

July 16th, 2026

Attention: **Annette Pedlar**, Executive Director - Safe N' Sound

Re: Support for New Shelter Building Site at 612-2nd AvenueE. Owen Sound

On behalf of the YMCA Owen Sound Grey Bruce, I am pleased to provide a letter of support for the establishment of a new shelter located at 612-2nd Avenue E., in Owen Sound. Homelessness across Ontario and within smaller rural settings is rising and increasingly visible. This includes people seeking shelter through encampments, and also includes hidden, temporary solutions like couch surfing, experienced by 11.2% of Canadians. Absolute homelessness, where individuals have no shelter at all, affects 2.5% of households, or nearly 938,000 people, during their lifetime. These numbers reflect a growing crisis that intersects with broader affordability issues and mirrors what we see happening locally with our fellow community members.

For community partners working to end poverty, the complexity of homelessness can present as overwhelming. This urgency is often heightened when the lack of housing is matched only by a concurrent lack of shelter from the elements. The situation that we face includes community members living without a place to call home with some not even having a place in which they can escape the elements. This experience is shaped by systemic discrimination, income disparity, and policy decisions that have failed to prioritize deeply affordable housing. The solution to solving this complex issue is achievable but requires broad buy-in and time. Meanwhile, people need to be able to access shelter, to stay safe and have their individual support needs met.

To address this solvable social dilemma, both professionals in building development and service delivery agree that there needs to be a range of housing options, for people experiencing homelessness within Ontario. Many people experiencing chronic homelessness also need housing with supports, which combines affordability with services like mental health care, addiction treatment, and trauma recovery.

Having a location within Owen Sound that can be easily accessed, affords people the privacy they are entitled to and also provides the space for people to meet with community supports. While moving to 612 – 2nd Avenue East will be a change for the community, it does provide a benefit to many of our most vulnerable and resilient neighbours. This expansion of supportive services creates a stepping stone for people to exit chronic and acute homelessness, leading to greater sustainability, health and socio-economic outcomes.

Homelessness disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, newcomers, lone-parent families headed by women, and people with disabilities. These groups are also overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness. Establishing an equitable, accessible and purpose-designed site for people to utilize and access exit points from homelessness is a key development for the City of Owen Sound!

Ending homelessness in Owen Sound Grey Bruce is possible—but only if we treat housing as a human right and work together to achieve this shared goal.

MShute

Matthew Shute

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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