

Letter from the Guelph Environmental Justice Collective on Motion 9.2 Encampments Within the Downtown

The Guelph Environmental Justice Project is a community-led initiative. This project seeks to realign Guelph's municipal priorities to address environmental justice issues. Environmental justice is an important social movement linking environmental and social problems by addressing the systemic issues & biases that cause poor and marginalized communities to experience higher levels of harm from climate change.

The Guelph Environmental Justice Collective, composed of key community leaders from across Guelph, is outraged at Mayor Guthrie's motion to direct staff to create a draft bylaw on encampments within the downtown area. Criminalizing underhoused people for setting up tents that meet their basic shelter needs is a human rights violation - especially when other dignified solutions and access to housing are not being provided as alternatives. Further displacing our underhoused community members in the cold winter months and from the downtown core where services are concentrated is extremely harmful. We are calling on Guelph city councilors to reject Mayor Guthrie's motion and instead work to better understand the immediate needs of the underhoused community members in Guelph and to offer immediate support and dignified solutions.

Some links to review:

<https://www.make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-National-Protocol-for-Homeless-Encampments-in-Canada.pdf>

https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-statement-human-rights-and-encampments-and-shelter-closings

Thank you,

Guelph Environmental Justice Collective