

Dear Council, Mayor and Clerks,

I am writing to ask you to vote in favour of all three motions on December 11th's council meeting.

I support the first motion (agenda item 4.1) opposing the closure of Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS's) because it would make our city safer for people who use drugs and those who don't. This motion is especially important now, in light of the provincial government pushing through Bill 223 with very little consultation from stakeholders like municipalities. We have seen the provincial government rescind bills<sup>[1]</sup> before, in the face of public pressure, and so this motion holds so much importance now.

SCS's reduce drug-related deaths in the neighbourhoods in which they're situated<sup>[2]</sup>. Without access to a convenient site near other services downtown, and without expanded hours, drug users can't ensure safe supply. Countless outreach, health, and support organizations have spoken out that closure of these sites will result in more deaths due to overdose or a tainted supply, as well as the spread of disease from needle sharing (e.g. <sup>[3, 4]</sup>). SCS's are a cost-effective public health solution<sup>[5]</sup>; what's more, there is a positive association between people regularly visiting SCS's and voluntarily undergoing addiction treatment (e.g. as a result of regular contact with a counsellor at SCS's)<sup>[5]</sup>. Without these sites, people will use wherever they can, increasing instances of people having to witness drug use in public<sup>[5]</sup>. We know that people in Guelph are concerned about this, and that more, not less SCS sites and hours, is the solution.

Closing SCS's will put the onus of response from highly trained medical and non medical professionals to (often) ill equipped community members. EMS services will be even more overburdened than they are currently, and this will result in more crowded hospitals, longer waits for ambulance and ER response, and it will result in more people dying <sup>[4, 5]</sup>.

The loss of SCS's, coupled with the City's Bylaw, will mean more people who use drugs will be doing so away from hard won supports and services, and now often in isolation as they fear drug seizure and criminalization. Additionally, Doug Ford stated in a recent letter his intention to pass legislation against public drug use and empowering police to enforce this. This will further increase the chances of people using in secluded places such as bathrooms where they may experience an overdose without anyone nearby to administer first aid. Imagine the community trauma it will cause because people will be responding to dead bodies.

Addiction is a disease and homelessness is a consequence of cost of living, inadequate support and inadequate housing, and yet both of these things are stigmatized and viewed as threats to public order and safety. You're not solving the housing or drug crises if you're coming from a place of stigma, especially when you're pushing people into isolation away from the care they need. This is why supporting this motion is so important and why I encourage you to vote in favour of this motion.

I support the second motion (agenda item 4.2) because it ensures that the council upholds the basic human rights of all its citizens. The provincial government's encouragement for mayors to use the Notwithstanding Clause to push through anti-encampment by-laws is a slippery slope towards erosion of human rights by the government. The Notwithstanding Clause is supposed to be used only in the most desperate and unique situations. This is why it is rarely used. There is no critical reason, for the safety, health or wellbeing of our City, to use the Notwithstanding

Clause. As politicians it is your duty to uphold and protect the basic human rights of all your constituents. By voting in favour of this motion, you are sending a strong message that you respect democracy and the human rights of all Guelphites.

I support the third motion (agenda item 4.3) because it ensures that municipalities are pressuring the provincial government to ensure cities like Guelph have the resources necessary to address the housing and addiction crises currently affecting cities across Ontario. As a student, I feel the impacts of the housing crisis on myself and others at University of Guelph who must find a place to stay, but I'm fortunate to be able to afford rent, while others in our community have no place to stay except in tents or, sometimes, crowded shelters. Cities, like Guelph, need additional support from the province in order to build housing that is accessible and affordable for people living on a fixed income, and provide services that appropriately address addiction and mental health, including full spectrum supports that include harm reduction options.

Your vote in favour of all these motions will give a voice to the city's most vulnerable, sending a strong message to the province that the City of Guelph is committed to working to proactive, workable, dignified and humane solutions to homelessness and addiction.

I look forward to your positive reply.

Sincerely,

Haidi Wu

Sources:

1. Rushowy, K. (2022, November 14). "Ford government kills controversial bill that ordered CUPE school staff back to work, as talks continue." *Toronto Star*. [https://www.thestar.com/politics/provincial/ford-government-kills-controversial-bill-that-ordered-cupe-school-staff-back-to-work-as-talks/article\\_f9a46101-eda5-5073-a2da-a57e86912347.html](https://www.thestar.com/politics/provincial/ford-government-kills-controversial-bill-that-ordered-cupe-school-staff-back-to-work-as-talks/article_f9a46101-eda5-5073-a2da-a57e86912347.html)
2. Rammhomen, I., Gaines, T., Scheim, A., Bayoumi, A., Werb, D. (2024). Overdose mortality incidence and supervised consumption services in Toronto, Canada: an ecological study and spatial analysis. *The Lancet Public Health* 9(2), 79 - 87. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(23\)00300-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(23)00300-6)
3. RNAO. (2024, August 20). "SCS closures: A death sentence that will lead to unsafe communities and higher costs". *Newsroom > Media Releases*. <https://rnao.ca/news/media-releases/scs-closures-a-death-sentence-that-will-lead-to-unsafe-communities-and-higher>
4. Lavoie, J. & Freeman, J. (2024, August 20). "'Detrimental impacts': Ontario announces closure of 10 supervised drug consumption sites". *CTV News Toronto*. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/detrimental-impacts-ontario-announces-closure-of-10-supervised-drug-consumption-sites-1.7007098>

5. Kennedy, M. C., Karamouzian, M., Kerr, T. (2017). Public Health and Public Order Outcomes Associated with Supervised Drug Consumption Facilities: a Systematic Review. *Curr HIV/AIDS Rep.* 14:161-183. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11904-017-0363-y>. PMID: 28875422.