

**From:** Jeff Hanks

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 8:55 AM

**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>; Jeff Hanks

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Tues Mar 28th Request for delegation status to present our petition to SPPC Committee Meeting

Dear City Clerk

We are asking London City Council to Declare a State of Emergency Related to Housing and would like to have delegate status at the SPPC committee meeting Tues Mar 28th at a time convenient to council to present our petition and have the allotted 5 min to speak in favor of the city doing so. Please contact me if you need any clarification or further information.

Jeff Hanks Co-organizer with London Regional Social Forum

<https://chnng.it/7f5hBPgFkN> Here is a link to our petition online.

Attached is also a letter of support from the Council of Canadians.

Dear Mayor Morgan and Councilors,

We, the London Chapter of the Council of Canadians write to strongly support London's making a declaration that homelessness and the housing crisis are a State of Emergency.

The Council of Canadians is a nation-wide citizens' group focused on social and environmental justice with a forty-year history. The London chapter is aware as you are of the beyond alarming facts showing the increasing numbers of Londoners unable to access the basic human need for housing. We hope you are as alarmed as we are to know that over 200 people have died on the streets of London in the last three years, (57 in 2022). It is unconscionable to know most of us lie warm in our beds while beleaguered shelter workers turn others away from shelter into a deadly Canadian winter night.

We know, as you do, that 6230 individuals and families are on a waitlist for social housing (up to 10 years) and 2241 are experiencing homelessness according to the London Community Foundation Vital Signs Report.<sup>1</sup> They await truly affordable housing, not at 80% of market value but geared to income housing or subsidized if they have no income, the only solution for those being left behind.

As you probably know, research strongly informs us that safe housing is the basic need that provides a footing for recovery from substance overuse and/or mental illness. This means some desperately needed housing also requires wrap around support and programs to create meaningful circumstances for recovery. We understand you may be guided in housing decisions by the upcoming Housing Summit recommendations. We hope they heavily endorse the needs of those who are being left behind and the need for geared to income solutions.

In keeping with the knowledge of London's poverty and housing organizations most connected with these problems we suggest that at least 2000 units be built annually to begin to bring down the precipitous growth of homelessness and the numbers of those in inadequate housing. We ask that 5 and 10 year plans and goals be shared with the public as soon as possible. Perhaps the CMHC can give no-interest loans to municipalities similar to the \$120 billion bank bailouts in 2009.

Beyond the waste of human health and potential there are costs to London in the form of extra policing, downtown business effects, etc. Instead of 50 plus new police hires, perhaps some of that huge sustained expenditure could be used for the basic needs of our left behind. A recent story out of Finland talks about their aggressive plan to house everyone and how it actually saves 21 thousand dollars for each person they house.<sup>2</sup> The positive effects on our economy once people are no longer forced to sleep in doorways of businesses downtown are obvious.

Why a declaration of a State of Emergency in our Homeless London population? This has been, to date, enacted in 6 municipalities: St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Ottawa (with a much smaller problem than us despite double the population), Peterborough, Thorold, and Goderich. What has it achieved so far? According to Ralston King, Ottawa councilor (who has agreed to speak to anyone on London's council who has questions, such as the mayor), it has created more dialogue between levels of government and also changed the context and urgency of these discussions. Further, a declaration shows that those in warm houses do care about those who are not, that we acknowledge their suffering and will strive to do better.

We know this growing problem is not only a municipal responsibility and we know London does take steps to recognize the growing problem of homelessness, but a declaration says London, like other municipalities, needs more resources to cope adequately. Toronto requested more funds and our homeless problem has been compared by front line workers to Toronto's problem as equal or worse. Incidentally, Toronto has begun to tax vacant homes and will administer a large fine for anyone that does not declare the status of their houses by the end of February.

According to Acorn's analysis of bill 23, municipalities will lose a lot of money in development fees and council will have a decreased ability to force developers to build deeply affordable housing.<sup>3</sup> This will further exacerbate the problem as do renovations, people coming to London from under resourced areas, the high influx of students, immigrant housing needs, the lack of rent controls and London being the fastest growing municipality in Ontario.

We urge City Council to join other municipalities in stating the reality that the situation and unnecessary deaths of the homeless in our city and the lack of deeply affordable housing necessitates declaring a state of emergency.

Sincerely,

Norah Fraser, Co-chair and Treasurer

David Heap, Co-chair, Peace and Social Justice Chair

Lynn Brown, Secretary

for London Chapter of the Council of Canadians

1. London Vitals Signs Report by Community Foundation London cited by Londoner newspaper article Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2022

<https://www.bethechangelondon.ca/housing?fbclid=IwAR1QTgRENpXFDPAHdGav0p6BCiURH5T50uzS0DUEfWiPiVT4bJ8a0H5m2KQ>

2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-wants-to-eradicate-homelessness-here-s-how-finland-is-doing-it-1.6728398?mibextid=Zxz2cZ&fbclid=IwAR3a-lvQoJ9Zdq5BoYWVZOcX7ljGG6uL4wOWS1mxl7WwA7o-Fp-dC5sDBDo>

3. <https://acorncanada.org/news/doug-fords-more-homes-built-faster-bill-23-destroys-cities-powers-to-build-protect-real-affordable-housing/>