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Ontario NDP Caucus • Groupe parlementaire du NPD de l'Ontario

Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

January 11, 2023

Dear Premier Ford,

We are writing to bring a very serious matter to your attention.

At the beginning of this year, a valued member of our London community, Mykal West, tragically lost her life as a pedestrian in a train-crossing accident. Only 34 years old, Mykal was a life-long Londoner, a beloved daughter, mother, sister, and niece. Mykal has been [described](#) by her family as a sweet-spirited and fun-loving woman who fiercely loved her family and life. Unfortunately, reports of this tragic accident described her only as an unnamed 'homeless woman'.

We write to you as London MPPs to share the words of Mykal's grieving family and join them in advocating for a commitment to a provincial strategy that will end homelessness in Ontario. Mykal would not have been vulnerable if she could have found a safe place to stay, but there were no shelter beds available anywhere in the city. Mykal was failed by a system that stigmatized her and was unable to provide her basic needs while she struggled with the impacts of mental health challenges.

Mykal's family recognizes that homelessness is a complex social issue. Preventing people from becoming homeless and helping those who are experiencing homelessness find quality, stable housing requires a strong commitment and coordinated action from all levels of government. We join Mykal's family in calling on the government of Ontario to stop cutting funding for new affordable housing, to jumpstart construction of much-needed deeply affordable housing, and to implement new programs that support mental health and rehabilitation.

Premier, the homelessness crisis in our city is getting worse. With Mykal's death, London has lost 201 people experiencing homelessness in just three years. The London Food Bank reports that 20,000 Londoners were unable to afford food last year, a higher number than in any of the 36 years the food bank has operated. London's emergency shelters are consistently full, with just 140 shelter spaces for the estimated 400 or more Londoners sleeping and living outdoors.



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The City of London has identified addressing homelessness as a priority in its draft strategic plan. Since November 2022, the City has been working with more than 60 local organizations, agencies, and business groups on a community plan to address the crisis, and is holding the third Summit on Homelessness at the end of this month. The city and our community partners have an important part to play in achieving the goal of ending homelessness, but they need support from the provincial government. Instead, your government's funding cuts and policy changes are undermining that goal.

Premier, everyone should be able to live in a home they can afford that meets their needs. We join Mykal's family in urging your government to take responsibility for reducing and preventing homelessness. The Ontario NDP have been calling for a plan to end homelessness by 2025, which includes:

- A homes-first strategy to convert privately owned buildings to affordable homes;
- Establishing a public builder to finance and build 250,000 affordable homes at cost;
- Increased funding for social housing maintenance and repair;
- Increased funding to the Social Services Relief Fund program to help provide housing to people in need;
- Increased funding for the rent supplement program to prevent loss of housing;
- Vacancy control and strong renter protections to stabilize rental prices and keep affordable private-market housing;
- A doubling of social assistance rates so people in poverty can afford to pay rent.

We urge the Ontario government to respond to the homelessness crisis with the urgency and care that is required. Our city wants to work with you. We desperately need your government to come to the table with resources and a real plan.

Sincerely,

Peggy Sattler, MPP
London West

Terence Kernaghan, MPP
London North Centre

Teresa Armstrong, MPP
London-Fanshawe