

August 5, 2022

To our community:

At United Way Elgin Middlesex, we believe in a community where everyone matters, where everyone has a fair shot at a good life. That includes the right to housing, safety and an income that allows one to not just survive but to thrive.

We are grateful for the courage and efforts of The Forgotten 519 to shine an intense light on the realities that far too many of our neighbours are facing. We are in a convergence of crises with poverty, homelessness, and opioid poisonings – all resulting in the unacceptable reality that people are living and dying on our streets. We share the community's grief over the deaths of these Londoners, and at how their loss has diminished us all.

When we talk to our colleagues working on the frontlines, we often hear the term “moral injury” to describe what they are experiencing. This goes beyond the pandemic burnout and exhaustion many of us have been feeling.

Every day, front-line social service workers are put in the position of choosing which person gets their attention, access to a program or a safe place to sleep. They do this knowing that others will go without their help.

We also hurt for the toll this is taking on our friends working in these conditions, knowing that there are simply not enough resources to give everyone the help they deserve.

We are encouraged to see partners working together to find immediate solutions that will save lives and improve conditions for people experiencing homelessness and precarious housing. But we know that this is just the beginning.

To create change for the long-term, United Way will continue to support this work through collaboration, investment in housing stability programs and advocacy with all three levels of government for policies that reduce and prevent poverty – the root cause of these issues showing up in our local community.

This work is not for just one organization, one sector, one government office. It is work that everyone in our community who agrees that the status quo is unacceptable can get behind. Raise your voice. Ask elected officials and candidates the tough questions. Help United Way advocate for policies that create long-term change. Give. Volunteer. Together, we can improve lives locally.

Sincerely,



Kelly Ziegner
President & CEO