

Sanctuary plan raises passions

By [Dan Brown](#), *The London Free Press*

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There's one emotion uniting those who are against or for London becoming a sanctuary city: passion.

There were a number of times the crowd broke out in loud applause Thursday evening at Goodwill Industries during a public meeting, the purpose of which was to gather feedback that members of city council will use to make their decision on the question.

Wayne Loucks, a London carpenter, stood in line for the microphone to voice his skepticism about the idea to declare London a sanctuary city.

Along with the symbolism of welcoming non-status migrants like someone whose refugee claim has been rejected, the designation would mean bureaucrats not ask for citizenship proof before providing service.

Loucks said he's primarily concerned that London's municipal resources are already stretched too thin, without the city becoming a community that offers services to undocumented foreigners, who can then use them "without fear."

"We have enough problems of our own. We are sitting ducks if this goes through," he told *The Free Press* during the two-hour session that drew a crowd of about 150 that seemed to be split about evenly between the two camps.

Retiree Vicki Van Linden was applauded when she spoke in favour of the notion of the Forest City opening its doors wide. "I want very much for London to make this statement and become a sanctuary city. The world is coming to visit us now. I hope we'll stiffen our spine and rise to this occasion."

Van Linden believes if London adds its voice to other communities making the gesture, the message of tolerance and acceptance will be amplified.

Actuary Greg McCormack, however, said accepting refugees and immigrants without the proper papers is an act beyond the scope of council. "Why put out a beacon attracting (chaos)? And who pays for that?" he asked. "There's a reason they're undocumented."

Before the meeting attended by several city councillors began, Coun. Harold Usher briefly welcomed participants. Of London becoming a sanctuary city, Usher said, "Some people find it distressing. Some find it encouraging."

“Enjoy the evening,” he urged participants. “Learn as much as you can. Give as much as you can.”

London lawyer Ed Corrigan felt he needed to be at the meeting. “I think minds, to some extent, were made up and closed” before the event began, he said of his fellow attendees.

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WHAT THEY SAID

Wayne Loucks, London carpenter: “We are sitting ducks if this goes through.”

Mike Roy, Western University student: “It turned into a joke.”

Ed Corrigan, London lawyer: “I think minds, to some extent, were made up and closed.”

Vicki Van Linden, retired Londoner: “I hope we’ll stiffen our spine and rise to this occasion.”

Greg Cormack, actuary in London: “There’s a reason they’re undocumented.”