



Sanguen Health Centre  
176 Wyndham Street North  
Guelph, ON

Thursday November 27, 2023

Guelph Mayor Office  
1 Carden Street  
Guelph, ON

Dear Councillors and Mayor Guthrie,

Sanguen Health Centre works with Community who are unhoused, use substances and struggle with mental health challenges. We operate from a Harm Reduction and Public Health lens, and offer outreaches and clinics both through our mobile van service, and through our Hep C teams.

We were incredibly concerned by the motion proposed by Mayor Guthrie for the prohibition of temporary shelters on lands owned by the City in the downtown area. Criminalizing people who are unhoused without offering realistic and adequate shelter options - both emergency and long term - won't stop people from tenting. Criminalizing poverty and homelessness further dehumanizes a stigmatized, vulnerable and marginalized people, and this brings significant risk to their health and well-being. Criminalizing tenting will likely result in police moving people to the outskirts of town, far away from the daily medical, social and crisis supports people need, not to mention food and warming centres. This move towards isolation brings many risks and harms, including increased risk of death by drug poisoning, increased violence, frostbite, and a complete lack of resources. The housing crisis is an emergency and should be treated as such.

We were heartened to hear that the City Council heard the many concerns of the community about this original motion. To address the new motion in place:

We hope the City will lean on the expertise of the people with lived experience to learn more about how to proceed. Working with people who have lived or living experience can mean creating solutions that are realistic, respectful and have a higher chance of success. Encampments can be a positive short-term solution, especially if they are created with inclusion, accessibility, resources and supports in mind. Having accessible transportation to supports from encampments will be an important piece, as well as sewage, potable water, and safety.

The City of Guelph would have been aware that the numbers of unhoused community members would increase due to

- a) ever increasing cost of living and a lack of affordable or accessible housing and
- b) with the eviction at 90 Carden.



Many front line organizations have seen an enormous increase in individuals accessing services, and have not been able to keep up with demand. Despite knowing this increase was inevitable, there has been no increase in funding to front line services - for services or gear, such as tents, tarps, sleeping bags, etc. This is a municipal responsibility that has been thrust upon ill-equipped charities and health organizations. We are heartened to hear the City wants to receive input on how to proceed, but funding over-burdened services will have to be a priority.

The proposed “Safe Use of Public Spaces” bylaw requires collaboration with people with lived experiences, front line organizations, Wellington Guelph Drugs Strategy, and needs to be created in a way that meets the needs of all community members, not just businesses and investors. We often see behaviours that are disruptive or difficult, and we ignore the meaning behind them. Behaviours are often an indicator of deeper problems. Addressing inequity will be more successful in reducing the list of unwanted behaviours, than handing out bylaw tickets, or increasing policing. It is well documented that reducing inequity reduces crime, as well as cost to Emergency and Health Care Systems.

There is a precedent from Waterloo Region that passing and enforcing anti-encampment bylaws is unlawful in the eyes of the Ontario Superior Court. Trying to pass and enforce this by-law will only lead to lawsuits, where the decision has already been established, costing taxpayers additional money.

We need immediate housing solutions that work for those living in temporary structures and encampments. We need more diverse shelter options. We need to learn from the expertise and experience of people who are unhoused, who use substances, who struggle with mental health challenges, and hear what people need. We need solutions that work for everyone, not just the rich and privileged. We need to follow Public Health and Harm Reduction Best Practices. Increasing punitive measures will not solve this problem, nor will pushing vulnerable community members to the outskirts of town.

Our unhoused community members are people. People who are part of Guelph. People who are loved and needed. People who matter. Let's work together.



We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with the Mayor and City Council. My Guelph Sanguen Team and I are eager to discuss these issues and move forward together.

We look forward to your reply,

Chris Steingart  
Founder, MD, FRCP(C), Executive Director  
Guelph Hep C Team  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[csteingart@sanguen.com](mailto:csteingart@sanguen.com)  
(519)-603-0223

Michelle Steingart  
Administrator & Clinical Program Coordinator  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[msteingart@sanguen.com](mailto:msteingart@sanguen.com)  
(519)-603-0223

Lindsay Sprague  
Director of Community Programs  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[lsprague@sanguen.com](mailto:lsprague@sanguen.com)  
(519)-778-9580

Alaina Klassen  
RN, Guelph Hep C Team, Van Team  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[aklassen@sanguen.com](mailto:aklassen@sanguen.com)  
(519) 500-8092

Steph Beaumont,  
Peer, Harm Reduction & Peer Outreach  
Coordinator  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[steph@sanguen.com](mailto:steph@sanguen.com)

Lachlyn Habermehl  
RN, Guelph & WC Van Outreach Nurse  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[lachlyn@sanguen.com](mailto:lachlyn@sanguen.com)  
(519) 710-3703



Cory Gillies  
Guelph & WC Van Team Lead  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[cory@sanguen.com](mailto:cory@sanguen.com)  
(519)362-9464

Mik Graf  
Guelph & WC Van Coordinator  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[mikaela@sanguen.com](mailto:mikaela@sanguen.com)  
(519) 465-6589

Laura Moolenbeek  
Guelph Admin Team, Hep C Team  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[laura@sanguen.com](mailto:laura@sanguen.com)

Jamie MacBeth  
Guelph Social Support, Guelph Hep C Team,  
Van Team  
Sanguen Health Centre  
[jmacbeth@sanguen.com](mailto:jmacbeth@sanguen.com)  
(519)835-6339