

Dear Council and Committee Members,

I'm writing to express my deep concern about and opposition to the proposed Public Space Use By-law. This by-law is a clear attack on one of our City's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. I am ashamed that my City is seeking to criminalize our unhoused neighbours by introducing a by-law that effectively removes the last safe housing option that remains for some people by banning tents, built structures, and encampments. The lack of humanity and empathy present in this by-law is disturbing, particularly after the outpour of outrage when council brought forward this by-law earlier in the year.

As the staff report to council points out, this bill does not address the underlying issues of the housing crisis. This by-law claims to be about health, safety and well-being, but does not provide any solutions or resources to actually improve the well-being of unhoused Guelphites. Instead, its implementation would require more resources going towards controlling and punishing unhoused people instead of housing them. Listen to the experts in this field that will be showing up to delegate at the council meeting — the experts that tried to get you to listen months ago. The City has the power to actually help our unhoused community. This by-law is not a solution.

If the inhumanity of this by-law isn't enough, listen to staff when they say that this could have huge costs to the city because of Charter challenges and additional staffing needs. You heard it from legal workers during the last council meeting on this by-law: this will be challenged. Are you ready for that cost? Are you ready for the backlash when your constituents see the cost?

This by-law is not going to stop encampments. This by-law is only going to punish people who are already living harder lives than most of us can even imagine. A better City would put its resources in housing solutions. A better City would not shift the blame onto the County. Step up to create the housing solutions people actually need - long term, affordable housing and geared to income housing. In the meantime while that gets put into action, let our unhoused neighbours live as they are.

From a very concerned citizen,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelby Law". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shelby Law