

Dear City Clerk & Ward 1 Councillors,

I hope you and yours are well.

Please include the following correspondence for Council's consideration regarding the November 4 agenda item on the proposed Vacant Homes Tax.

As a resident of Guelph, I am writing to express my support for implementing a Vacant Homes Tax - but urge Council to strengthen the staff recommendation. A 2% rate would not go far enough to address housing pressures or ensure the program's effectiveness.

To be effective, Guelph's Vacant Homes Tax should include:

1. **A vacant home tax rate of 4%.**

This rate would provide a meaningful incentive to return housing to use, generate funds to support affordable housing initiatives, and cover the costs of administering the program.

2. **Mandatory declaration.**

A mandatory declaration ensures equity and allows the City to identify all legitimately vacant homes.

3. **Direct surplus revenue to the local non-profit housing sector for quick application.**

Hamilton's Affordable Housing Funding Program provides a reference related to this.

4. **Establish a vacant homes registry and annual inspection program** to prevent demolition by neglect, with costs covered by vacant property owners.

5. **Establish effective penalties.**

Set fines at \$10,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations to ensure compliance.

6. **Initiate the program in 2026.**

These measures would create a stronger, fairer, and more effective Vacant Homes Tax that supports housing availability and affordability in our community.

After all, we are in a housing crisis, and as a young person, my dreams of home ownership and a family seem out of reach. Cities don't have all the tools to alleviate the crisis, but we should use the ones we do have.

Thank you for including this correspondence in the public record, and thank you councillors for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Conor Russell - 

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Conor Russell