



COMMUNITY
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GREY BRUCE

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July 13, 2026

Annette Pedlar, Executive Director
Safe 'N Sound Grey Bruce
310 8th Street East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 1L4

RE: Letter of Support for the Safe 'N Sound Neighbourhood Response Team (NRT) Program

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the Safe 'N Sound Neighbourhood Response Team (NRT) Program and its continued role in strengthening community wellbeing in Owen Sound and Grey Bruce.

The 2026 Grey Bruce *Vital Signs* Report identifies housing insecurity, affordability challenges, social connection, health outcomes, and community belonging as some of the most significant factors influencing wellbeing in our region. The report notes that housing and homelessness are among the foremost considerations affecting community health, economic vitality, and demand on public and emergency services. It also highlights the importance of fostering belonging, social inclusion, resilience, and coordinated community responses to emerging challenges.

The NRT program directly addresses these priorities. Through a harm-reduction and trauma-informed approach, the team provided proactive outreach, wellness checks, de-escalation, system navigation, housing support, and connections to healthcare and social services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use concerns. In just 150 days, the pilot achieved over 1,600 participant and community interactions and delivered more than 2,200 supports throughout Owen Sound's River District. The connection between the NRT program and the wellbeing indicators identified in *Vital Signs* is clear.

Community Belonging and Social Inclusion: *Vital Signs* emphasizes that strong communities are built through connection, engagement, and a sense of belonging. At the same time, the report warns that social gaps, isolation, and barriers to inclusion continue to exist within Grey Bruce. The NRT program created trusted relationships with some of our community's most vulnerable residents while also serving businesses, agencies, healthcare providers, and members of the public. By providing compassionate, dignity-based support and acting as a bridge between residents and essential services, the program strengthened social connectedness and helped build trust throughout the community. Community survey respondents repeatedly identified relationship-building, de-escalation, and community assistance as key benefits of the initiative.

Housing Stability and Homelessness Response: The *Vital Signs* report identifies homelessness and housing affordability as critical regional challenges, noting that hundreds of households in Grey Bruce experience homelessness annually and that affordable housing remains out of reach for many residents. NRT staff worked directly with unhoused individuals to connect them to

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emergency shelter, housing supports, health services, and community agencies. During periods of extreme winter weather, the team provided life-saving outreach, winter clothing, blankets, wellness checks, and transportation assistance. Their presence helped mitigate the risks associated with homelessness while creating pathways toward longer-term stability.

Health and Wellness: While *Vital Signs* reports strong self-reported mental wellness across Grey Bruce, it also highlights concerns related to substance use, access to healthcare, and vulnerable populations requiring support. The NRT program contributed directly to community health outcomes through harm reduction, wellness checks, post-overdose follow-up, support accessing medications and appointments, and coordination with healthcare providers and social service agencies. By engaging individuals where they are and reducing barriers to care, the team helped promote health, safety, and dignity for those most at risk.

Community Safety and System Efficiency: The *Vital Signs* report recognizes the value of coordinated partnerships and upstream prevention approaches in creating healthier and more resilient communities. The NRT program served as a crucial non-emergency response option for businesses and community members. Survey responses consistently demonstrated that the team's specialized de-escalation skills reduced reliance on police for situations involving distress, mental health concerns, and social vulnerability. Business owners described the program as an essential resource that improved safety while ensuring individuals received appropriate support rather than criminalization.

The evidence from both the NRT Pilot Program Report and the Grey Bruce *Vital Signs* Report demonstrates that investments in community outreach, homelessness response, harm reduction, and relationship-based support contribute significantly to overall community wellbeing. The NRT program has proven itself to be an effective, practical, and compassionate response to identified community needs.

For these reasons, I strongly support the continuation and expansion of the Safe 'N Sound Neighbourhood Response Team Program as a vital component of a healthier, safer, more inclusive, and more resilient Grey Bruce.

Sincerely,

Stuart Reid
Executive Director



To: Mayor Boddy and Members of Owen Sound City Council

Re: Support for the Safe 'N Sound Neighbourhood Response Team (NRT)

Dear Mayor Boddy and Members of Council,

On behalf of the Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our strong support for Safe 'N Sound Grey Bruce and its efforts to secure continued funding and support for the Neighbourhood Response Team (NRT).

The Chamber believes the City of Owen Sound should support this initiative as it provides meaningful benefits to both our River District business community and individuals experiencing homelessness and hardship. The NRT was created to serve as a bridge between businesses and vulnerable community members by offering non-emergency outreach, social navigation, de-escalation support, and connections to essential services.

Although the program operated for only a short period, the NRT demonstrated its value to our community. By responding to non-emergency concerns, assisting individuals in crisis, helping connect people to housing and community supports, and working directly with River District businesses, the program provided a practical and compassionate approach to addressing complex social challenges in our downtown.

The Chamber has consistently advocated for a vibrant, welcoming River District. We recognize that business success and community well-being are closely connected. Programs such as the NRT help businesses by providing an appropriate response to situations that do not require police or emergency services while ensuring vulnerable individuals are treated with dignity and connected to the supports they need.

