

Good Morning Everyone! Lesley Crompton Co-Lead of the Unsheltered Campaign. I sit here speaking as a member of 2 small grassroots network - Unsheltered Campaign and the Civil Hub. The Unsheltered Campaign mobilized with the start of the pandemic by a number of partners in the Civic Hub Waterloo Region, a support initiative led by SDCWR. The Unsheltered team has been advocating to municipal councils, has been raising awareness in the community, and coordinated a number of basic needs networks to reach the homeless when no washrooms, cooling centres, or food was available.

I am not an executive or even staff of a long standing and trusted agency. Does that invalidate my thoughts and my abilities? Likely it does in your eyes but in actuality, as a taxpayer, I have expected that you and the agencies were taking care of the homeless on my behalf. However, this does not seem to be happening. Life changes and the pandemic has taught us that we must approach everything from a new perspective. I am looking at the unsheltered and our support systems with fresh and critical eyes. Just as I did with my free, low-income tax clinic during the pandemic. I was the only one in the Waterloo Region doing low-income tax returns during this time due to flexibility, adaptability and non bureaucratic structures while meeting the privacy and confidentiality requirements of the CRAs as well as one major region agency . Agency for which I completed 150 returns prior to the original June 1 deadline. There is a time for agility, flexibility and innovation and the time is now.

Conceptually, I fully support your dorm-style housing approach with on-site support as one of many alternative solutions. Other than believing it is temporary and emergency. Both are misnomers. Just as dorms are not appropriate living arrangements for all post-secondary students; dorms, especially shared rooms, are not appropriate for all unsheltered.

Unfortunately, yet again your proposal is only looking to accommodate those men from the Radisson and the House of Hope. I expected a proposal that, at minimum, would have tripled the existing capacity. It opens up no options for the estimate of up to 650 other unsheltered individuals within the Waterloo Region. Those in encampments will continue to be in encampments this winter, relying on community members to keep them fed, warm and alive.

As well, this approach does not address the women and adult family units living within the encampments. In some encampments, the ratio of men/women is 50/50 or even higher than that percentage of women.

Hopefully, all these new community organizations and networks that have arisen during the pandemic and providing essential services expected of the government, will continue to operate as Ontario reopens. However, it also will leave you scrambling should a 2nd wave of COVID19 hits in Oct/Nov.

In addition to increasing the number of dorm-style residences you are leasing, would it not be better to start actively engaging these community organizations to work on alternative solutions with the Region and the other agencies? The community organizations and networks are telling

you they want change.. Listen and Engage... I bet if we put a group together, we could have the alternative housing planned in Cambridge ready by the November snowfall. As well, as another in Kitchener. With onsite support and ability for them to build intentional communities. Especially, if we can tap into Habitat for Humanity resources. There are Habitat for Humanity organizations that do tiny homes using the mortgage model as well as rents. Maybe our Regional Habitat can step in and help. This is the time for action, fast action and all hands on deck.

As some are aware, Regand Brusse and I have been advocating for and working with the family of 10 at Fackoury's. I have sat in their homes talking to the family of 10 about what they want, what their dreams and how they work as a family. And it is only 10 living there. One individual joined us at my house Sunday for a bbq and is coming back to do maintenance/repairs which is his passion and how he manages his addiction.

They want more than living in an encampment, more than just living in a hotel with limited control over their lives. They want permanency of housing..Being able to move once and know that they can be there until they are ready for their next move forward. They want to be able to use their skills and rebuild their lives rather than having to rely upon the goodness of strangers. They have their family rules just as any family does and by keeping it to a small group but providing a sheltered common space, kitchen, showers and washrooms, will allow them to grow and move on to the next steps in their dreams. And they do have dreams.

I am not ready to walk away from that family and have yet another person let them down. Are you? If you walk away without listening to me, to them, then you are not just walking away from a family of 10 but 640.

So in closing, I ask that not only do you proceed with the dorm style housing but you increase the number of resident facilities being leased as well you move swiftly to adopt and put in place alternative solutions in a more nible, adaptable and non bureaucratic ways. The Well Being Waterloo Region was All in 2020. Given snow in November, you have 3.5 months to meet that goal. The time for action is now.

Thank you