

Please accept my delegation regarding the RFP for the Daytime Shelter space downtown.

Mayor, Council and Staff

I am writing to express my objection to the tabling of the daytime shelter report as presented by City Staff to Council as part of the 2026 Budget deliberations. (Agenda Item 5.1)

Initial Exclusionary and Secret Project Framework and Policy

Per city staff [city report/council meeting] the initial decisions on this were made entirely by Council, the County and the Downtown Advisory Group, who operate in secret. The Downtown Advisory Group is supposed to address ways to create a thriving downtown-including what prevents it. Thanks to Cllr Klassen's passed Council motion, It is secreted within the homelessness Emergency Task Force-the mayor's self-declared, exclusionary, closed door group that deals with homelessness and related issues, (drug use and ostensibly community security and safety). This group initiated various closed sub-groups that provided information for subsequent reports; it includes both the Stepping Stone and the Mission as group members and stakeholders (particularly the Guelph-Wellington Health & Housing Community Planning Table). Stepping Stone particularly has an apparent, direct conflict of interest as they gather and control data on homelessness that gives needs and numbers for their services, directly affecting budget requests, potentially including their salaries and staffing numbers. IMHO, this is a fairly clear conflict of interest that should be addressed, but I can find no recognition of in any staff reports.

No members of the public were part of this process, including wider stakeholders: neighbours, those in affected human rights groups (elderly, disabled, LGBT+), and/or taxpayers footing the bill, etc. . To my knowledge, the City (or stakeholders for that matter) held no Q&As or Town Halls on this project, or related issues in the Downtown Core generally that allowed Guelphites to have a fair say. That includes sharing their safety and security concerns and related lived experiences around downtown social service locations, including the Main Branch Library, the Stepping Stone (formerly the Drop In Centre) and the Mission.

As a result, the general public are entirely cut off from our local democracy, and denied basic accountability and transparency for any problem, project or initiative relating to the downtown-including this day shelter. Also, any broad initiative/project will be funnelled into that lens (homelessness), which is not always appropriate and can perpetuate a closed system where creative solutions including diversity and inclusion are ignored.

All harm reduction projects have been developed in basically the same way, and cost taxpayers millions, including higher level funding allocations. The low barrier "transitional" housing on Delhi was projected by the city to cost \$800 000-largely due to using a heritage building they claimed didn't need an addition. One addition and \$10.6 million later,[per County Budget documents] Guelph taxpayers were directly on the hook for \$3.1m, with zero explanation why the project changed so drastically, why the addition was needed, cost and type of security

measures for residents the surrounding area, and how much higher level funding was given for this that will be unavailable for other future projects. Under the current undemocratic, secret framework, there is no reason to believe it will be any different for this.

I'd also respectfully remind Council and staff that the permission to go ahead with the Stepping Stone's current expansion, which included the potential for daytime services, went through the Committee of Adjustment as a "minor variance", which it most definitely was not. Major building use conversion, unstated zoning, adding another story, and providing multiple services (under low barrier drug policy) is not under CofA mandate as a minor by-law variance request. One member voted against on that basis alone, 2 others didn't vote (abstention, absence), so a majority of even this Committee didn't approve.

That means in reality that important safety and security provisions, including: boundary setbacks, CPTED principles and landscape/building construction, floorplans, access, staffing, and well-being of housing residents there is not considered, and will be costly if needed to be retro-fitted after the project is completed, regardless of when the daytime shelter comes on-line. There is no mention of the low barrier status around drug use and how this impacts everyone, and the budget. (That includes lack of comparables for other jurisdictions with these services—reports that include ALL affected people, not just the usual harm reduction/Christian/social activist bubble. There is no clear information on whether or not consumption sites are part of the daytime shelter service. From the County's previous report, that was the stated purpose, per the Lived Experience ETF table, but no one will speak on it publicly. They offer no detailed breakdown on similar shelters elsewhere they feel have worked, nor addressed the myriad ones that don't, including for the purposes of mitigation of known and real community harms (including other marginalized potential clients' experiences with these shelters/programs, including violence, theft, and sexual assault). There is no mention of how the locations' neighbours and the general public, since this is a business district, were consulted on what they claim was a consideration point for these proposals. All of these issues are in the public record in reputable news outlets and municipal reports.)

There is zero detail in relation to this in the staff report attached under this budget request. There is no financial breakdown for any part of this project development, including: cost breakdown (why high staff costs?, what is security budget?); future cost projections- is a percentage of higher level funding needed (that can be allocated elsewhere) for this budget cycle and in future, etc. There are no explanations for the amount requested, what the day shelter's policies are on security, drug use and community relations (including a potential liaison, which is an added cost if implemented later), or related zoning.

More importantly, both of these locations have previously served as daytime shelter locations, albeit under slightly different parameters. Why is there nothing here breaking down KPIs for these times, including but not limited to: real costs throughout the Core (garbage pickup, needle removal, extra police presence, escalated public safety incidents, surveys of potential and current service users, staff surveys, etc.), human rights considerations for vulnerable groups (in and out of the shelters, including all the public), esp. the elderly, disabled,

Indigenous, and LGBT+ communities. (The latter especially deserve special consideration, as both of these groups are Christian-based and have experienced discrimination from Christian groups in the past-Salvation Army for example.)

This proposal does not have enough information or public inclusion and IMHO should be deferred from the budget process until it is provided, especially already allocated city funding outcomes for both the Mission and Stepping Stone. I appreciate the staff are in a zoo w/the season, but this is too important to get wrong. These are funds and programs previously approved, it shouldn't be too hard to gather this information into a report. The public's inclusion would also be nice, but sadly, based on past experience, I'm not holding my breath.

jj salmon

Ward 2

Re: the Guelph Today article on the reduction of rent subsidies as a [part of the budget requests](#). There is no need to deny or change this program in order to reduce the budget.

Deny the \$3.4m request for the zero barrier day shelter/consumption site*, and apply it to the \$2.9m Social Services County budget increase request to keep the RGI supplement for the 321 people who rely on it. [The extra \$500 000 can be used as an RGI reserve fund for future overage requests]

*This is the original use that was part of the [Collective Results Report, whose recommendations were passed by council](#) as a result of the various committees and symposia stemming from the Mayor's closed, undemocratic Emergency homelessness and community safety Task Force. Once council had passed this, staff referred to it only as a day shelter for the homeless, and entirely omitted any reference to a zero barrier consumption site/recreation space for drug users.

Regardless of my previous delegation positions on the day shelter, I think most people would consider it reasonable to prioritize the emergency funding needs for those at imminent risk of homelessness over a recreational space/consumption site geared to a minority of downtown drug users. Even the larger use of a general day shelter for the homeless is not the same as a priority housing need.

It should also be noted that the main branch library is already used as warming/cooling and drop-in space for the homeless. The library CEO has indicated that this policy will continue into the new space. If this request is for what staff have claimed, a day shelter for the homeless (i.e. not a consumption site) then not funding the day shelter will have an even lesser impact because other options are available.

jj salmon
Ward 2