

Dear Guelph City Council,

Guelph is not alone in its experience of poverty, drug abuse, housing shortages, overwhelmed mental health support, and public safety issues. Attempting to find a comprehensive political solution for these interrelated issues is doomed to failure for a number of reasons. By now we are all painfully aware of the jurisdictional, financial, and legal challenges of attempting to address any component of the crisis. Pointing the finger at the county's responsibility in areas of mental health care and supportive and affordable housing does nothing to address issues where the city can help.

Downtown streets and squares are by definition "public spaces". The municipality is responsible for providing public safety services, and to enforce building, zoning, planning, and occupancy standards bylaws through policing and bylaw enforcement. Guelph's current bylaws regulate and license everything from street food vendors, to sidewalk signage, to sidewalk patios, to sidewalk construction closures, to the length of your lawn. How can it be that we are missing a bylaw keeping me - or anyone else - from deciding to live in St George's Square or on the ice pad in front of city hall?

I am a retired senior citizen who continues to support downtown retailers and services. My family has operated a business in downtown Guelph since 1973. In the late 1970's and early 1980's downtown commercial vacancy rates exceeded 50%. It was a sad sight. As my municipal representatives, enacting a Public Space Use bylaw - and related bylaw and public safety enforcement - is your responsibility and important step in addressing this complicated crisis.

Many thanks.

best,  
doug.

Doug Minett

