

I'm writing to express my concerns with the proposals from the Mayor, re: all emergency items related to Homelessness, Addiction and Mental Health.

The "emergency" the mayor speaks of is a result of 8 years of a harm reduction, "housing first" drug strategy that had NO public mandate or participation, human rights consideration for vulnerable groups and that has been a documented failure in every area it's been implemented, from Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Toronto now to Guelph.

It follows a very clear path and pattern, and Guelph is at a tipping point. ALL the community needs to be involved in solutions and have their voices heard, not least because everyone \*will\* be affected by this, even in the well-off South end.

The current method of creating groups in secret of those who share the radical political and religious beliefs at the heart of this strategy, then inviting select groups like the DGBA or the Chamber of Commerce behind the curtain if they have problems with it, has been standard operating procedure. It's unfair, unsuccessful and undemocratic. It does not respect human rights and will not solve the problem.

Instead of recognizing this, the Mayor and the those involved under the "Towards a Common Ground" umbrella have doubled down. The key housing plank, including shelters, is developed, overseen and implemented by County staff, including requesting funding from higher governments that counts toward Guelph's share of higher tier social housing funding. That means Guelph citizens have no say or representation from elected officials for affordable housing projects or how tax dollars are allotted in our city. The process itself is something the Mayor publicly complained about as being unfair for those exact reasons when the County refused to approve his Agenda projects. If the process was unfair then, it's unfair now.

The County has also taken over evaluation of project from City Staff, after saying they had no ability/expertise to evaluate social housing projects (although they evaluated and recommended approval for three supportive housing projects regardless).

Re: the situation downtown, The Mayor Homelessness ETF has been particularly harmful in allowing conditions to deteriorate. Many employees were prohibited, or feared retaliation from employers for sharing their honest experiences downtown, including violent crimes. Residents and patrons were totally ignored, especially at the library. Instead, councillors and the Mayor directed comment toward the ETF as the only venue to address these issues.

Complaints to him, & council about some of those unhoused were ignored. (And I want to stress my complains recognize that not all homeless, and/or substance users are responsible for these problems, and in some cases they are the victims of others. Also, we're all human beings and deserve to be treated as such.) No one with different views or any negative lived experience re: the drug strategy/housing policy was allowed to serve. The 2 "public" positions were not advertised, and were filled by advocates-at least one of whom received money from the police the ETF proposed (Welcoming Streets initiative) [per public files w/the City]. To my knowledge, no one from affected vulnerable human rights groups, esp. those outside the harm reduction bubble, were given a seat, esp. disabled & LGBT+ community, both of which I'm a member of.

Given these issues, I don't feel it's appropriate to put the Downtown Safety committee under this group. At the very least, this should be a point of open debate, with a deferred decision.

All of this adds up to the situation we have now. I'd beg Council please defer these items. In life of a vote today I propose instead, a) a city wide Town Hall Public Safety Meeting & b) a special Council Meeting after the Town Hall. Have a format that allows \*all\* people to respectfully but \*honesty\* share their experiences, opinions and information they have, including alternate solutions to the fundamentally flawed current drug strategy-the root of the public health/safety issues and of housing.

Regards

jj salmon