

March 17th, 2022

To the Municipal Council, West Elgin, Ontario

Greetings.

I write to ask for your action to help family units and individuals in West Elgin who are finding themselves in difficulty because of the increasing cost of housing, whether rental or purchasable.

The latest case that has come to my attention is that of an elderly woman and her handicapped son who are being evicted from what is barely able to be called a dwelling even though they have been faithfully paying their rent. I find it hard to believe that anyone would have to live in the kind of 3rd world conditions that were described to me. And I also find it difficult to believe that landlords would put the very lives of tenants at risk by evicting them in order to sell the property during this time of real estate boom.

During my over 40 years of Christian Ministry in several provinces as well as in El Salvador, one of the common needs that presented itself was safe, affordable housing. Due to economic conditions, health issues, age or infirmity, affordable housing can be and is an almost insurmountable obstacle for some people, preventing them from having a safe and secure living accommodation.

In Thunder Bay, I first became acquainted with Habitat for Humanity, and I participated in three different builds there. These builds were done on what had been vacant lots on which taxes had fallen into arrears. The City cooperated with Habitat by donating those properties so that, once a house was built and the new owners installed, the City would realize a tax benefit.

In Virden Manitoba, I was one of the founding members and secretary of the local Habitat for Humanity committee. The church in which I was ministering was closing, and decided to donate ½ of their property to Habitat so that Habitat could build a duplex to benefit two low income families. That duplex was built with volunteer help from the community. One contractor donated his team's labour (about \$10,000 worth) for digging the foundation and building from the footings up to the main floor. Since I left Virden, the committee has continued with at least two more dwellings of which I am aware. (Virden has a population of around 2000...). Again, one of the selling points for the town for that first build was that the Church's land (which had not been taxed), would become two taxable properties, as well as providing decent and affordable housing to two families.

I am sure that West Elgin would benefit greatly by partnering with Habitat for Humanity. There surely must be some land that could be donated, with a view to tax benefits once the construction of dwelling would be completed.

I urge Council to take this matter seriously.

Yours sincerely, (Rev) James M. Patterson, 147 Main Street, West Lorne, ON.
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