

April 9, 2025

Dear Northumberland County Council,

We are writing this letter as a response to the discussion at the April 2nd Social Services meeting, to explain our deep concern for the ongoing chaotic state created by Transition House's operation at 310 Division Street for our business and neighbourhood.

We regret that we are unable to attend today due to prior commitments. In our absence, we have written this correspondence and included pictures of examples of our concerns to illustrate the significant negative impact that Transition House continues to have on our business and personal lives.

As a direct result of the chaos induced by Transition House's operation, a neighbouring business has moved to Port Hope, while several others are seriously considering relocating or closure in the next year - this is alarming.

This underrepresented view at County Council, is essential for council, staff, and the public to gain a full picture of the impact of Transition House on our community. These negative experiences are the consequence of housing 70+ individuals, most with serious addiction and mental health needs in a single location, amongst residents, businesses, and tourist attractions in a densely populated neighbourhood.

As the owners of Cobourg Orthopaedic & Sports Injury Clinic (COSIC), our daily responsibilities involve managing a full caseload of patients, organizing 20 healthcare professionals, and attending to administrative tasks - all well constantly supervising the unpredictable, chaotic behaviour of some of our 310 neighbours on our property, to ensure the safety of our staff, clients, and clinic.

The examples of negative behaviours highlighted in this correspondence have been brought to the attention of Transition House and Social Service staff on numerous occasions in meetings, email, and phone communication. All of these examples *directly* involve users of Transition House at 310 Division Street, and can be substantiated with pictures/videos documenting residents walking to and from 310 Division Street before or after these incidents. Examples of negative behaviours documented include:

- Regular open illegal drug use, that is highly visible to the public and our staff.
- Drug paraphernalia left on property including pipes, needles, foil, etc.
- 4 attempted break-ins to our building since the opening of 310 Division.
- Numerous attempted car break-ins.
- Regular distressing interactions of clients and staff with unpredictable mentally unstable 310 clients on sidewalk and parking lot.
- Frequent drug deals witnessed by patients and staff in our parking lot - often with both drug dealer and drug user coming from 310 Division Street.

- First responders attending to overdoses and other calls on our front lawn and sidewalk while the public and clients watch as they enter our facility or drive-by.
- Chronic loitering in groups directly in front of businesses, including smoking cigarettes, and marijuana within close proximity to business entrances and resident windows.
- Chronic loitering obstructing client and staff access to businesses.
- Intoxicated people walking into busy traffic on Division Street without regard for their safety or the individuals driving vehicles.
- Daily issues with garbage, clothing, backpacks, weapons, stolen/collected items, beer cans, and cigarette butts left on our property.
- Frequent screaming, yelling, domestic fights and altercations on the street and our property at all times of day and night.
- Intimidating our patients while walking to and from their cars to our clinic.
- Patient initiated discussions daily regarding the negative behaviours witnessed walking in to our clinic and along Division Street.
- Dog feces left on property.
- Disruption of parking lot traffic with 310 residents sitting down in the middle of parking spots to do drugs, and loiter.
- Daily trespassing on our property to enter or exit adjacent residential properties, or Beyond the Blue Box to do drugs, steal, or store stolen items.

Each of these examples is contrary to what defines a “good neighbour” and Transition House’s Resident Code of Conduct. A good neighbour is expected to use their property without interfering with the rights of other neighbours to do the same. Consistently disregarding these rights as a neighbour for some Transition House residents is inconsiderate and ultimately unlawful. To date, it appears that there is little to no consequence for doing so.

In addition to the daily challenges of dealing with the described negative behaviours of Transition House clients, it has also been difficult to convey to Social Service and Transition House staff how all-consuming small business ownership is - it is in the best of circumstances very stressful. We don’t enjoy highlighting the negative influence of Transition House on our business and neighbourhood, as we understand its purpose, but it continues to severely negatively impact our ability to operate successfully and has unfavourably influenced our own mental health.

We have tried to express to Social Service and Transition House staff that owning a business is a 24/7 responsibility, how hard it is to engage and keep customers, the importance of a first impression, concepts of curb appeal, how critical it is for clients to feel confident in your product or service, how important it is for them to feel safe coming to your business, and how all of these things in our situation are being directly detrimentally impacted by some 310 residents. These are widely accepted practices in successful business operation, thus why we call Transition House security, By-law enforcement, and Cobourg Police Service daily regarding loitering, open drug use, trespassing, excessive noise, and littering. Calls are responded to, issues are “dealt with”, but these behaviours are endlessly repeated.

