

December 5, 2023

Dear Mayor Richard Leatham and West Elgin Municipal Council,

We respectfully write to you today with concerns about the closure of the physical office of Employment Services Elgin in West Lorne. We share these concerns as community residents and taxpayers, and our thoughts expressed today are our own and are in no way connected or influenced by any employer of ours', past or present.

Last month, Employment Services Elgin notified you that they would not be renewing their lease at their location at 160 Main Street in West Lorne. This is public knowledge, as referenced in the Municipal Council Agenda for November 23.

For those who may be unaware of the structure, West Elgin Support Services was a partnership of local non-profit support agencies. Employment Services Elgin was the core tenant and they provided office space for other agencies to use. Over the years some of these partners included: YWCA St. Thomas Elgin, Ontario Works, West Elgin Community Health Centre Transportation Dispatch, Violence Against Women Services Elgin County, Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic, Quad County Support Services, and Community Living Elgin. The centre developed strong working relationships with other organizations such as Contact North and Fanshawe College. It was also an outreach location for Service Canada, who attended twice monthly to help with services such as Employment Insurance and CPP.

We are sure you'd agree that losing access to a central hub of community services in this way is by no means an enhancement to services. Certainly, the broad model of service that Employment Services Elgin plans to deliver will provide benefit for a select number of residents with very specific needs.

We understand that a great deal of community services can now be offered remotely, or from a temporary location, but urge you to consider that not everyone has access to the technology or literacy skills to do this.

We would like to respectfully request that council consider the impact of this loss to the community they serve. We would encourage you to ask your community residents about their experiences using the services there, and see if it is something that could be supported on a smaller level with Municipal support.

By closing the office location, local residents will have limited access to job opportunities, there will foreseeably be a reduction in skill development workshops and programs that were readily available locally, and this will hinder the overall economic growth of the community. Additionally,

residents may face challenges in finding relevant information and support for employment, potentially resulting in a decline in the overall well-being of the community.

Residents should be concerned about the closure of West Elgin Support Services because it directly affects their livelihoods and economic stability. This office provided essential services like job placement, career counseling, and skill development, which contribute to individual and community prosperity. The closure will lead to reduced access to resources, and a negative impact on the overall quality of life.

Being actively involved and advocating for the preservation of this office is crucial for residents to sustain their economic well-being.

We propose a community town hall meeting with the funders, board of directors and management team of this organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "JBlanchard".

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Jenn Blanchard

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Keech-Leveille".

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Jennifer Keech