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

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Room 281
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

July 15, 2020

Dear Premier Ford,

We are writing to express our profound concern about the financial pressures facing the City of London without an immediate commitment of emergency operating funding.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, London City Council acted quickly and decisively in the best interests of Londoners to flatten the curve and protect the health of residents, providing much-needed supports for businesses and vulnerable populations. Through collaboration with local stakeholders, council led the process of establishing new cross-sector networks to assist businesses and organizations to pivot in approach and service delivery and ensure that community needs were being met.

In the face of the unprecedented social and economic challenge created by COVID-19, London Mayor Ed Holder has stated that "municipalities represent both the front line and the bottom line," mandated to meet the essential needs of residents while balancing the budget. The City of London has already made difficult decisions to respond to the budgetary impact of the pandemic, including reducing transit services, cancelling non-essential maintenance work on water and wastewater treatment, laying off or delaying hiring of 1,500 city employees, and putting a hold on critical new initiatives like the Core Area Action Plan. Despite these measures, staff are projecting a shortfall of at least \$13.5 million by the end of August, directly due to COVID-19. Options to further reduce the deficit are running out, which means that addressing the shortfall in the 2021 operating budget could put critical front-line services in jeopardy or force significant property tax increases. Without immediate supports from upper levels of government, London City Council will have no choice but to abandon or delay multi-year budget priorities, implement tax hikes, or make more drastic cuts to the vital services that Londoners and the region rely upon. London is the heart of southwestern Ontario and neighbouring municipalities depend on London for vital services. To ignore London at this crucial time is to ignore residents of Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Lambton, Chatham-Kent, Huron, and Perth.

Ontario NDP Caucus Services

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Premier, together we are calling on you to recognize the urgency of protecting the essential services that Londoners rely on. It is imperative that your government commit to working with the federal government to ensure that London is provided with at least \$13.5 million in immediate emergency operating relief. London City Council needs a firm commitment now that this funding will flow, to prevent impossible budget choices from having to be made.

The COVID-19 crisis is being felt most acutely at the local level. Addressing the crisis and enabling cities to prepare for recovery and renewal requires the full commitment of all levels of government. We strongly urge the province of Ontario to step up and fulfill its responsibility to Londoners.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to your response.

Terence Kernaghan
MPP London North Centre

Teresa Armstrong
MPP London-Fanshawe

Peggy Sattler
MPP London West

cc. City of London Mayor Ed Holder
Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing