





**Adam A. Donaldson** @adamadonaldson

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**Thread reader**

Thread by Adam A. Donaldson (@adamadonaldson), Feb 14

Coming up at 10 am, a very special, and very controversial, council meeting: [guelphpolitico.ca/2024/02/02/cit...](https://guelphpolitico.ca/2024/02/02/cit...)

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Mayor Guthrie calls the meeting to order. Again.

Next up is Mik Graf from Sanguen Health Centre. They say they're concerned about the public space bylaw b/c the reason for someone sleeping a tent are multifaceted, and they're criminalised and stigmatised b/c of it. Tents can offer more safety than a shelter.

Graf also challenges the assumption that everyone who sleeps rough uses drugs, and the ones that do use drugs are trying escape some kind of pain in their lives that's also routed in the reasons they're homeless. They note the multiple poisonings in one day last week.

Graf: We need to discuss what a reasonable alternative to encampments are and what accessible shelter looks like. Need more housing supports and treatments. Need to reach people where they are.

Allt asks Mik about basic needs and self-medication. They note that people use drugs to cope with things that society doesn't provide service for healing and rest. Also pets, which may be the only loyalty that a person knows in their lives.

Ron East is next. He says this bylaw is not strictly legal though he's not a lawyer. People in tents are engaging in a lawful protest of an economic and social system that results in people being forced to live in tents.

John Fisher is next. He lives downtown and believes there's genuine compassion for people in the community, and while we've done a lot to build new housing, it's still not enough. Concerned about a "cascade of negative consequences."

Fisher calls the proposed bylaw "negative, legalistic, and confusing". Need a response on par with a natural disaster, perhaps setting up a formal structured encampment site at the old lawn bowling club near the Boathouse.

Next, Susan Ratcliffe. She's asking council to support the draft bylaw as it's a "reasonable and fair" first draft to support public spaces for everyone. She says she's not an expert, but has had contact with homeless people thru work at library.

Ratcliffe says that Charter was passed around common good, not individual rights. Housing may be a right, but we also have zoning and other rules about where housing can be. It's not fair that a few people have taken St George's Square for private use.

She also says that the encampments downtown will have a negative impact on tourism and will have people leave with a negative impression. The look of downtown right now can deter future visits.

Guthrie notes, in response to Ratcliffe's last comment, that Ontario's Big City Mayors passed a resolution asking the federal government to open up armouries for homelessness support. They haven't heard back.

Susan Watson is next, saying that the irony is not lost that there was no public engagement on the public spaces bylaw, and then she called Guelph a new "dictatorship." Notes concerns about going to court over this, and advocates for vacancy tax.

Watson adds that there's no shortage of money for housing but all the benefit seems to be going to developers. She says councils need to stop being the handmaidens for the Ford government, transferring \$23 million to developers in lost fees.

Watson reminds Guthrie that he voted with a council motion in 2022 to reject Strong Mayor Powers, and she said that he should be ashamed.

"Great, thank you," Guthrie said.

On the rowhouses on Fountain, Guthrie asks Watson if she's aware that the area is getting redeveloped. Watson says if that's true, then there's no reason not to let people live there now.

Pina Marfisi, owner of Acqua Salon, is next. She says she's never witnessed a more disturbing situation downtown; drugs are rampant, people are hunched over with needles in their arms everyday, and it's common for people to be followed, harassed and assaulted.

Marfisi says people who live and work downtown live in fear and are asking themselves if today is the day they get beaten or mugged? She says many store owners are hanging on by a thread, and small business owners are behind the character of the DT.

She adds that while Royal City Mission is trying their best, they're overwhelmed. There's been 50% drop in sales, and customers are frightened to come downtown. How can they survive when people won't come downtown?

Marfisi says that the businesses in the core care and have given supplies to the Mission. At this point, Dorval rises and shouts that he's heard enough. He walks out to the chamber. Marfisi continues that this bylaw is balanced and a first step.

