



February 16, 2023

London City Council  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London ON  
N6A 4L9

Dear Council Members:

On behalf of CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, we are writing in support of the City of London's Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response initiative. Having collectively worked in the field of mental health and addictions for many years, we offer our strong endorsement of this work, which is the first of its kind in London and perhaps across the province.

There have been countless planning exercises in the past, but most of them have been sector-specific – for example, mental health services, addiction services, education, social services, violence against women services, and programs addressing homelessness. On occasion, the above services would collaborate; but never before have they all come together with the City, business owners, and developers, to consider the whole system and the partnerships required to make a real difference. For too long, there has been finger-pointing at various organizations, with the insinuation that “if someone just did a better job, these things wouldn't happen.” There is now a realization that the precipitants of the crises on the streets of London are complex and multi-faceted, and most certainly no one's fault. Therefore, the solutions must also be multi-pronged and well-coordinated, following a shared set of principles and commitment to the common good.

As various stakeholders have convened in the City-organized Health and Homelessness Summits over the last few months, there has been a palpable change in the way in which we have looked at the system, with difficult but positive conversations and steps toward tearing down silos and finding ways to work together. Existing partnerships are being enhanced and strengthened with community support – for example, **H.O.M.E.** (Health Outreach Mobile Engagement, which provides primary care, harm reduction, support with substance use, basic needs, and wraparound care services directly to people wherever they are) and **COAST** (Community Outreach and Support Team, which connects with individuals who are at risk of crisis or frequently experiencing crisis due to a struggle with mental health, mental illness, and/or addiction and provides intervention, de-escalation, and safe transition to appropriate care). Building on the demonstrated success of such programs, as well as the dialogue fostered by the Summits, organizations are beginning to plan additional collaborative initiatives in our community; and there is renewed energy for sustainable change.

CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services has always anchored our service delivery in the values of collaboration and accountability and has continually partnered with others in numerous programs across the region. For example, we have staff working within the hospitals to facilitate transitions for individuals as they return to the community. We partner with London Middlesex Community Housing to provide supports and programs to both clients and other residents living in their



buildings. We believe in a system lens in addressing the needs of our community and invest our resources in collective work that will have a positive impact.

At a time when the needs of our community are at an all-time high and our service providers are stretched and distressed at the inability to offer appropriate and timely care, the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community Response has brought a glimmer of hope that change is possible and that we can make London a better place for everyone to live. This transformative opportunity can position London as an example for other cities who are also struggling with these difficult situations. Most importantly, however, this initiative will save lives and reduce suffering for those who for too long have lived in the margins of our community.

Thank you for supporting this vital work in your role at London City Council.

Sincerely,

Beth Mitchell  
Co-CEO  
CMHA TVAMHS

Linda Sibley  
Co-CEO  
CMHA TVAMHS