

To: The April 3rd, 2023, Cobourg Town Council Meeting-of-the-Whole.
From: Keith Oliver, 327 Walton Street, Cobourg, (anytime cell 905-375-8540)
Subject: **The housing crisis and "Peace, Order and Good Government"**.

I'm appearing before you tonight as an individual who, like many others, is becoming increasingly frustrated by our inability to work together as a community and solve the pressing problems of (1) homelessness, (2) housing-affordable-to-all and (3) the belief that those of us who are not personally affected by such challenges are different from those who are, that they have somehow made bad choices and should therefore be left to suffer the consequences. "*Lock 'em up!*" some say and blame our Chief of Police for not doing so.

These issues have been in existence in our community for many years and are only getting worse. Why? Why have we not been able to find solutions?

Watching the public discussion around these issues as found at Council, in the media and on John Draper's "Cobourg News Blog", what I find most alarming is how that discussion has **degenerated into a state of what can only be described as chaos**. There is a conviction that whoever shouts the loudest will win. **This chaos is beginning to undermine our precious shared confidence that those we elect to govern will do so to the benefit of us all.**

Language is becoming more extreme; individuals are confronting each other instead of listening and engaging in constructive criticism; misinformation is being taken as the truth; a bias toward those in need is increasing; some have publicly called Councillors "stupid"; another has called the proposed six month 12 unit sleeping cabin experiment at the Memorial Arena "a shanty town".

Finally, out of a sense of frustration over the lack of real progress, well intentioned individuals and groups are implementing solutions on their own.

What is missing and what is desperately needed is inclusive and effective leadership. Some say it already exists in that the issue of housing is the responsibility of the County alone. I say the County has had its turn and has failed miserably!

Cobourg from its inception has been the urban centre of a rural community. It was among the first to be named a Municipality under the Municipal Act of 1850. We have benefitted from that relationship. Our institutions, our health facilities, our retail and professional service economy, our collective wealth, our ability to debate, plan and act on issues that can be called "close to home". You, the elected members of Cobourg Town Council, have the responsibility to lead.

Having said that, many questions remain as to what form that leadership should take if it's not to become top-down, or quickly dominated by one interest or another; how to ensure it becomes truly inclusive, effective and results in a public conviction that progress is under way and that solutions in one form or another will be found.

One possible form that leadership could take is through the creation of a "Housing Summit" which would begin with a private forum in which those present represent all aspects of the housing problem; that they have a sense of a shared responsibility and a passion to succeed; that their goal should be to map out a process that as the Housing Summit expands it becomes as inclusive of others as possible and engages the public further in its' search for effective solutions.

Initially the Housing Summit could be limited to 12 and include a contractor, developer, financier, real estate agent, urban designer, architect, urban planning staff, representatives of Town and County government as well as the Green Wood Coalition, Habitat for Humanity and the Help Network.

A Housing Summit and its many Forums would encourage new ideas, new technologies, new relationships and new design.

As an example, under the heading of New Technologies there are the successful innovations in prefabricated foundations and energy exchange systems first built into the Waterloo Region Green Home in 2000 ... or the use of modular prefabricated box technology now being successfully used in Toronto as it fulfils its pledge to create over 3,000 rent-to-income dwellings.

Finally there is the mandate as first inscribed in the British North America Act of 1867 (now called the Canadian Constitution Act), that the goal of our system of self-government is to create a Just Society based on "**Peace, Order and Good Government**".

There is one related matter that will appear before you this evening under item 10.3 on the Agenda. There Council will be asked to make a decision on the future of the Cobourg Collegiate West property at 117 Durham Street. **This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Cobourg.**

I respectfully suggest that Council delay any decision that would affect the final use of the property until such time as it has seen **one or more detailed urban design plans for the property** including the southern two acres of undevelopable land. **Good design is invaluable in explaining the possible. Good design solves many problems.**

PS:

One can find a more detailed description of how the 117 Durham Street site can be developed according to an approved urban design plan at virtually no cost to the Town, in my post of April 2 at 10:06 pm on John Draper's March 31 blog entitled "Cobourg Decision Requested on Old CDCI Property". (search "Cobourg News Blog" to access John's website).