It is important to recognize that the NRT was still in its infancy when pilot funding came to an end. As a pilot project, it was designed to test a new and innovative approach, gather results, and demonstrate community impact before long-term funding decisions could be made. The Chamber believes the program showed significant promise and deserves the opportunity to continue, grow, and further demonstrate its value.

Supporting the continuation of the Neighbourhood Response Team would represent a positive step forward for Owen Sound. It aligns with the City's commitment to a safe, thriving River District while also recognizing the need for compassionate solutions that support our unhoused population. The Chamber feels that Council would be acting in good

faith toward its business community by partnering with Safe 'N Sound and other community stakeholders to help sustain this important initiative.

We respectfully encourage Council to support Safe 'N Sound's efforts to secure ongoing funding and operational support for the Neighbourhood Response Team. Continued investment in programs like the NRT will contribute to a safer, healthier, and more inclusive downtown for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to the residents, businesses, and visitors of Owen Sound.

Sincerely,

Tiffany James

CEO

Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce

M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre



July 9, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre is pleased to provide this letter of support for Safe 'N Sound's Neighbourhood Response Team (NRT) and the development of its new year-round emergency shelter.

For many years, M'Wikwedong and Safe 'N Sound have worked in partnership to support individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, substance use, and mental health challenges. Our organizations recognize that strong collaboration is essential to improving outcomes for some of our community's most vulnerable members.

Indigenous Peoples continue to be disproportionately represented among those experiencing homelessness. At Safe 'N Sound, Indigenous participants access services at a rate approximately nine times higher than their representation in the general population. This reflects the ongoing impacts of colonization, intergenerational trauma, and systemic barriers to housing, healthcare, and other essential services.

Both the Neighbourhood Response Team and the new shelter will strengthen the supports available to Indigenous community members. The NRT provides relationship-based outreach, de-escalation, and connections to services that help prevent crises and improve access to care. The new shelter will provide a safe place to stay while creating greater opportunities for participants to connect with housing, healthcare, and culturally appropriate supports. We also appreciate that community partners, including M'Wikwedong, will have dedicated opportunities to meet with participants onsite each morning.

These initiatives complement and strengthen M'Wikwedongs' work by improving coordination between services and creating more opportunities for Indigenous community members to access the supports they need. They represent an important investment in community wellness, safety, and reconciliation.

M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre is proud to support these initiatives and our ongoing partnership with Safe 'N Sound.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. K. Abram", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Renee Abram
Executive Director

Heather Prescott

[REDACTED]
Owen Sound, ON [REDACTED]

July 10, 2026

To Mayor and Members of Council,

Re: Letter of Support for Safe 'N Sound's 24-Hour Shelter in Owen Sound

Please accept this letter as my personal letter of support for Safe 'N Sound's proposed 24-hour shelter in Owen Sound. I am writing as a private citizen, community member, mother, and nurse practitioner with experience in addictions, mental health, and street medicine. This letter reflects my own views and does not represent the position of any employer, agency, or organization with which I am affiliated.

I live in Owen Sound and am raising four children here. I have raised them to love this community, to see the dignity in all people, and to understand that connection is one of the strongest forms of harm reduction we have. A healthy community is not built by pushing vulnerable people out of sight. It is built by making sure people have somewhere safe to go, someone who knows their name, and a chance to remain connected to care, housing, recovery, family, and hope.

I have seen firsthand how homelessness affects health. Lack of shelter worsens wounds, infections, chronic disease, mental health symptoms, substance-use harms, sleep deprivation, trauma responses, survival crime and crisis service use. People cannot stabilize their health, reduce substance-related harms, attend appointments, take medications consistently, or work toward recovery while simply trying to survive outside, in doorways, in unsafe housing, or in constant displacement.

A 24-hour shelter is not just a place to sleep. It is health care, overdose prevention, violence prevention, discharge planning, housing stabilization, and community safety. It is a practical, human rights-based intervention that reduces avoidable suffering and creates a meaningful point of connection for people who are too often left outside every other system of care.

Safe 'N Sound has already been doing this work in Owen Sound for many years. Their drop-in space provides everyday necessities such as food, clothing, showers, laundry, hygiene supplies, harm-reduction supplies, warm drinks, crisis support, housing help, advocacy, and referrals. These basic needs are not small things. They are often the first step toward trust, safety, and engagement.

The NRT pilot also reflects the value of year-round social navigation and appropriate diversion from police, EMS, and fire when emergency response is not required. Through practical, relationship-based outreach, NRT helps connect people to services, supports businesses when

concerns arise, and helps residents and shoppers feel safer. Its collaboration across local partner agencies strengthens a coordinated community response rooted in dignity, connection, and care.

As a mother, I want my children to grow up in a city that responds to suffering with courage rather than fear. I want them to see that all community members belong here, including people who are unhoused, using substances, living with mental illness, surviving poverty, or carrying trauma. The presence of poverty and homelessness in our community is not a reason to withdraw compassion. It is a reason to deepen our commitment to practical solutions.

Safe shelter with appropriate support and coordinated outreach are practical solutions.

I strongly support Safe 'N Sound's 24-hour shelter and urge Council to support both a safe, accessible, year-round shelter space and year-round NRT services in Owen Sound. Together, these are necessary investments in health, dignity, public safety, housing stability, and the kind of community we say we want to be.

Sincerely,

Heather Prescott