



Thames Valley
Family Health Team



Regional
HIV/AIDS
Connection



London
InterCommunity
Health Centre



OPEN LETTER

Dear London City Council,

We're writing to you today to express our deep concern for the over 320 Londoners who are currently living outdoors in dangerously cold weather. Over the past week the temperatures have dropped considerably, and our teams are beyond devastated at the trauma they've been navigating consistently.

The Middlesex London Health Unit issued a cold weather alert and said people should stay inside. Sadly, too many people do not have an indoor space to turn to and we believe it's our responsibility as a community to provide that.

The scope of work our outreach teams conduct is impressive and not an easy feat. Yesterday in -20 degree weather our outreach team arrived on scene to find an individual with significant frostbite to his lower limbs. This individual was stuck underneath a tent that had collapsed on top of them. Their feet were completely frozen. Our outreach team ensured that this individual remained calm while contacting emergency services for further assessment and support. This individual attended hospital and remains in hospital undergoing medical care. This should not be the reality for frontline workers or individuals experiencing homelessness in our community.

Our teams have had to respond to people who have been released from institutions in the middle of the night with no place to go. Individuals new to homelessness are at significant risk as they typically lack the knowledge in resources to stay warm and indoors. In the middle of the night, our teams have no solutions except an offer of a blanket, supportive listening and wellness checks until services resume in the morning.

This is a state of emergency, and we cannot do this alone. We must come together as a community and no longer wait for what isn't coming.

It is January 21st, 2025, we need an immediate solution to the desperation and lack of care humans are experiencing. Our first and best choice is that the City opens indoor warming centres overnight with security and supports. A secondary suggestion is to set up heavy insulated tents, a trailer with washrooms and showers, as well as a common tent with a heat source. This location would require fencing and security with a collaborative outreach response to assist individuals with basic needs and supports for exiting their experience of homelessness.

It's important that this solution utilizes a low barrier approach to supporting individuals with complex needs. Every person should have the opportunity to be warm and safe in this weather.

We know this is not a long-term solution for our community and does not provide adequate care. This service model would be utilized as we continue to work towards long term solutions to support those most marginalized.

Please consider all possible options you have at your disposal. We need your help urgently.

In solidarity,

Chris Moss, Executive Director, London Cares Homeless Response Services
Sarah Campbell, Executive Director, The Ark Aid Mission
Chuck Lazenby, Executive Director, Unity Project
Mike McMahon, Executive Director, Thames Valley Family Health Team
Scott Courtice, Executive Director, London Intercommunity Health Centre
Martin MacIntosh, Executive Director, Regional HIV/Aids Connection
Pam Tobin, Executive Director, Canadian Mental Health Association
Allison DeBlair, Executive Director, 519 Pursuit