

Hello there,

My name is Maeve Brennagh-Mackie. I am a student who divides their time between Guelph and Montreal and has experience working with various community organizations in Guelph including Downtown Guelph Friends, who is at the frontlines of the housing crisis in Guelph and who has direct contact with those who experience homelessness.

I am writing to you as I am very concerned as to the item of discussion 9.2 regarding encampments in the downtown, to be considered in the upcoming council meeting on November 28th. I understand this proposal has been revised, although these revisions still do not appear in the City Council Meeting Agenda here: <https://pub-guelph.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=93da6e7b-932a-4e6e-a7ec-b24e77606178&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>.

Regardless of the contents of the proposal, to criminalize and displace marginalized and unhoused people from the downtown core will result in A) people losing access to essential services such as harm reduction supplies at the Guelph CHC and Downtown Guelph Friends, warming centres such as the Guelph Public Library, and food and resources at community centres such as the Royal City Mission and HOPE House, and B) people being unable to set up tents downtown, where many folks would prefer to stay due to these essential services and friends/community, leading to sleeping in the open cold temperatures which is very dangerous and potentially deadly.

Instead of this proposed item 9.2, we need the immediate expansion of shelter capacities in downtown Guelph as well as the use of downtown spaces for expanded permanent housing. This cannot be a long-term project, it needs to be immediate. If this is not addressed, people will freeze to death this winter in the cold, on the streets of our downtown.

I urge the Mayor and the Councillors to seek to serve all those who call Guelph home, not just those with a similar life experience and level of privilege. Crises of homelessness, addiction, and mental health, are not going away. You cannot push these humans away from your sight simply because you see them as unseemingly within your vision of the city. These are people with complex stories, relationships, and so much compassion, humour and determination despite hardships.

I hope you will consider my voice on November 28th.

Thank you,  
Maeve

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Maeve Brennagh-Mackie