

Friday, March 26, 2021

Dear City Council,

The past few weeks have been noteworthy to say the least. The issue of road closures in downtown overtook some of the great work City Staff presented in the **2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program** as well as the many concerns, ideas, and alternatives proposed by members of our community. I hope that members of City Council and the wider community took a second to listen to the concerns, read the various correspondence or opinion pieces, and considered compromise(s) and potential alternatives for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Guelph City Staff did their best to bring fair and equitable solution(s) to you for consideration. Remember, you instructed City Staff to work under a very tight timeline and challenging circumstances to provide you and the community with different solutions, their financial impacts, and any other critical information. In my opinion, many more options and opportunities were not presented due to that tight deadline. This must and can be rectified.

While I continue to support the approval of **Recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 6** of the 2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program Report. I continue to ask that **Option 5**, the Delegation of Authority. I agree that an information report is fine with Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 6, however, I feel that with Recommendation 2, it must come back to Council for further exploration.

What the report describes for the 2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program and has laid out in [Attachment-3 On-street Patio Permissions Map.pdf](#) is on par with other cities, such as Toronto and Ottawa, which have been using parking spots as patio spaces for many years. This alone will bring economic activity into the Downtown area and make it a destination through Patio season.

Concerns raised by some businesses about higher insurance costs due to moving traffic beside the patios have been long known before Covid as a part of the cost of having these types of spaces. Due to Covid-19 impacts and the unknown indoor capacity limits that may happen, I recommend that Council look at ways to assist businesses with a one-time grant for 2021 to cover some part of their insurance cost to have an outdoor street patio on the roadway.

The one-time costs of \$112,500 for delivering the program are critical in making this program a success. We must make the look of the program uniform, safe, and aesthetically pleasing. The annual seasonal patio parking stall fee of \$3.00 per square meter sounds reasonable, however, some comparable cities are charging less. This data should be provided for current and/or future adjustments to the program. I fully support the waiving of application fees for 2021.

I fully support the creation of the temporary use by-law and connecting with the different ministries for keeping the basic 2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program going.

As for **Recommendation #2**, I cannot support Option 2 without significant work to keep transit moving. Option 1 leaves a lot to be desired but in the short-term would be acceptable to keep transit accessible this summer. At the end of the day, while not perfect, Option 3 gives us a chance to create a pedestrian space. While it will not have additional patios like last year, it will give residents and visitors a space to walk around and enjoy our Downtown. The migration costs for 2021 to detour transit are reasonable (although I strongly would rather be spending

that money on improving frequency), but the detours need to be adjusted better along with better communication to transit users and downtown dining patrons.

I can only support Option 3 for this year as I feel circumstances will change in 2022 and 2023. I deeply believe that there are better options for closing streets available to us that not in addressed in the report.

I encourage Council to approve the following amendments that the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph presented in their correspondence:

- **That the closure of the Wyndham and Macdonell intersection does not occur until the conclusion of the A.M. Transit Peak period and/or after 9:15 a.m. on Fridays except for July 2nd.**
- **That the closure of the Wyndham and Macdonell intersection be extended from Thursday, July 1st (Canada Day) uninterrupted to Sunday, July 4th.**
- **That the closure is extended into the following Holiday Mondays: Victoria Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, and Thanksgiving Day with the teardown times the same as Sunday.**
- **That Guelph Transit partners with downtown restaurants and businesses to provide transit information, provide a hand-out map of the detours, have those detours posted throughout Guelph Central Station and throughout the downtown area.**
- **That the Guelph Transit Group Day Pass be promoted to users of the Patio Program this summer.**

We must remember that we are still in a pandemic. Regardless of what is scheduled to happen between now and the fall, there are still many unknowns, uncertainties, and unanswered questions. We do know that the University of Guelph is aiming to have more students back on campus in September, however, at the time of this writing it is from my understanding that the U-Pass would not be available.

The options presented by Staff each offer strengths and weaknesses. With all the options presented, adding programming, like live music, is highly unlikely for 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic but should be considered for 2022 and 2023.

### **Alternative Transit Detours for 2021**

I was disappointed that no direction was given to Staff at the Committee of the Whole to consider some of these suggestions.

City Staff are recommending to you **Option 1** - Restricting special event road closures to the Wyndham Street and Macdonell Street intersection, however, with the Covid19 Pandemic still raging, it would not be advisable to proceed with this option at this time.

If **Option 2 or 3** were to be approved for this specific intersection, I would suggest the following be considered by all parties to keep transit moving for 2021 only.

With the lower frequency, some of these suggestions may need additional resources. I must also note that while 11 routes go through this intersection, not all routes need to pass through here. Many of the detours (i.e., Route 3) work well as is. There are also other ways to

access Guelph Central Station that should be considered such as using Yarmouth Street to get to Woolwich.

