



To: Community Safety and Crime Prevention Advisory Committee

From: Stephen Lecce, President, University Students' Council at Western

RE: STUDENT FEEDBACK ON SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION IN LONDON

The University Students' Council would like to thank the Advisory Committee for the invitation to share several priorities regarding safety and crime prevention. Though my comments are focused through a student issues, I would note that many of these priorities are shared by the entire London community.

1. REDUCE BURGLARY OF STUDENT RENTAL HOUSING DURING VACATION PERIODS

During summer months, the December holiday season, Reading Week in February, and long-weekends throughout the year such as Thanksgiving, student rental housing is at a heightened risk for burglary due to the large exodus of the student population back to their home communities. As such, there are less 'eyes on the street' in near campus neighbourhoods, and many properties appear vacated, particularly during the winter vacation periods when driveways and walkways are not shovelled.

Several actions could be taken to address this priority:

- Improve education among the student population regarding steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of burglary. Education could be provided in partnership with Western's Off-Campus Housing Service, or the City of London could take up the issue on its own.
- Educate landlords regarding improving the security of their property, particularly during vacation periods. The City could partner with the London Property Management Association (LPMA) to provide educational materials to landlords regarding this issue; the LPMA is an excellent resource for landlords, and would likely be a willing partner in this endeavour.
- Develop tactics aimed at improving the sense of community among student and non-student citizens, which would hopefully result in all residents acting as 'good neighbours'; for instance, permanent residents would watch out for their student neighbours' property during vacation periods, and students would take greater pride in their neighbourhood, and be more sensitive to the needs of permanent residents.
- Develop a program – potentially in partnership with the university and college – to clear snow, stamp down snowy walkways, and monitor properties for signs of burglary during vacation periods. Such a program exists in several other Ontario communities with large student populations that are concentrated in near-campus neighbourhoods.
- Increase the police presence in near campus neighbourhoods to deter burglary during vacation periods. Students note an increased police presence, and a very active police media relations effort, during September and April to address the concerns of all residents affected by anti-social behaviour that typically arises during these periods; students would appreciate increased patrols and police media relations efforts during vacation periods to reduce burglary.

2. IMPROVE PERSONAL SAFETY IN NEAR-CAMPUS NEIGHBOURHOODS.

This past year Western students received a significant scare due to a perpetrator entering unlocked student homes, and watching tenants as they slept. Many other students, at times, feel unsafe in near-campus neighbourhoods, and others are simply unaware of steps they could take to improve their personal safety. The University of Western Ontario and the University Students' Council takes many steps to help improve safety on and off campus, including the USC Campus Safety Commission, the Rape Aggression Defence (RAD) program, Western Foot Patrol, and educational programming offered by the Campus Community Police Service, and Residences.

Another action that could be undertaken to address this priority:

- Safety audits of the built and natural environment in near campus neighbourhoods to identify gaps, and plan for enhancements. Enhancements could include improved lighting, addressing overgrown landscaping to improve sightlines, and addressing any other elements of the built and natural environment that would enhance safety. Audits

could be spearheaded by the City, but could also be undertaken by a host of other stakeholders including neighbourhood associations, and the students' council.

3. ENHANCE THE SAFETY OF RENTAL HOUSING.

The vast majority of landlords offer safe rental housing to their tenants. Unfortunately, the actions of a single negligent landlord could have tragic repercussions for the entire community. As such, we are of the belief that the rental housing industry should be subject to the same degree of regulation and proactive inspection as other industries offering products and services that could harm their customers. Presently, interior inspections of rental housing are only done in reaction to complaints – we believe all tenants, not just those with the savvy to recognize safety hazards and wherewithal to levy complaints – should be guaranteed that their units meet safety codes.

Actions to address this priority:

- Enhance proactive, targeted enforcement based on previous history of complaints, and Census data. Census data identifies, through self reporting of citizens on Census forms, residential structures in need of major repair. This data can be mined to precisely identify particular areas of the City in need of attention. Past complaints could also be used as an indicator of areas to target. It should be noted that tenants would need to consent to inspections, so not all rental housing in targeted areas would be inspected.
- License rental housing, with the policy objective of enhancing tenant safety. A proposal is currently before the City that recommends licensing rental housing structures that have 6-units or less. Licensing would include an inspection of the property to ensure compliance with all safety codes. The proposed licensing fee of \$30 a year – less than \$3 a month – is a small price for landlords to pay to ensure their units are safe for tenants.

4. INTRODUCE LATE NIGHT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS.

During exam periods, students study very late into the evening. Many students, and many London citizens, work at part-time jobs that end well past the time when the final LTC bus has left the road. Of course, many students and other Londoners are also out late enjoying dining, entertainment, and all the other wonderful commercial and cultural venues this 'Creative City' has to offer.

From a campus perspective, we offer late night shuttle services during exam periods to deliver students safely from the Library to their homes. As mentioned earlier, we also offer Western Foot Patrol to walk students home.

Another action to address this priority:

- Work with the London Transit Commission to pilot a late-night bus service program. We understand that the economic benefits to the LTC of running such a program may not be pay immediate dividends, which presents a significant challenge for the Commission in moving forward with such an initiative. As such, we believe the City of London, possibly in conjunction with sponsors, could provide funds to pilot a late-night program to test the impact on safety, and also to determine if a sustainable economic model is possible.