Next is Kate Nixon from Your Downtown Guelph Friends. She says she's ready and eager to create a more empathetic and support environment. and it's essential to see the human faces affected by these policies. We can choose compassion over coercion; empathy over enforcement.

Nixon says it's crucial to recognise people's humanity and give them the support they need. Calls the eviction of tenants "draconian" and collective punishment, which is a violation of international law. Lack of affordable housing options has forced people into tents.

Next is Daniel Loughrin from Upbeat Guitar Studio. He didn't think he'd have something unique to bring "and that's wild." He says his business has been unaffected, and the only thing his clients talk about in regards to tents is what's going on.

People are clearing opting out of all the options that they're being given, and says that council is clearly failing and what they're trying to do. The bylaw just shuffles people off to somewhere else and it was rammed in over 11 days "It just feels weird," he says.

Loughrin notes that Guthrie took campaign funds from developers for his campaign, which is public. If there's going to be housing developed in Guelph, we're not getting affordable housing. We're going to get more condos people can't afford.

He doesn't understand who's buying them because he might be, in his words, "an idiot."

Guthrie asks for no laughing.

Next is Andrea Baker. She's a U of G sociology student, and rejects the assumption that people living in tents are dangerous. Black people shouldn't be profiled for being Black and homeless people shouldn't be profiled for being homeless.

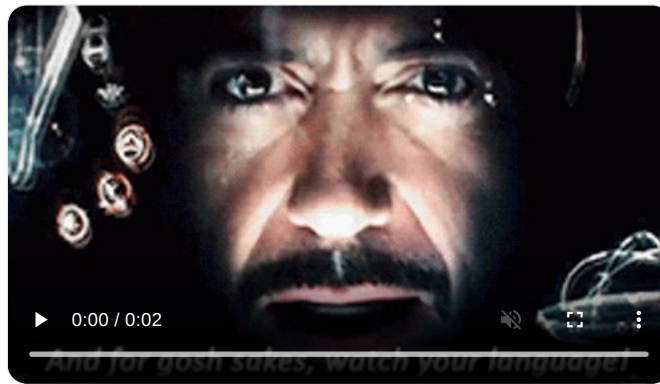
Baker, clearly upset, encourages everyone talk to people and get to know them, which seems a lot simpler and cheaper than criminalising people. She loves visiting downtown, and brought a friend here recently.

Next, Jill Francis. She's 21 and works as part-time program support for Wyndham House. She feels a lot of things, and empathises with business owners but she care more about how people are doing in their lives than the city's aesthetics.

She assumes that no one on council knows what it's like to smoke meth, shoot up or be unhoused, she doesn't know either, but she asks council to imagine a giant picking up their house and moving it. Council is putting themselves on a "frightening pedestal", she says.

She tells Guthrie that he's beckoning people to respect the room, but they're asking him to respect people's lives. "It goes both ways," someone says from the gallery. She adds that she hopes council looks in their hearts or "some shit like that."

Guthrie asks people to watch the swears.



Next, Omorowa Eguakun. She's shock and dismayed by the bylaw, especially since the people affected were not consulted. She calls it a "gross overreach" of policy and enshrines that there are only certain people who are valuable.

Eguakun says that we need to get actual housing solutions and taking unhoused people to court is not going to solve anything. Needs more trauma informed education and "people building". Would like to see more co-ordination and lobbying for affordable housing.

Dani Lindamood from Water Watchers is next. Starts by saying ditto, the bylaw has sweeping implications that have not been established. She notes that access to water and sanitation is a human right, and not all access is equal.

The underhoused should not be criminalised for trying to exist, she adds.

Liz Cherry, VP of the Guelph NDP, is next. She says ditto to previous comments, but you can't talk about encampments without address homelessness. It's a humanitarian crisis and a human right, and not a lifestyle choice. 50% of rents paying 30% plus of income in ONT.

Next, Nik Valkova. They've lived around downtown for 6 years and has never seen rent this high and wonders when they might be homeless. The # of encampments is a warning sign bigger than the bylaw, calls arguments that public space should be used by everyone "self contradictory."

