An aerial photograph of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, taken at sunset. The sky is a vibrant orange and yellow, reflecting on the water of the Grand River on the right. The city is densely packed with buildings, including several modern high-rise apartment complexes in the foreground and center. A highway with a bridge crosses the river. The overall scene is a mix of urban development and natural beauty.

# City of Guelph AMO 2023 Advocacy Priorities

**AMO 2023**



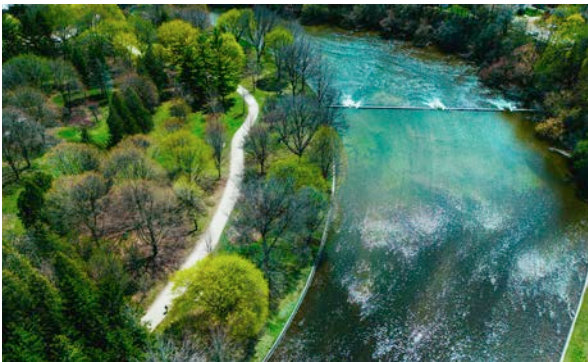
The City of Guelph is pleased to present its advocacy priorities for the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference. This year, we're facing consequences from recent provincial legislative developments, and are still seeing the aftershocks of COVID in our community. At AMO 2023, we look to advocate on issues including housing, infrastructure, healthcare and the environment.

## Environment

### **Environmental issues continue to be a top priority at AMO 2023.**

Guelph is aiming to become a net zero community by 2050, with an interim Race-To-Zero target of a 63 per cent reduction in municipal greenhouse gas emissions by 2031. These goals are at the top of our mind as we advocate for dedicated funding towards climate-friendly infrastructure, transportation, and municipal buildings.

In addition, we're once again raising the issue of brownfield remediation. While the province supports municipalities in offering tax breaks to private owners of contaminated sites, there are no supports available for municipally owned sites. These sites are a large financial and environmental liability – especially in groundwater reliant communities such as Guelph, and with their often central location, have a very high redevelopment potential. At our meeting with the Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks, we're asking to discuss a dedicated brownfield remediation funding opportunity to help municipalities clean up and revitalize their contaminated sites.



## Housing and Infrastructure

Guelph is a rapidly growing city. With a major university, and located in close proximity to the GTA, we're facing increasing pressure on housing affordability. With our recent housing pledge, we're committed to building 18,000 new homes by 2031, but we can't do this without help from the province. Recent legislative developments have made it even more difficult to sustainably accommodate this unprecedented level of growth.

In our advocacy, a major concern is the impact of Bill 23 on our ability to sustainably facilitate growth within our city. Bill 23 places significant restrictions on our ability to collect development charges from homebuilders, which support approximately 85 per cent of our growth. Over the next 10 years, Bill 23 is expected to cause a 30 per cent reduction in the development charges collected by the City, leaving us and municipal taxpayers on the hook for an additional \$227 million in infrastructure funding.

These changes come at a time when municipalities across Ontario are already facing rising construction costs – in the past few years, we have had the lowest bids for some projects come at 60 per cent over budget. Looking forward, Ontario's municipalities will need financial and policy support from the Province to build the necessary infrastructure to support our growing communities.



# Healthcare

## Paramedic offload delays

Paramedic offload delays continue to cause issues for paramedics and hospital patients across Ontario. Guelph General Hospital, which serves over 200,000 people in Guelph-Wellington, has the 4th worst offload delays in the Province as of May 2023.

Between 2020 and 2022, the average offload delay time doubled to over an hour, while the longest recorded delay increased to over 24 hours.

This is an unacceptable life safety risk for individuals coming into the hospital who cannot immediately receive appropriate care, and an issue for paramedics who are forced to provide care to patients in hospital hallways and can't respond to calls.

Guelph Wellington Paramedics and Guelph General Hospital staff have been working hard to address this issue, including through the Community Paramedicine program. These solutions have proven effective, and we have recently been observing positive trends in offload delays, but without the Province addressing the root issue of hospital staffing, capacity, and funding, they will remain individual solutions to a systemic problem. Our advocacy efforts with the Ministry of Health are focused on emphasizing the need for systemic collaboration between the Province, hospitals and municipalities, as well as additional funding for specific programs designed to address paramedic offload delays.

## Mental health system gaps

We're seeing large gaps in our mental health care system. From psychotherapy to in-patient services, accessible our most vulnerable community members at risk. Municipalities and community organizations around Ontario have been piloting some promising accessible and low-barrier mental health support programs:

- The Alternate Care Destination Model in London provides crisis stabilization beds for patients with mild to moderate needs related to mental health and substance use. This model operates on a 24/7 walk-in basis, and is not part of the hospital ER, which makes it highly accessible for individuals seeking emergency supports, and removes pressure from paramedics and emergency rooms.
- The Youth Wellness Hub model has shown positive results in Guelph – The Grove offers a free, one-stop-shop for youth seeking mental health supports, substance use services, primary care, education, and other community services. An adult version of this model could have potential to provide low-barrier, non emergency mental health services to adults.

In our discussions with the Ministry of Health, we are emphasizing the urgent need for solutions to close mental health system gaps, advocating for a systemic approach and the need for collaboration, and promoting accessible, community-based mental health supports.







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