

## Appendix Item A



February 7, 2025

Lambton County Council  
789 Broadway Street, Box 3000  
Wyoming ON N0N 1T0  
Canada

Dear Members of Council,

On behalf of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), a national charitable organization committed to ending homelessness, I am writing to express our support for the County of Lambton's recommendation against use of police to staff emergency shelters.

CAEH understands that the County of Lambton is facing challenges maintaining safety in emergency shelter and is actively seeking a solution. From our own experience working in communities across the country, backed by credible research and data, we know that police staffing in shelters poses significant challenges, and there are more effective ways forward to achieve safe and effective solutions to homelessness.

Police presence in emergency shelter presents the following challenges:

- **Trust:** Many individuals experiencing homelessness may have had negative interactions with law enforcement in the past. The presence of police can be distressing, unwelcome, and may deter people from accessing shelter.
- **Increase in Encampments:** Lack of adequate low-barrier shelter options is a common cause of unsheltered homelessness including encampments. People who feel unsafe or unwelcome in shelter may have no option but to sleep rough. This in turn displaces concerns around safety rather than resolves them – as well as increases risk to those that would otherwise seek shelter indoors.
- **Training:** It is best practice that emergency shelter staff are trained in trauma-informed service delivery. Police often lack the specialized training needed to effectively deliver supportive services that meet the complex needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- **Criminalization of Homelessness:** Criminalizing homelessness is ineffective, causes more harm, is very expensive. Employing police at emergency shelters places individuals at risk of arrest or other legal issues, rather than focusing on moving them into permanent housing solutions.

Best practice in emergency shelter service delivery are programs that are housing-focused and as low-barrier as possible, as demonstrated by other communities in Canada, such as [St. Thomas-Elgin](#). The ultimate objective of connecting people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing solutions is best met by adequately trained staff that are equipped to provide support, rather than enforcement.

The County of Lambton has been participating in CAEH's Built for Zero Canada program since 2020, during which time they have actively worked toward data-driven system improvements. The community has been recognized by CAEH for having Quality By-Name Data (2022) and a quality Coordinated Access System (2023). These milestones serve as evidence that the community has a system equipped to respond to homelessness in a housing-focused manner.

We are excited to offer our full support and expertise to the County as you move forward with your work on ending homelessness. We stand ready to collaborate with your team to provide the resources and guidance needed to ensure that the emergency sheltering response is not only effective, but sustainable and compassionate.

Sincerely,



Anna McGregor

Senor Director, Community Impact

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