may be opportunities for the City of London and Western to work together to ensure graduate students can effectively integrate into our community. There may also be unexplored opportunities to partner with the local business community in order to provide work experience for students and contribute to the local economy in an even more significant way.

3. Building the research intensive university

Western has been the site of many exciting discoveries, inventions and advancements. We are proud of the many accomplishments that have resulted from Western's continued focus on research and innovation.

We believe London provides an ideal environment to cultivate innovations and discoveries. We believe together we can do more to support successful transitions from research to commercialization.

1. **Research parks** – we are enthusiastic about the progress to date at the Advanced Manufacturing Park. Fraunhofer is already being recognized as a global leader for the innovations that are being developed at this site. Research parks are prime examples of municipalities and universities partnering for mutual benefit and successful outcomes. We continue to be your partner in this area and encourage Western to acknowledge this important aspect of building a research intensive university in its strategic plan.
2. **Community research partnerships** – the City of London benefits from many existing research relationships with Western faculty and we recognize this as an important source of knowledge and expertise that our organization relies upon. We encourage the continuation of these partnerships and recognition of the benefits they offer for Western, its students and faculty, and community organizations.
3. **Research institutes and entities** – the City continues to value its partnerships with key Western affiliates including Stiller, WorldDiscoveries, and many faculty-specific programs. The City and the community benefit from the continued success of these organizations and we encourage the University to view the City as its partner in this regard.
4. **Water Consortium** – we are encouraged by the Province of Ontario's Water Sector Strategy and Great Lakes Strategy. Both speak to establishing Ontario as an expert in water technology. The Southern Ontario Water Consortium and the London Node, in particular, are prime examples of innovation in water technology and strategic collaboration between universities, private sector and municipal governments. We are excited by the progress to date and believe there are still many untapped opportunities through this wider partnership. We believe this represents a significant strategic opportunity for the City and University and believe this should be identified as a continued priority over the coming years.

4. Raising Western's international profile

The Western brand is increasingly recognized around the world. We congratulate the Board of Governors, University Senate and senior administration for its prominent efforts to redefine the Western brand and visual identity over the past year. This exciting work will undoubtedly pay dividends as Western continues to enhance its international profile.

Western attracts top international talent in both faculty members and students. The City of London is a natural partner for Western in these efforts. Welcoming newcomers is also a top priority for the City of London.

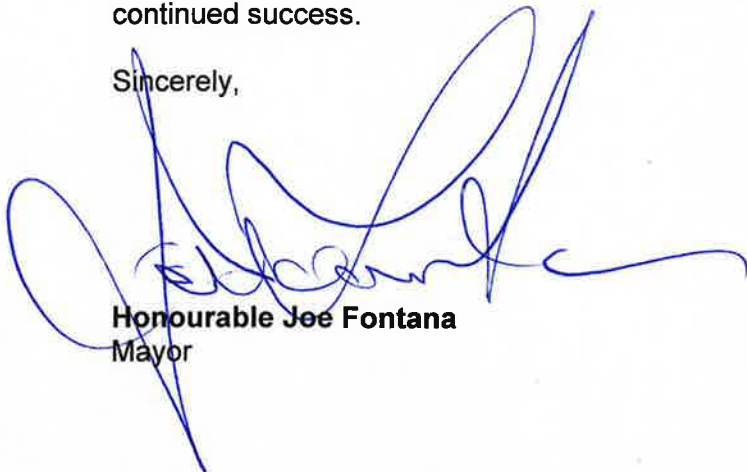
Canada is now the fastest growing country in the G8 and almost all of this growth is attributed to immigration. London continues to be an attractive location for newcomers and we are pleased to see many cultural communities growing and thriving as a result. We believe there is more we can do to ensure all newcomers, including international faculty and students, feel warmly welcomed in London.

1. **Building institutional partnerships** – the City of London and Western are not the only institutions in London with an interest in welcoming and engaging international talent. Fanshawe College, the Thames Valley District School Board, the London District Catholic School Board, and many other institutions and organizations have identified this as a top priority. Great progress has been made through the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, but we believe there is more that can and should be done to welcome newcomers, and particularly students. A forum for collaboration and dialogue between organizations would benefit our organizations and the community as a whole. We encourage Western to identify collaboration with the City of London and other organizations in this area as a priority for the coming years.

Thank you for the invitation to provide input on Western's strategic plan. We commend your consultative approach to this process and trust that our recommendations may offer useful considerations for the Senate Committee on University Planning.

We welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about any of the topics identified above, or if other areas emerge during your process where the City of London could contribute towards Western's continued success.

Sincerely,



Honourable Joe Fontana
Mayor



Art Zuidema
City Manager