Ultimately, we feel strongly that a patient should be able to park their car in our private lot, walk into our clinic for their appointment and return to their car without witnessing the harmful behaviours discussed. Existing and prospective patients should be able to drive by our clinic at any hour and see a building without people urinating on it, littering on it, breaking into it, screaming, leaving drug paraphernalia, loitering in front of it, verbally and physically assaulting people, and using explicit drugs - it's really that simple. Despite our best efforts to be vigilant, we do not have confidence that this can happen under the current operating guidelines of Transition House, but remain adamant that these are reasonable expectations as a neighbour, property owner, and tax payer.

What is an acceptable threshold of negative incidents? How many residents need to sell their homes or file lawsuits? How many businesses need to complain, relocate, or close before change is implemented?

Currently, we call Transition House security, Cobourg Police, and/or By-law enforcement 1-5x per day. Each call is for a concern related to a violation of the Transition House Resident Code of Conduct, the Criminal Code, or the ECE by-law. It is rare that we would go a day without a call. Typically, after a significant issue, things are more quiet for a day or two, then incidents predictably increase in frequency.

It is also important to note that many issues go unreported, as they may have taken place while the clinic or other businesses were closed and are discovered the following day, or there is an urgency in the matter, requiring it to be addressed immediately by our staff. Several businesses and residents don't have security cameras, high traffic customers, or multiple employees to observe issues which also contributes to matters being underreported.

In order to illustrate more specifically the impact of the chaotic behaviour of some Transition House residents on our staff and business, a recent incident should be shared. The event occurred when a staff member who is pregnant, tried to leave our clinic through the staff entrance at lunch time. As she attempted to open the door, she realized that two 310 residents were directly against the door smoking illegal drugs. She quickly closed the door to minimize her exposure to the toxic drug smoke, and went back inside to get help. We were not in the office that day, so another practitioner opened the door and politely asked the individuals to leave. This request was met with the Transition House residents shouting expletives as they reluctantly left the area. All clinicians were working with patients at the time, and several were waiting at our reception to be assisted, so the matter was immediately dealt with, agencies were not called, as there was little time in a busy day to meet the needs of our patients, let alone once again manage some of the Transition House's clients. This incident created significant stress for our staff, was observed by patients, and is detrimental to our business.

The impact of the chaotic state that some Transition House residents have had on us is vast. Our physical, financial, and emotional resources to manage issues are exhausted. We have spent thousands of dollars on a camera system, security system, door and window locks, and a fence to

prevent direct access and drug consumption on a neighbouring business. We spend several hours per day making calls to security/police/bylaw, reviewing camera footage, receiving messages and calls from concerned neighbours looking for our help, and managing our own property. We get daily messages from neighbours, patients, friends and family about witnessing an event on our property or the surrounding area. The stress of managing this situation is severely negatively impacting the mental health of our staff and us as business owners.

Since the announcement that Transition House was moving to 310 Division, we have tried to be thoughtful and solution-based in our approach. We have been thorough in trying to understand all perspectives surrounding the discussed issues and had meaningful discussions with all County and Municipal stakeholders, as well as many business owners and residents.

Despite all of the good intentioned discussion and efforts, we still have a chaotic environment in which to live and operate businesses. We understand not all Transition House residents are contributing to the negative behaviours. We have met clients at Transition House who are lovely people, just trying to get back on their feet, and feel the most sympathy for them. It must be incredibly difficult for them to do so in such a chaotic environment.

It should also be recognized that Cobourg Police Service and By-law enforcement are working hard in their roles. They do their very best every day to attend to our concerns, and manage issues within their scope. We have had many thorough discussions with both agencies and they have always been accessible, receptive, and take action when appropriate. The resources that are being used to manage a few hundred meters of one street in our town is highly distressing as a tax payer, yet we feel the alternative would be far worse.

Our experience delegating to Northumberland County Council and Social Services staff previously, leaves us to question if the format of a 10-minute delegation suits such a complex matter. In a delegation, we would largely be reiterating much of our delegation from 16-months ago and this correspondence. That said, if you are open to speaking in a one-on-one format, or round-table discussion between County Council and concerned business owners to inform your decision making, we would welcome that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Hillary Allen & Jeff Crowley