

Comments, questions and concerns regarding the resubmission of Public Space Use By-law re: encampments and related issues, and the Engagement justification memo:

### **Community Engagement**

There's once again an appalling lack of public engagement and consideration of **all** equity defined groups for a public space use by-law, and related issues, specifically sanctioned encampments in public space (parks).

#### [City of Guelph Engagement policy](#)

p.3-4 In all engagement, The City strives to

- practice inclusive design and **address identified barriers to participation;**
- focus on the needs and experiences of equity-denied groups;**
  
- engage early and evolve its approach as it goes;**
- connect dots;
  
- meet people where they are;**
- deliver diverse engagement opportunities;**
- spark curiosity and joy;

and •report back. [all emphasis mine]

The mayor put forward a motion banning downtown encampments in [late 2023](#). Per the "engage early", the city should have immediately initiated a public engagement process per policy. This was \*plenty\* of time for a proper consultation to take place under the Community Engagement Charter (CEC) that included \*all\* of the public, and ID'd and designated all stakeholders.

All due respect, how many iterations it undergoes and why, has nothing do to with, and is no reason not to initiate and adapt, formal public consultation under the CEC. The intent and issues are the same, whether or not it evolves into a wider public space use by-law or not.

The non engagement criteria wording on p. 2 in the CEC cited in the memo is “\*immediate\* public safety issue”, not the “urgent situation” described in p. 10 of this report.

The "urgency" that required a special council meeting is also not defined with examples that differ from the status quo on these issues.

Is it a public safety issue? Yes. Is it “immediate”? No. It’s urgent, but not so immediate that it negates the public’s right to be involved in decisions that affect them, and they can influence. [This is especially true when all the other cited documents stem from or are part of closed, exclusionary task forces, symposia, and the downtown “strategic working group” secreted in the mayor’s closed Emergency Task Force.]

It’s important to note that neither the terms "immediate" or "public safety" are defined in the memo or Community Engagement Charter pdf on the city website.

Additionally, rules around the city’s response to encampments were developed even before all of the above. There were no \*immediate\* public safety issues expressed. There were many people who complained to their councillors and the mayor about \*their\* negative experiences, living, working, and owning businesses in close proximity to encampments. Why weren’t the public involved in those discussions as part of a formal community engagement process, including those affected stakeholders?

In addition, p4 states that City project managers,

are aware of and understand their responsibilities related to the City’s Community Engagement Policy and **ensure consultants and external organizations leading engagement on behalf of the City are as well;** [my emphasis]

With reference to the previous general criteria above (p3-4) it's clear that this requirement has **not** been met. All of the referenced consultations and reports arose out of the Mayor's Emergency Task Force, which was (and still is) a closed, exclusionary entity that includes members at the whim of the mayor. The general public, and anyone who disagrees with the harm

reduction advocates is excluded. That includes other equity deserving groups, e.g the disabled and elderly, most affected by public safety concerns.

That includes making the County Consolidated Social Service System Manager, where they can develop, consult, implement and fund social policy unilaterally with no democratic process involving Guelph citizens. The only reason this is before council right now is the Mayor used strong mayor powers to force a city by-law.

The housing symposia they held that City staff is using as a main information resource, was invite-only, excluded the press for the majority of time, excluded people with lived experience outside harm reduction philosophy, and those from equity groups outside the social justice activism of related groups. Their promised reports are still not public.

People With Lived Experience (PWLEs) are only referenced in this memo within the framework of exclusion: only those part of the County Housing symposia. You've also moved the goalposts once again on consultation- now not even all PWLE are considered- only those currently homeless, not past experiences.

Not only are they only concentrating on those w/\*current\* lived experience, they are narrowing that even further to only clients of the Stepping Stone, and allowing them (and not other designated outreach workers) to collect data on outreach runs.

This is a gross conflict of interest, as the Stepping Stone is part of the Tiny Homes Coalition, which will be requesting funding from upper tier government sources for a sanctioned encampment project.

Also, those who want to access shelter services might be intimidated, or feel pressured that they will have to have opinions/concerns, etc. that agree

Stepping Stone philosophies or they might be denied access to shelter services or placement on the BNL could be affected.

Many in encampments are there because they cannot use the Stepping Stone's services because of their low/zero barrier policies and the disruption/disorder, etc. they allow at their shelters. The results have been documented and referenced in my previous delegations.

The City's DEI statements are being interpreted through a left-wing, social activist lens/bias, not on a broader basis that is real equity and inclusion.

I am a low income, LGBT, disabled resident in precarious housing. I have \*never\* seen any city, County or council 'community' engagement initiative\* that represents who I am in anything related to housing, public safety, downtown experience (I'm a Core regular), or anything else related to DEI principles the city purports to uphold.

There are also major issues of enforcement of by-laws and real consequences, not fines under the municipal act, for non-compliance.

jj salmon  
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