

To: Chair Michael Harris
Date: January 6, 2023
RE: Submission for consideration in the deliberations for the 2023 Region of Waterloo Budget.

This is a request for funding to provide for security services at the oneROOF Youth Services location on Sheldon Ave., Kitchener. Since the opening of the shelter at the former Schwaben Club, there has been a noticeable increase in incidences involving adults at their shelter and the immediate neighbourhood.

oneROOF Youth Services is committed to providing for the safety, support and overall well-being of youth who are experiencing homelessness, and youth who are at-risk of homelessness, aged 12-25, in Waterloo Region.

Historically, oneROOF Youth Services has had a strict policy where they denied adults (over 25) onto property. The reasons for this include the vulnerability of the youth they support, the very real threat of sex trafficking and grooming of youth, increased drug sales, violence etc. Since the building of their Next Steps Housing Supportive Housing building, they have had to alter their policies slightly to allow for tenant guests that might be outside their mandate. However, they have maintained strict protocols for signing in of guests and limits regarding the length of visits.

Unfortunately, oneROOF has noticed a marked increase in adults wandering into their property since the opening of the Schwaben Club Shelter. The foot traffic has increased dramatically, and adults come on site totally uninvited. This has increased the incidents of violence and the issuance of No Trespass Orders; as well as complaints from youth who are feeling unsafe, staff who are reluctant and ill-equipped to deal with adults and neighbours who are demanding oneROOF keep these folks off their property. Since moving to Sheldon Ave oneROOF has worked hard to alleviate NIMBYism, but sadly it has been reawakened due to the increased adult presence in the neighborhood.

Staff, youth and neighbours are seeking security on site and to patrol the surrounding streets due to feeling unsafe and threatened by these adults.

In the month of December, oneROOF had 22 critical incidences that involved adults coming onto the property and either causing conflict with youth or with staff. A specific example of one of those incidences was an adult wanting a youth to come outside to him, and when told to leave, threw rocks through the youth's window. The adult was trying to get the youth's attention. The adult verbally threatened staff when asked to leave and told them he would "mess them up and follow them home". He claimed he could go where he pleased, and the youth was "his" and we should stay out of it.

OneROOF is seeking funding to employ 4-5 security staff to help alleviate the growing tensions and incidences of violence and/or confrontations. The preference would be to employ security guards during the day, evenings and overnight. OneROOF would prefer that existing day staff not be responsible for enhanced security, along with their regular duties.

Respectfully submitted by Councillor Rob Deutschmann