Nik notes that the meeting started with a territorial acknowledgement, and though the City says they don't own the land they're still going to police it. They save if the City is concerned about propane, they should provide electricity. Also, washroom access is limited.

Nik says they can't understand the collective effort to build hut and patios in short order, but can't get housing going just as quick. Moving people out of site during the day to portray a clean downtown is "barbaric", they say.

"I regret that I had to be here today," Nik adds.

Kim Richer is next. She wants council to vote no saying that it's created a huge divide in the community with a lot of stigma getting thrown around. Wonders how we cannot come together as community and do better than this.

Richer says that she wants to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Notes that she knows several people who are homelessness, but are not on the by-name list. So there's room to do better.

Dorian Hallman says that the supports of the bylaw seem to be middle class people separate from the nature of poverty. Quotes an ABC article that says the people are more victimised by the fear of danger versus any actual danger.

Dorian says they live across the street from St George's Square and has never felt threatened, and they have seen people in crisis in the area, but imagines that this is the source of people's fright.

Dorian says that this community will only be prosperous when we all prosper.

Next, Toma. They ask what the purpose of this bylaw is? Because it seems like we're going to send them out all over town to find somewhere new and those people will need to have a checklist and a tape measure. We're telling people that they're not wanted.

What's the alternative? Bring people together. Stop the fighting, stop forcing people out of their place. Toma went down to the Square to talk to someone there, and they don't want to live there in a tent. Council's brought everyone together, so why not use it.

Last, Martin Collier from the Residents for a Safe Speedvale Avenue. He asks council to put this bylaw on hold and then petitions council to save money for Emma-to-Earl Bridge and reallocate the funds to housing solutions.

That's a wrap for delegations! Guthrie thanks everyone for the engagement.

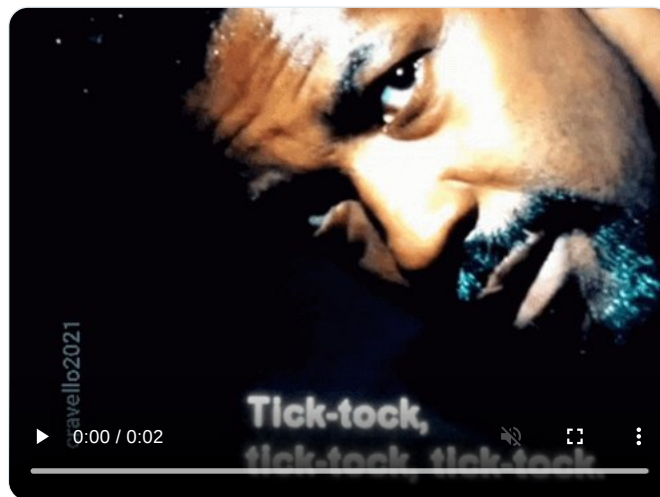
No what? Closed session for legal advise apparently. Busuttil move to go in-camera under Section 239 (2) (f) for solicitor advise. Motion approved. So we're going in-camera! Back in a bit!!



Quick update: No update. Council is still in-camera.



It's 34 minutes until the next council meeting and council still in-camera getting solicitor advice.



15 minute warning till what supposed to be the start of the next meeting.



Some clarity from the clerks: The next council meeting, which is council acting as tribunal, so they have to start that meeting at 5 pm sharp-ish.

Council could end the meeting by deferring the recommendation. They could recess. They could adjourn and continue another time.

Council is coming out of the backroom! Stand by!!

Guthrie reports from closed that they got lots of legal advice, no direction was given at all.

But since we've got to do the DC appeal, Guthrie is going to ask for a recess, and then post tribunal, they will re-open this issue.

Guthrie says that next will take about an hour to 1.5 hours, so we might not get back to this till 7. Goller asked we can postpone the other meeting, but they cannot.

We've just hit the pause button on this meeting. We'll get back to it later.



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