- **Restricted Traffic Lane on Macdonell:** Creating a slow one-way lane for restricted traffic (buses, taxis, delivery vehicles, EMS) traveling outbound from Guelph Central Station toward the Basilica only. Keep the number of routes restricted and the speeds lowered. The number of stops closed would be a minimum of 4. Route 10, 99 N/S, and 11 could use this lane.
- **Restricted Traffic Lane on Carden St:** The parking spaces along Carden Street are recommended to be all patio space, utilize the remaining lane as a slow one-way lane (toward Wilson) for select Guelph Transit Routes, Taxis, Delivery Vehicles, and those wanting to access the Wilson Street Parking Garage. For safety, install a barrier between Wilson and the Courthouse in front of City Hall to prevent people from jaywalking. The number of stops closed would be a minimum of 4. Route 10, 99 N/S, and 11 could use this lane. For concerns about bus turning, I talked to 6 drivers who all say it is possible but may be tight depends on the street situation.
- **Rerouting:** Move Route 20 or Route 10 away from Paisley and have it travel inbound down London Road and then down Woolwich Street into Guelph Central. This cuts out several traffic lights and turns and could keep the route on time.
- **Rerouting:** Have Route 10 go down Suffolk Street to Woolwich inbound. This requires the route to turn off Paisley at Yorkshire Street or Edinburgh. It also cuts out several traffic lights and turns that cause delays.
- **Other routes:** Some of the other transit detours were reasonable but should be reviewed for additional improvements.

Some of the above could save time, money, and minimize transit stop closures, maintain access to critical locations, and help transit continue to play an important role in rebuilding our local economy during and after this pandemic.

### **Alternatives for 2022-2023**

While I am willing to compromise on **Option 3 for 2021**, I believe there is a tremendous number of alternative options that we can experiment with for 2022 and/or 2023.

### **Alternative Road Closures**

The Mayor has stated on Social Media that he does not care where downtown the road closures happen. These are some of the solutions I can think of in that regard.

**From Macdonell to St. Georges Square** should be closed to traffic. One lane or two from Quebec Street (same side as If Shoes) to Cork Street should remain open to traffic.

- **Alternative:** close Cork from about where Bell is and closing Wyndham at the Square/Quebec Street.

On the same side of **Scotiabank from the Square (or Douglas Street) along with Wyndham to Woolwich**, you could close 2 lanes of traffic while leaving the two other lanes open (same side as Old Post Office) for two-way traffic to get to Quebec Street and/or Cork Street (if not closed)

Closing the small stretch of **Wyndham between Carden Street and Macdonell Street.**

**Leaving Macdonell Street open**, except for the patios approved in the Program as outlined in [Attachment-3 On-street Patio Permissions Map.pdf](#)

- **Alternative:** Extending patios out further while leaving a Restricted Lane (in or outbound) for transit, EMS, Taxis, and Delivery Drivers.

These alternatives allow for transit to operate with minimal impacts while keeping access to other important vehicles such as delivery vehicles, EMS, and others while, while extending active transportation zones across more of downtown.

Additional items that could be considered:

- Making the Macdonell Street parking lot OR St. Georges Square into a Patio Zone with Food trucks (see Richmond Street in Toronto as example.)
- Creating a temporary *Transit Mall* along Macdonell OR Wyndham Streets (please see correspondence from TAAG or ask me about atmosphere, liability, and safety issues)
- Rotate road closures one year from Wyndham and next year Macdonell.

**I strongly recommend that Council direct City Staff to consult with the community, select groups, other departments, to research, explore, and propose different road closure scenarios and street patio zone options for 2022 and/or 2023 and report these back later this year.**

At the end of the day, the patio program as outlined in the report (without road closures) **is excellent**. It brings Guelph on par with larger cities and makes Downtown a destination for dining, shopping, and tourism. Once the pandemic has passed, we defiantly should look at making parts of Downtown into Dining Districts and more Pedestrian Friendly with entertainment and other activities, but until then, Option 3 in the report offers a compromise for 2021 as do some of my suggestions and others.

In conclusion, the major hurdle to any road closures is for those who use Guelph Transit. They have long been asked to make sacrifices and wait patiently for improvements, which in many cases have never come or taken years to show up.

Our downtown core can be turned into a safer and enjoyable destination for all users.

If we want to pedestrianization more of our downtown streets, especially to enjoy patios and entertainment, then effective integration of Active Transportation and Guelph Transit needs to be a priority, not an afterthought.

Thank you.

Steven Petric  
Guelph

**Disclaimer:** *The following is my own opinion and does not necessarily represent the opinions of the Board of Directors of the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph.*