

Dear Honourable Mayor Cam Guthrie and the Members of City Council,

While I appreciate that the proposed bylaw includes two recommendations to try and deal with the housing crisis via permanent shelter occupancy and an appeal to other governments for additional funding, it doesn't sound like we're really trying to get to the heart of the matter.

Do we have city and county resources that are talking to the people that feel the need to camp outside? Do we understand WHY they sometimes turn down shelter spaces? Do we understand the most critical items that we, as a society, need to HELP them with so that they can get treatment, get work and live again safely and with dignity?

I HAVE spoken to some of these people and they tell stories of the shelters not being safe. Personal belongings are often stolen, they feel they don't have enough privacy, and violence is a very real threat. Are we addressing those real concerns?

Everyone that is homeless or is camping started with a home at one point. They all have reasons and circumstances as to why they have gotten to this point in their lives. Are we addressing those reasons? Are we doing it quickly enough and with enough rigor and commitment? Are we picturing these people as our loved ones and friends and are doing our best to really help them?

I beg you, please don't sweep this issue under the rug. Please show the rest of Ontario and Canada that Guelph can really be a model for dealing with the issues that cause city camps. Please don't let Guelph be the city that just pretends it doesn't happen, but rather the camps, and them, really do matter, and are a welcome part of this city.

Very Sincerely,

Robert Whitmore
Guelph