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Dear Colleagues,

As we move forward in trying to tackle the epidemic of homelessness being experienced in our community and reimagine a new approach to dealing with this crisis, all of us have acknowledged that we cannot succeed alone, that the provincial and the federal governments must play a role in their areas of responsibility.

It is equally important that we recognize other communities must continue to do their part. Our current social services are beyond capacity. Our available housing inventory, particularly in the rental market, is effectively zero. We have no capacity to do more. Unfortunately, that fact is seemingly being ignored by some in other jurisdictions across Ontario.

We accept and respect that those experiencing homelessness, including individuals in London, will move from community to community of their own volition and for a variety of reasons. What we must not accept, and what must be addressed, are those who are moved to London under false pretenses or against their will. This is no longer the subject of conjecture.

During the first six months of 2023, City of London staff has successfully diverted 319 individuals back to communities where they have a natural support network after having arrived in London seeking supports. That is how a compassionate system should function. However, of those 319 individuals, over 25% were sent here against their will, or under false pretenses, by various individuals and organizations from outside London. That represents almost one person every other day, and – it's important to keep in mind – this is incomplete data. It does not represent those individuals who are not self-identifying as having been sent to London from another community.

Those who relocate to other communities of their own freewill, for whatever reason, is commonplace and not for us to pass judgment. However, those who are being moved against their will or under the false promise of available resources in London is at best grossly misinformed, and at worst inhumane. These actions must cease, and those engaging in this type of activity must be held to account.

Therefore, I am seeking your support for the following motion:

*That the Mayor & Government Relations staff BE DIRECTED to a) undertake immediate advocacy efforts with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Big City Mayors Caucus, and the Government of Ontario to develop a united policy condemning the relocation of homeless individuals under false pretense or against their will;*

*b) And to further work with those partners to undertake the development of processes to stop this practice, including but not limited to the withdrawal of public funding, charitable, or not for profit status of any organization found to be actively engaged in such activities and/or the suspension of professional accreditation of individuals found to be engaged in such activities.*

*c) And to work with the province to develop a program by which those released from hospitals or detention centres are provided proper discharge planning that includes transportation back to their home communities.*

We have said all of London needs to be involved in tackling this problem. We have said that all levels of government need to do their part. I am asking us to us call on all communities in Ontario to also do their part.

Sincerely,

Shawn Lewis  
Deputy Mayor  
Ward 2 City Councillor