

Delegation Request submitted: Friday May 16th 2025 10:49 AM

Reference number 2025-05-16-019.

- **Name of Delegate(s) (include title/position, if applicable) :**

Tanner Bergsma, multi national autistic social justice activist, award winning author, co-founder of the Tanner Bergsma Foundation

- **Reason for Delegation Request :**

As someone who was born and raised in Stratford, I am returning to speak not only from lived experience, but on behalf of those in our community whose voices are often unheard—particularly our homeless population and vulnerable residents struggling under the weight of rising costs.

Stratford is facing a crisis of affordability. The price of rent and basic necessities has risen beyond what many can manage. According to recent CMHC data, Stratford's average rent has increased by over 20% in the past two years alone—surpassing what is manageable for individuals on ODSP, CPP, minimum wage, or working precarious jobs.

There is an urgent and growing gap between the cost of living and the reality of income for thousands in our city. This delegation is being made to:

- Advocate for the urgent expansion of affordable and supportive housing options within Stratford;
- Highlight the impact of inflation and rental hikes on low-income and homeless populations;
- Call for a cross-sectoral, human-centred response that includes lived experience voices in planning and policy decisions;
- Emphasize the moral and civic responsibility we have to ensure no one in Stratford is left behind simply because they cannot afford to live.

Stratford raised me—but it is now becoming unlivable for the very people who built and continue to serve this community. I am here to urge Council to act with compassion, urgency, and equity.

- **Action/Decision Being Requested of Council :**

Prioritize Affordable Housing Development:

Commit to increasing the stock of affordable, supportive, and transitional housing through municipal land use strategies, incentives for developers, and partnerships with non-profits.

2. Revise the Official Plan Through an Equity Lens:

Ensure the revised Official Plan includes concrete strategies to address:

- Aging population needs (e.g., accessible housing, mobility planning)
- Income insecurity
- Mental health and addiction supports
- Inclusion of Indigenous and marginalized voices

3. Cap Rental Increases on City-Owned Properties:

Where possible, implement rental control measures and provide supports for tenants living in municipally affiliated housing to avoid displacement.

4. Establish a Community Advisory Committee on Poverty and Homelessness:

Form a standing committee composed of individuals with lived experience, social service providers, and city staff to ensure ongoing input and responsive policy development.

5. Fund a Municipal Mental Health and Outreach Response Team:

Allocate resources to a multi-disciplinary street outreach program that responds to mental health crises, housing instability, and addictions with care, not criminalization.

6. Create a Vulnerable Populations Emergency Fund:

Establish a city-managed emergency assistance fund for individuals in crisis to access food, shelter, or urgent supports when no other help is available.

7. Expand Senior Support Services:

Ensure that Stratford's growing elderly population has access to affordable home care, accessible transit, and appropriate housing options that allow them to age in place with dignity.

- **Clearly outline the subject of your presentation. Please note if you have already been a delegation on this matter, you will need to specify the new information that you intend on presenting.**

Subject of Presentation:

Addressing the Urgent Housing and Cost-of-Living Crisis in Stratford: A Call for Inclusive Planning and Immediate Support for Vulnerable Populations

As a lifelong resident of Stratford and an advocate for equity and social justice, I am here to present on the escalating housing affordability crisis and the broader impact of rising living costs on Stratford's most vulnerable residents—including seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and the unhoused.

This presentation will address the following key areas:

- The growing gap between income and rental costs in Stratford;
- The increasing number of residents at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness;
- The urgent need for affordable and supportive housing;
- The importance of revising Stratford's Official Plan through an equity-focused lens;
- Tangible actions Council can take to meet the needs of our aging and vulnerable population;
- The role I am playing as an advocate and contributor to municipal planning processes.

The goal of this delegation is to present solutions rooted in lived experience, data, and compassion—and to urge the City of Stratford to

implement structural changes that protect and uplift all residents, especially those being left behind in today's economic climate.