

Mayor Cam Guthrie,

I, among other Guelph residents, are concerned and angry about the recent public space use bylaw proposal (or should I say re-proposal considering this is your second attempt). This bylaw will disproportionately harm our unhoused neighbours in Guelph, and even criminalize their existence without providing them with any viable or sustainable alternatives.

Thanks to budget transparency, we know there are alternatives you could be providing to house, uplift, and support the Guelph community. It just seems like your budget is currently being misused.

The Guelph Police budget this year is \$6,584,900. An absurdly large sum of capital that could be used in countless ways to support people. More money than what a large majority of us Guelph residents will make cumulatively throughout our entire lifetimes and working careers. A lifetime of work is less than what you're paying to fund a single year of the police force within (what I've experienced to be) a lovely, creative, and kind community. Over 6.5 million dollars.

I invite you to reflect on who law enforcement generally focuses their time (and our money) on. The disproportionate over-surveillance, arrests, and manufactured criminalization of the people left behind by the system. Impacted by the countless housing, healthcare, financial crises and burdens outside of their control.

This current allocation of funds seems to be unsuccessful in your laws (and law enforcement's) mission to "serve and protect" our most vulnerable communities. People are sleeping and overdosing on the streets, and you're trying to make that illegal.

It's incomprehensible and upsetting to see your escalations against your own community members who are impacted by systemic issues which are beyond their control.

Mayor Guthrie - their issues are in YOUR control. Your hands, your power, your decision making, democratic integrity, bylaws, and allocation of funds. Their well-being is in your control. You are a very substantial cog in this system that should be used to support, not punish our vulnerable unhoused neighbours.

This lawmaking and action towards affordable housing should have happened 10 years ago, but the next best day to start is today. We've heard the narrative about the time you need to make these decisions, but there is no time.

Short term action is possible. It's already too late, but I beg you to start catching up before more of our neighbours are killed from your inaction.

This public space bylaw, alongside the discontinued funding of safe consumption sites, will result in countless preventable deaths. Preventable by action—immediate action.

I believe there are actionable short term solutions, such as strongly opposing this bylaw proposal and provide funding for actual community support in Guelph. Support such as funding and expediting safe consumption initiatives, tiny houses for our unhoused community, and volunteer-lead meal programs such as Your Downtown Guelph Friends.

Mayor Guthrie I ask you this:

Why are you using our public tax dollars to police and punish unhoused people when you could use that same money to just HOUSE them?

A leader with compassion would use their power and decision making to help protect, feed, and shelter unhoused people rather than criminalize them.

As a Guelph resident and a human with empathy, I am frustrated this even needs to be a conversation and uncertain with the integrity of our supposed democracy.

Thank you for the time and I hope you decide to take action towards resolving the housing crisis rather than punishing those who are trapped by your inaction.

Tay  
Guelph resident, ward 5