To Mayor Cam Guthrie and members of City Council:

Over the last year the Guelph Chamber of Commerce proudly joined community organization Toward Common Ground to spearhead a process to address the changing needs of Guelph's diverse downtown community. We convened social service organizations, community members who use downtown spaces and access services, and the businesses that are located in the area. We had one goal: we'd lead by example and work collectively with community partners, including the City of Guelph, County of Wellington, Guelph Police Services, and other community organizations towards creating a downtown environment that is welcoming and thriving for everyone. By late winter 2022 we were able to prioritize and mobilize some key actions to improve access to services and supports for people in need in the immediate term.

Unfortunately, our efforts have not made enough of a difference. People continue to struggle and suffer downtown, and businesses and patrons are being negatively impacted by escalating circumstances. We know that if our business community is an essential component of a healthy and prosperous Guelph, then our broader community's wellbeing must be prioritized.

We urge council to vote in favour of the recommendations outlined under agenda item 10.2 (most pertinently #1 and #6). Additional bold action and effort will be required over time; however, these motions will enable the City of Guelph to meaningfully:

- ensure downtown looks and feels safe and inviting for everyone
- understand and mobilize effective health and social service delivery in the city, and,
- consider an integrated system governance model that is responsive to people's needs

The Guelph Chamber and our network commits to playing an active role to meeting the above outcomes and will support Council and Staff to effectively respond to the community's urgent needs.

Sincerely,

Shakiba Shayani
President & CEO