



Vanier, April 22th 2022

To: Steve Willis, General Manager of Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development.

Marc Provost, Executive Director, Salvation Army.

Cc: Councillor Fleury, City Councillor Ward 12.

Re: Advisory Committee with the Salvation Army.

Dear M. Willis, Dear M. Provost,

As the president of the Vanier Community Association representing the community of Vanier, I am writing this letter to express our serious disappointment with the process of the Advisory Committee. Our community feels entirely unheard and misunderstood on several levels.

It is essential to share, that as City Planning staff continuously noted, that many of the committee members are volunteers. As such, our community contributed to work with the City and the Salvation Army in good faith. Such volunteer commitment should be valued and respected, not just with words, but with a fair and deliberative process. This intent – put upon us by Council – was explicitly to try and get something that seemed so wrong, right by actively and effectively conducting a dialogue with the community. And yet, five meetings in, hours and years of perseverance on saying things need to be done right, and we are repeating it, questions to help us understand the project and formulate recommendations/comments have not been answered. At this point, it is still not clear where the project is headed with respect to programming beyond emergency and other short-term shelter, we still don't know how our work with the Advisory Committee has informed the process, and the relationship with the community is not improving.

Despite indications of City support for the proposed supportive housing, the proposed apartment building makes no provision to separate tenants from the emergency and other shelter clients, nor does the CPTED identify or address measures for such a building, its design as a separate apartment block, including amenity space for tenants, nor for protection of tenant rights under provincial legislation. No effort was made to outline how programming at the supportive housing building would be delivered despite the different supports needed.

In your statement, you shared that “Discussions over this period have led to several changes to the site plan”. There is no evidence that the Salvation Army has incorporated the comments from the community in their new submission. The Salvation Army separately told the VCA that the clientele of the emergency shelter component was entirely a matter for City direction, yet no changes have been made to respond to the need raised by City staff for a family emergency shelter to replace what the City is currently operating in the existing motel on the property and nearby at another motel in Vanier.

The lack of progress to discuss programming has meant that detailed comments by the VCA on the site plan were premature given the absence of the project’s functionalities and operational needs. The UDRP report was only recently released.

The VCA has not only asked for a tracking system to be implemented by the system to demonstrate how community feedback was informing the Salvation Army submission, the VCA has pointed out multiple times that the Salvation Army has never demonstrated very clearly how community feedback was integrated in the proposal. After the first and second meetings, we never saw the plans and the proposed changes. Moreover, you indicate in the same paragraph that detailed discussion with the committee proved difficult. The onus is on the City and the Salvation Army to establish and foster a deliberative environment that is conducive to a constructive dialogue. Let’s be clear – the changes listed are not thanks to any input or care to what role the advisory committee had – but instead of what the Salvation Army has pressed upon us. To this extent your statement admits that the Advisory Committee has not fulfilled its role.

At this time, we would like to highlight our concerns once again – that continue to go unanswered. In a letter dated March 29, the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition wrote in response to the Salvation Army project, “To our mind, the “programming advisory” role remains undefined and unresolved. We have not come to consensus on the advisory aspect and how it fits in the decision-making related to the project.” The Vanier Community Association supports this statement and until today, this question remains unaddressed. Further, the OAC’s letter raised specific issues and concerns with the Salvation Army which included scope and scale of the project, relationships with the Salvation Army and the Indigenous community, clientele, business model, resources as well as with relationships with Indigenous service organizations located in Vanier. Again, no adequate response from the Salvation Army has been given. City staff’s apparent ambivalence to these circumstances are in marked contrast to the important achievement made by Council recently in advancing reconciliation with the Anishinaabe First Nation.

Vanier is an incredibly eclectic community with an overconcentration of social services. You may not know the ins and outs of our home, so once again, we will share our concerns. Some organizations already offer services such as food banks, school camps, family services that you have indicated the Salvation Army will bring on site. For example:

- Vanier Community Services Centre offers:
 - The suite of Employment Ontario services,
 - Early-on Family Services
 - Youth programming

- Community legal services,
- Vanier CSC (Partage Vanier)
- Action Logement/Housing Help has support for individuals seeking housing and experiencing challenges with housing conditions.
- EBO offers financial counselling and budget counselling
- Wabano Community Health Centre, the Inuuqatigiit Centre and the Akausivik Inuit Health Clinic offer a range of services, including family services and community health services supporting indigenous residents.
- Many organizations offer Food services:
 - Partage Vanier.
 - Wabano.
 - Community gardens and dedicated food services for seniors.
 - Tungasuvvingat Inuit Family Resource Centre.
 - Local schools.
- Montfort Renaissance, CMHA and Hôpital Montfort's ACT, programs offer life skills, drug addiction and mental health services.
- Maison Marie-Louise, some parishes and church groups, and Vanier CSC offer support and settlement services to new immigrants and refugees.
- Many organizations like CAP offer mental health and drug addictions services.

An analysis of the existing social services offered in Vanier should be conducted. We have a booklet that is at everyone's disposal on the website of Together for Vanier.

Nonetheless, Vanier was never in need of more of the same services. We ask again - How is the risk of duplication and confusion with navigation of services being addressed by the Salvation Army? How is the City and the Salvation Army ensuring they are not competing with well-established organizations and put them at risk of losing funding because funders perceive that Salvation Army's services are offered to the general population. What are Salvation Army's plans to compensate these long-serving organizations? Further, what measures are in place to support organizations that may become beyond capacity or overwhelmed by the shelter residents accessing existing limited resources? Can these questions that were asked at the Advisory Committee be answered. It is remarkable that the Salvation Army failed to engage in any serious consultations with all these service providers. The plan you present does not address this.

We cannot wait five to seven years for this answer when the shape and needs of our city and, more specifically, our community have changed once again. These questions should have been answered at the Advisory Committee. Once again, this proves that the Advisory Committee has been conducive to dialogue and providing answers/recommendations on urgent matters.

Further, if the answer is that you are planning for the future – how can you? How can you push a plan forward without the end in mind? What does the Salvation Army know that this group – who lives in this community today – doesn't? And why is it ok that you, or any other individual who does not live here, think you can make an informed decision and expect us to live with the consequences?

Many committee members have pointed to the quote in the Ottawa Citizen, where the executive director of the Salvation Army, Marc Provost, acknowledged that the project would "...take the time it takes," – this again has not been addressed. We remain confused about why Mr. Provost would say this, yet not stand by it.

The Vanier Community Association is not a group that is committed to countless years of advising an organization that does not listen or respond to simple, but important questions that are central to providing significant feedback. We have been participating in good faith, but the responsibility to build a relationship with the community, solely remains in the hands of the Salvation Army and, given the potential financial implications, of the City staff.

This group of stakeholders remains steadfast in that programming informs the design and that this step is integral before submitting a site plan for review. Building a building is one thing, but the plan and use of space is quite another. The same way that moving in a community is one thing, but investing in a relationship with its residents is another. The staff recommendation of the Advisory Committee should not have been revoked this early without concurrence with the Councillors appointed to the Committee, and we ask you to reconsider as this group remains incredibly concerned that our questions posed to you at all five meetings remain unanswered.

Sincerely,

Lauren Touchant
President
Vanier Community Association.