

Open Letter to Sidney Town Council

“We are not opposed to the establishment of a EWS but locate it in a more appropriate location” reads the final line of a 400-signature petition delivered to Sidney Town Council on September 8th. The petition requests that the proposed Extreme Weather Shelter at Wakefield

Manor, non-market housing for seniors in Sidney, be defeated. For the seniors who live on Sidney’s streets, no alternative was given, besides the notion that they must go somewhere else. Sidney has a homeless population of about 20 people, most of whom are seniors with no other option. The primary difference between them and the Wakefield Manor residents is that the Wakefield residents are in the system that those on the street are unable to access.

At St. Andrew’s Anglican Church, we feed the under-housed population in Sidney five days per week, so we know these people personally. We question whether many of the signatories of the petition would have signed, had they known that they were relegating twenty of our vulnerable unhoused neighbours to the winter cold for the foreseeable future. The Mayor and Council are well aware that the timelines of municipal processes meant their votes would determine that there would be no Extreme Weather Shelter this winter, or possibly ever.

Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith, the swing vote on the shelter, which would have opened only in the event of extreme weather, shared that he was “disappointed in the outcome of the vote.” Mayor Cliff, we are also disappointed. You voted to relegate your town’s most vulnerable people to weather winter storms without shelter. Worse than that, you have decided to refuse to act to locate an EWS in a more appropriate location.

We are issuing you a challenge: On December 6th, spend a night in the winter cold with us, so you can experience what you have legislated for the people that we serve. We’ll be waiting at the south of the intersection of Beacon Avenue and Highway 17, adjacent to the bike path and highway after 6:30pm, carrying signs, collecting donations for the Backpack Project, and serving a hot meal. Please join us. We’ll even provide you with a Stay Warm/Stay Dry Kit. However, if you share our belief that no one should have to spend a night in the cold, we ask that you please commit to finding an appropriate location for an emergency weather shelter in Sidney.

Sincerely,

[St Andrew’s Anglican Church](#)

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