



Neighbourhood Legal Services

LONDON AND MIDDLESEX

August 25, 2022

Community and Protective Services Committee
City of London
300 Dufferin Ave
London, ON N6B 1Z2

By email cpssc@london.ca
cc: mcassidy@london.ca

Re: August 30, 2022 Agenda Item – 4.1 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

Dear Committee Members:

Neighbourhood Legal Services London Middlesex is a poverty law clinic assisting low income Ontarians who reside in London and Middlesex County with legal issues in the areas of social assistance, landlord/tenant and precarious employment. As such, we are highly aware of the difficulties that low income Ontarians encounter.

We are writing today to support Ward 5 Councillor Maureen Cassidy's motion to direct staff to work with community partners on social service business cases for the \$2.9 million left in the London Community Recovery Network fund. We specifically support her priority of focussing these funds on efforts to mitigate homelessness.

Throughout the course of the pandemic low income Londoners have suffered greatly. There have been no increases to social assistance in the past three years, and the upcoming 5% increase to ODSP rates doesn't come close to addressing cost of living increases over these past years. We know that food alone has increased approximately 10% and food bank usage is at an all-time high.

Moreover, the crisis in housing in London is exacerbated by very large increases in rent over the past few years; 18% last year alone. The average price of a one bedroom unit now is close to \$1,200 and \$1,800 for a two bedroom apartment. This has meant that many landlords are highly motivated to evict long standing tenants in favour of newer tenants so that they can gain the value of those rental price changes. Shelter allowances for OW and ODSP remain at \$389 and \$497 respectively. The people we service, including the working poor, cannot afford market rents. Many vulnerable low-income tenants are simply not able to find new housing they can afford.

We support Councillor Cassidy's call to work with community partners to develop business plans for the use of these funds for low-income Londoners. For example, our clinic would support these funds could be used by allocating them to the Community Bridge Housing Program that assists low-income tenants to find and afford adequate housing. We believe this would be an effective way to prevent homelessness and take some pressure off the shelter system. We have an urgent need now for rental housing assistance now, in the form of rent supplements to keep low income Londoners from becoming homeless.

Thank you for your anticipated review of Councillor Cassidy's motion, which we fully support.

Yours truly,



Kristie Pagnielo
Executive Director



Mike Laliberte
Staff Lawyer



Theresa Kiefer
Housing Support Worker