

January 27, 2022

Councillor Shawn Lewis, Chair
Corporate Services Committee
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, ON N6B 1Z2

Dear Corporate Service Committee Members

We submitted a report to Council last June, requesting the City systemically address the issues relating to Property Standards By-Laws CP-16 & A-35. You will receive a report on Monday, January 31 in regard to one of the recommendations; levying additional taxes on vacant properties.

The report, however does not take a systemic approach. Why should taxpayers continue to bear the burden of the costs for ongoing inspections of properties, that are clearly not secured according to our community standards, and the costs and risks of sending the Police and Fire Department to these properties? These costs have not been factored into the recommendations that will be before you.

Slapping plywood over the windows does not meet the standards outlined in the bylaw. When the property standards are enforced, there is less likelihood that they will be left vacant to deteriorate, particularly when there is a substantial cost for property owners to secure them appropriately and tax levies should reflect the total costs to the community for all the services they incur.

We further submit that the costs of the vacancy tax program, even as estimated by city staff, it is still worth implementing. We believe that the tax will bring much needed affordable residential units back into the market and discourage real estate speculation. It would increase affordable housing units in an affordable manner. As well, a further option is to increase the vacancy tax from 1% to a higher amount (ie. 1.25%) to cover costs to administer the program.

Fewer affordable housing units are available as a result of other ongoing pressures within London. We are aware that many private investors are purchasing affordable housing units, renovating them, and then requesting higher rents. We are seeing a number affordable rental townhouse complexes

being bought by companies and then placed on the market to be sold to owners who then displace tenants. We are also aware of properties being purchased by developers and holding companies and left vacant for many years. Not only does this lower the availability of affordable housing, it also drives market rents higher.

We submit that these issues be approached systemically and we reiterate that London needs an Affordable Housing Plan that includes a tax on vacant properties. The Affordable Housing Plan needs to be developed with a multi-layered approach to address the spiralling effect of the housing market and lack of enforcement capacity for an extended period.

Sincerely,



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