

Hello,

My name is Chelsey and I have been a resident in the downtown core for 5 years. Over the years, I have watched as community members in the area slip into homelessness and end up camping on the streets, in the parks, and other places where they can find. I've had countless conversations with friends and neighbours about what the situation means for the city and why people end up in homelessness. It always seemed so simple in those conversations, however, nothing in life is ever simple.

I came to Guelph from Toronto in 2014 to complete my degree at UofG. To me, Guelph represented an opportunity to move away from the callous nature of the big city. Gone would be my morning fights for a space on the bus, my need to trek hours on transit to get anywhere fun. Now I had a small city where everyone knows everyone and of course- no people sleeping rough on the street corners. I remember when my mom drove through downtown she asked me "what kind of small town is this?"

Guelph is not a small town. Incorporated in 1879, Guelph has been a city for 144 years. Faith, Fidelity, Progress sits as the motto at the bottom of the coat of arms. A reminder to the residents that this is to be a city that is a safe place to live and grow. This is the "Royal City". The motion put forward by Cam Guthrie shows us the real meaning of that title. This is city is the result of one of the most successful colonization projects in Canadian history. Prior to 1820, for more than 5000 years, Algonquin, Huron, Ojibwa, and Anishinaabe families moved through the area, sharing in the land. In 1827 when John Galt made the purchase from Upper Canada, the rules of purchase stated that no one but loyalist to the crown should be eligible to buy land. This is a city where people who are not loyal to the vision of royalty are not valued enough to protect and care for.

The motion put forward by the mayor makes it clear that the crisis of homelessness is not one that deeply troubles the cities image of itself. The visibility of the camps of people without homes does not ignite a drive within the mayor to come up with solutions that have long term benefits for the entire community. The matter is too complex. Instead, we get a motion that is dehumanizing the people who camp, turning them into a public nuisance that must be remedied. I am writing this letter to say that it is not acceptable for a city to behave this way, especially not after a pandemic and not during an economic crisis.

Please do not pass this motion.