

Dear Guelph City Council,

I am a Guelphite - born and raised. My city, our city, has changed significantly over the past 28 years I have called Guelph home, and even more so recently after COVID-19. More and more people are unhoused in Guelph and do not have access to basic needs like food, water, and shelter.

I hear many people commenting on how ugly downtown looks these days, and I can't help but wonder why people continue to complain rather than help. There are new encampments going up in Downtown Guelph because the city has failed to provide adequate resources for unhoused persons. The City's failure to take care of its citizens results in people turning to desperate measures to survive, and in turn are themselves blamed for making downtown look 'ugly'. This issue is much more deep rooted than the privileged aesthetics the city cares so much about. The wider community cares less about our downtown looking or feeling a certain way — we care more about getting people safely inside for the winter, fed, clothed, bathed, and cared for.

There are whispers of a closed door decision made about kicking out the encampments in Downtown Guelph. We need to pull together to ensure that these people don't die this winter as a result of this decision. Without shelter, they will freeze to death. We need better solutions to ensure that this is not the end result wherein the city prioritizes aesthetics rather than compassionate care.

I urge City Council to reconsider this careless decision and put money towards getting the unhoused population safely inside this winter and provide food. This is NOT a good look on Guelph to abandon and ignore our community members. As a city who prides ourselves on being progressive and socially conscious, this ban on encampments downtown would seriously damage the lives of many. Tents downtown are not the 'bad look' that the city needs to worry about — it is the intentional ignorance of a population who needs immediate access to care.

Please think carefully about how this decision will impact the unhoused and general community's trust in our city government to do the right thing at the right time.

Sincerely,

Elly Grant