



Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Main Legislative Building, Room 281, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

VIA EMAIL

Subject: Humanitarian crisis in Thunder Bay

Dear Premier Wynne:

I am writing to ask you to intervene personally in a humanitarian crisis currently unfolding in Thunder Bay.

Shelter House, an emergency shelter there, has announced that, effective April 1, it will suspend its Street Outreach Service (SOS) program. The program is a mobile service that helps people who lack housing, are publicly intoxicated, or living in encampments, providing them with food, shelter, transportation, and addictions counseling.

In 2016, Shelter House provided shelter to 928 individuals for a total of 20,352 bed stays. The SOS program provided 4,923 transports, and gave out 21,696 amenities such as blankets, coats, food, and water to homeless people in need. And make no mistake: this program saves lives.

All of this work will end for want of \$200,000 a year.

There is no question that the SOS program saves money for the province by intervening in the lives of our most desperate citizens before they need medical care or require the attention of police. However, money is not the issue here. This is truly a humanitarian crisis in the making. In the name of treating all Ontarians with the dignity and respect they deserve, please intervene and make arrangements to keep the SOS program in operation.

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My union represents some 60 workers at Shelter House, members of our Local 738. They do the work they do because they care deeply about the well-being of their fellow citizens. Please support them in this invaluable work.

I strongly encourage you to invest 2 minutes and 57 seconds of your time learning about this issue by watching Shelter House's video about the SOS program, available at www.shelterhouse.on.ca.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

- c. Patrick Brown, Leader, Official Opposition
- Andrea Horwath, Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
- Joe Everett, Unit Steward, OPSEU Local 738, Shelter House
- Silvana Cacciatore, President, OPSEU Local 738
- OPSEU Executive Board