

# PUBLIC SPACE BYLAW

Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2024

Mayor Guthrie, councilors, city staff and fellow delegates.

My name is John Fisher and I am delegating today as a resident of downtown. I want to thank council and staff for bringing this discussion into the public arena with a draft bylaw on which we can focus our attention.

I believe there is genuine compassion and empathy by our community for our fellow citizens who are experiencing homelessness. And the record suggests there *has* been progress made over the last year in providing permanent housing solutions for some.

Unfortunately we have not built fast enough, or in sufficient quantity to satisfy the need. It's gratifying and disappointing that it's a community organization which is providing the leadership for an interim temporary solution of tiny houses for the still unhoused community.

Regarding the Staff recommendations concerning the Public Space Bylaw.

I support recommendation #2 for the collection and sharing of data from the County of Wellington and agree with a delegate that it should be expanded. Other health partners should share in the data collection design to optimize solutions and outcomes.

I also support recommendation #3, Advocacy with Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the province. However the current strategies don't seem to be working and the AMO should be re-evaluating alternatives to getting the Province's attention.

I don't support Recommendation #1, The Public Space Use Bylaw.

I do support a Public Space ByLaw, but not this one. This draft is negative, confusing \* and with none of the elements required for a Human Rights Approach to homelessness.

The new bylaw must state simply and plainly the location(s) that the city has designated as suitable for an encampment community to be setup. It needs to provide that encampment/or tiny house community with the facilities that we all expect from our municipal government to support it. The community should be managed in conjunction with members of that community that will focus and coordinate the services required by the community members to move them into more sustainable housing solutions.

Allowing underserviced encampments to proliferate around the city and particularly the downtown core does not dignify the unhoused and causes a cascade of negative consequences that adds to the stigma that people associate with the occupants. It also has a negative impact on the safety and economic wellbeing of downtown businesses and is discouraging to other residents who frequent downtown.

In natural disaster emergencies, governments and agencies quickly respond with temporary shelter, washrooms, waste services, running water, security and food and health supports.

Why can't we address the homeless crisis in Guelph with the same focus and urgency?

If the city provided this kind of alternative I don't believe there would be any financial litigation risks of a bylaw that insists that members of the homeless community move to the fully supported location. The city would be offering a far better, more effective and supportive alternative than tents on the street.

In the meantime there are lots of creative opportunities the city should pursue to contribute to solving the crisis and supporting the homeless community. Hopefully representatives from the homeless community were able to express what they needed at the private housing symposium. There were also many creative ideas expressed today from delegates, for example a vacancy tax, leasing vacant store space, providing secure lockers to store personal property etc etc.

I look forward to reading the next improved draft of the Public Space Bylaw  
Thankyou

John Fisher

\*Encampments aren't allowed in the square during the day, but its OK at night as long as you set up after sundown and tear down before sunrise.

Encampments are permitted on Reservable Public space but only if its not rented.

Encampments are allowed in a Park but only if its not Sensitive Public Space.