

Written delegation to Guelph City Council

**Re: Structured encampments report**

May 10, 2024

Dear Council,

Thank you for giving serious consideration to the actions Council can take, in cooperation with other decision-makers and community partners, to address the complex challenges we face as a community due to the lack of appropriate housing for all residents.

As community-based health service providers that support community members experiencing harm resulting from homelessness, we have some comments on the Temporary Structured Encampment Report.

***Through this written delegation, we hope to:***

- a. ***Provide context around some of the items in the written report, and***
- b. ***Remind City and County Councils and staff of the obligation we have as a community to use community resources and decision-making power to implement emergency housing solutions by Fall 2024.***

**1. If a structured encampment is not supported, what action can be taken?**

- This report is well written, and it does a good job of highlighting the challenges our community is facing. The report accurately notes that a structured encampment will be costly, and it would need support.
- It is unfortunate that the only solution that was within the report's scope is a structured encampment, and that there was no mention of our ongoing imperative to address these urgent needs. Since we are not absolved of our obligation to meet the needs of these residents, alternatives that would improve on the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents must be explored. If this process ends here, it will constitute a missed opportunity for community/collective action. If not this option, then what?

**2. We must acknowledge the gaps.**

- The report is accurate in identifying that we have recently added a number of options to provide supportive housing to our community that work really well. We also have new options coming soon, and a solid plan to continue to connect these services and better support clients. ***However, even with these services and plans, there are still individuals in our community who do not and will not have housing options.***

- We know there are gaps in the housing continuum, and urge Council to take steps to respond to deep needs in the following areas:
  - Female identifying individuals
  - Couples
  - People with pets
  - People who don't want to be inside
  - People who have been institutionalized
  - Indigenous communities
  - Individuals with significant health needs in an aging population
  - High Support Housing
- We urge the City to engage in additional, meaningful dialogue with people with lived and living experience of homelessness to determine their needs. As service providers, we are willing to provide support to this process.

### 3. We cannot rely only on new government funding for Permanent Supportive Housing

- The government has announced \$152 million in investments towards supportive housing initiatives, however our community has already received investment from this envelope. We do not expect we will receive any further funding. ***It is misleading to suggest there will be more potential solutions from this provincial investment.***
- The report is accurate in naming our community's accomplishments in permanent supportive housing (PSH), and in naming that these options will help, but they are one part of the solution. ***There will still be well over 100 known individuals who will be left without an option once all the new units are filled.***

### 4. Issues with unstructured encampments will continue

- The issues we have been experiencing as a community in the absence of sufficient housing options will continue to be present throughout the year. Residents will continue to be forced to live in inhumane, unhealthy conditions such as unstructured encampments without access to their most basic needs (i.e. water, sanitation, food, temperature control). If we, as a community, don't respond to this need and implement solutions by the Fall, we will be in the same (or worse) situation this coming year. Failure to respond to this need now will result in increased pressures in the fall and deepening need for residents.

### 5. All we need is will

- While the report is accurate in reporting that no one agency in Guelph-Wellington has the resources independently to fund the creation of a structured encampment, the good news is that through collaboration and advocacy, ***our community has all the***



***ingredients to have a solution in place before the cold weather returns.*** There are accessible resources, and a new non-profit, (The Tiny Homes Coalition) to support implementation and operational leadership. There are agencies currently providing supports to unstructured encampments that would be able to shift those supports to more dignity-promoting options. The County has knowledge of various funding pathways. The City could help with capital, land, and utilities. Health partners are willing to step in and support coordination of health services.

Council, we urge you to consider the options available to meet the deepening needs of Guelph residents, and meaningfully engage service providers in the community to determine what can be collaboratively done. What action will you take, so that 100+ people are not living in tents throughout our community this winter?

Your community partners are ready to support the joint leadership of our City and County in a shared action plan.

**Submitted by**

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