

Mayor Guthrie, councillors, city staff, and members of the housed and unhoused public. My name is Ben Minett and I am a co-owner of The Bookshelf on Quebec street in Downtown Guelph. We have been in downtown Guelph for 50 years this year and have thankfully made it through the pandemic. I want to acknowledge my businesses privilege. We have made it through many ups and downs over the years. We are very privileged that our customers have supported us for half a century in wonderful downtown Guelph. They have enabled us to donate \$50,000.00 in our 50<sup>th</sup> year in business to supportive housing and food security in our city.

Mayor Guthrie, councillors, city staff, and members of the housed and unhoused public, we are in an emergency situation, and we have been for a long time. We have many business which have gone bankrupt due to the trials and tribulations of the pandemic, we have many people who are working and still cannot afford a home in this city, we have businesses that are having a lot of trouble paying their bills, we have people who are addicted to various drugs, cannot afford a home, and are dying.

When I look out the doors of The Bookshelf and see police or an ambulance, it saddens me. It saddens me because the person receiving the care, has usually been physically, emotionally, or financially traumatized to the point where they are getting acute care from our security net. Canada over the years has had a lot better track record than most countries for helping its citizens and also doing a lot of good work around the world. This is what I want to see.

Right now we have numerous complicated problems overlaying each other and intersecting at points. Just because we want thriving downtown businesses does not mean that we do not want to care for the unhoused, mentally ill, or addicted. In fact, it is quite the opposite. If our businesses our solvent, it means that we can help the folks that we see having hard times.

Mayor Guthrie, councillors, city staff, and members of the housed and unhoused public, this is our house. It is very clear that there is an emergency. Fires are burning. What do you do if you are lucky enough to own a home and you smell smoke? You put out the fire by all means necessary. This means, amending bylaws to accommodate folks that are unhoused. This means, supporting small businesses that are having a difficult time. This means, communicating your desire for people to have dignity in an unfair system. The means, conveying your desire help your fellow citizens to your elected representatives in this community and sending a note to Doug Ford in Queens Park would also be useful.

We need more financial support for mental health workers. We need more support for paramedics. We need more support for our health care system. We need more support for supportive housing. We need more support for police. We need more support for food security. We also need support for small businesses in Downtown Guelph.

Mayor Guthrie, councillors, city staff, business owners, and member of the housed and unhoused public. This is our collective house and lets treat it as such.