

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. The city's skyline is visible, featuring a mix of modern high-rise buildings and older, historic structures. The foreground shows several large, modern multi-story buildings with glass facades. The overall scene is a mix of urban development and natural beauty.

City of Guelph 2024 AMO Advocacy Priorities

The City of Guelph is pleased to present its advocacy priorities for the 2024 Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference. In 2024, the City of Guelph calling on the province to provide coordination and funding for programs helping vulnerable members of our community, while seeking fair and sustainable funding for critical infrastructure needs.

Environment

The City of Guelph is calling on the province to provide streamlined and expanded waste diversion regulation, to ensure that millions of tonnes of industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) waste across Ontario are not lost to landfill every year.

As Ontario transitions to the Extended Producer Responsibility framework for waste diversion, IC&I waste continues to be ineligible for collection under this new system. Without provincial action to include IC&I waste in the new waste management framework, this will leave small businesses and institutions across Ontario stranded with no viable way to recycle their waste. In Guelph, that means that up to 9% of the currently recycled waste will likely be landfilled in the future.

Guelph's pro-active approach to climate change is also reflected in our advocacy efforts at AMO 2024. We remain committed to become a net zero community by 2050, while working to implement actions in our Climate Adaptation Plan to increase our resilience to climate risks. In our advocacy, we are emphasizing the growing importance of funding for infrastructure that makes Guelph more resilient to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events.

Healthcare

The City of Guelph is advocating for the province to provide permanent and consistent funding for the Community Paramedicine for Long Term Care (CPLTC) program.

Delivered by local paramedic services, the CPLTC program offers treatment, diagnostic, and monitoring services for seniors in their homes, and has demonstrated vastly improved health outcomes and quality of life for patients, at a fraction of the cost of traditional long-term care beds. In 2023, the CPLTC program provided at-home care for over 36,000 high-risk seniors across Ontario.

Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Services are committed to further increasing the quality of community care, however the current year-to-year nature of the funding makes it challenging to plan for the future, offer secure, full time positions, and make capital investments. In our advocacy, we are seeking permanent and consistent funding for the CPLTC program to improve community health outcomes in Guelph and across the province.



Outside of AMO, we continue to advocate for solutions to provide barrier-free mental health, substance use, and housing services to our community. The "hub" model is a promising approach for reducing barriers to accessing these services, offering a wide range of mental health and social supports under one roof for individuals experiencing complex challenges. Guelph is home to many community organizations offering integrative and innovative social support services, however provincial coordination and funding support is required for these services to achieve maximum impacts in our community.

Housing Security

The City of Guelph is calling on the province to strengthen the Residential Tenancies Act to ensure that tenants facing renovations are supported, and landlords undertaking bad-faith evictions are held accountable.

As the proportion of residents renting their homes continues to grow across Ontario, addressing the issue of renovations is a top priority.

Significant backlogs at the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board as well as confusion around tenant rights have resulted in landlords increasingly evicting tenants under the guise of renovations and subsequently raising rents, in violation of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).



Renovictions pose a significant threat to the residential security of renters, and diminish the stock of affordable rental housing by allowing landlords to raise rents on previously affordable units.

In Ontario, tenants facing renovations are largely responsible for upholding their rights under the RTA, and landlords are only penalized for bad-faith evictions following successful appeals by tenants. The City of Guelph is advocating for strengthened legislation which places the responsibility on landlords to justify the need for major renovations, and ensures that tenants are appropriately supported.

Municipal Fiscal Needs

The City of Guelph is advocating for a review of the municipal fiscal framework that would give municipalities the tools to fund critical infrastructure and services without putting undue financial pressure on our community.

Infrastructure for new growth is largely funded by development charges, however the recently enacted development charge exemptions for affordable housing put this funding source at risk. While the City of Guelph is committed to increasing housing affordability, these exemptions are expected to result in \$119 million in foregone revenue for the City over the next 10 years, putting a disproportionate financial burden on existing residents.

On top of challenges with funding for new infrastructure, Guelph and many other municipalities are facing major backlogs of existing infrastructure renewal needs. Guelph is currently looking at \$354 million worth of infrastructure renewal work that had to be deferred past the ideal replacement date, and this number is expected to grow to \$527 million in the next ten years as we prioritize our available funding towards the most critical projects.



At the core of these funding challenges are the limited revenue tools available to municipalities. Municipalities raise the majority of their funds through property taxes and utility rates, however, unlike income taxes, these are not charged based on resident's ability to pay. As Guelph works to support the construction of 18,000 new housing units by 2031 and faces major infrastructure renewal costs, these costs ultimately fall on our community, exacerbating existing affordability challenges for tax and rate payers.



1 Carden Street
Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

519-822-1260
TTY 519-826-9771

intergovernmental.relations@guelph.ca
guelph.ca

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