

Future in Focus:

Building Guelph Together

Guelph's Priorities for the
2025 Provincial Election



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Introduction

The City of Guelph is pleased to present its priorities for the 2025 provincial election.

Over the next four years, provincial-municipal collaboration will be essential to address the pressing challenges of today. We need a truly collaborative approach that sees all levels of government work together and play to their strengths, to ensure that critical issues are addressed in an equitable, sustainable, and consistent way.

Municipal-Provincial Relationship

The City of Guelph supports and provides the core services that make life better for residents and visitors to our community. Managing an infrastructure portfolio worth over \$7 billion and overseeing essential local services, the City delivers responsible, responsive, and professional public service to Guelph's growing and diverse population.

This work is not done in isolation. Guelph and other municipalities get their jurisdiction from the Province of Ontario, which sets out the legislative environment within which municipalities operate and determines the division of responsibilities.

The success of our community is directly connected to the success of this municipal-provincial relationship. Under all four themes of Guelph's Strategic Plan, there are opportunities for Ontario to support Guelph's efforts – from improving operational efficiencies through legislative and program-level change, to providing increased funding to support shared goals.

2025 Provincial Election Priorities

As we enter 2025, there are major systemic challenges facing municipalities across the province. As a record number of people in Ontario experience homelessness, housing supply continues to lag behind demand, and social support services are struggling to meet the increasing community needs.

The City of Guelph is using many of the tools at its disposal to address and mitigate the effects of these challenges at a local level. However, the complex and wide-reaching nature of these crises makes intergovernmental collaboration essential. Guelph and other municipalities do not have the funding tools, the capacity, and often the jurisdiction to solve these issues on their own.

Faced with these challenges, the three key priorities that Guelph is amplifying throughout the 2025 provincial election are for the province to:

- **Collaborate with municipalities to build housing for everyone**
- **Invest in community safety and wellbeing**
- **Reduce reliance on municipal property taxes to support affordability**

This document aims to provide an overview of these key priorities, and provide details on how specific provincial action can help Guelph achieve progress towards improving housing affordability and community wellbeing. Additional details on these priorities can be viewed here: [Future in Focus – Building Guelph Together](#).

The City of Guelph looks forward to working alongside the next provincial government, and with our Member of Provincial Parliament, to continue to grow our strong municipal-provincial relationship, and **build Guelph together**.



City of Guelph: Community Profile

This place we call Guelph has served as traditional lands and a place of refuge for many peoples over time, but more specifically the Attiwonderonk, and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands and territory with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Guelph lies directly adjacent to the Haldimand Tract and is part of a long established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have come from across Turtle Island call Guelph home today.

The City of Guelph is a fast-growing, vibrant, and diverse community of nearly 145,000 people located at the heart of Southern Ontario. An innovative, green and creative city, we are home to the University of Guelph and Conestoga College, a strong small business community, and renowned local arts and culture festivals. Guelph is also a top destination in the Americas for foreign direct investment, with major employers in the advanced manufacturing, agri-innovation, life sciences, cleantech, information and communications technology and tourism sectors. As a premier, mid-sized city, Guelph is the perfect testbed for innovative solutions for big-city problems, and we remain committed to creating a safe, inclusive, green, and prosperous community using innovative tools at our disposal.

Priority Area: Housing for Everyone

In 2024, 1 out of 3 Guelph residents reported that housing affordability was the most important issue facing the City, and over half believed that the quality of life in Guelph has decreased, largely due to affordability issues. This is a significant shift from the findings of the 2022 Guelph satisfaction survey and reflects the growing scale of the housing crisis across the entire housing continuum.

There are many drivers behind this issue. Inflation, high population growth, strategic over recruitment of students by colleges and universities to fill their budget gaps, and a lack of availability of long-term care beds and other housing options prompting seniors to stay in their homes for longer are just a few of the factors contributing to the rising costs and inaccessibility of housing.

While many of these issues are outside of municipal jurisdiction, there are ways in which the province can work with Guelph to support new housing growth. From infrastructure investments to legislative change and funding for affordable housing, there are opportunities for provincial support to help Guelph enable and provide housing for everyone.

How Guelph is promoting new housing supply

The City of Guelph is taking an all hands on deck approach to promoting new housing supply, including policy measures, funding, and internal process improvements:

Policy and Funding

As part of the work funded through the Housing Affordability Fund, the City is:

- Approving zoning by-law amendments to allow up to four units on low-density properties, and encouraging “missing middle” housing.
- Developing a Housing Affordability Strategy to build 6,060 affordable rental units and 2,640 affordable ownership homes by 2051.
- Drafting a Community Planning Permit by-law for flexible development standards, to promote inclusion of affordable units in new builds.
- Creating an incentive program for affordable housing development, launching in spring 2025.

Process Improvement

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, since 2022 the City has cut red tape by:

- Reducing Official Plan Amendment approval times by 142 per cent,
- Reducing zoning application approval times by 117 per cent, and
- Reducing site plan application approval times by 481 per cent.



Infrastructure Growth and Renewal:

The City requires predictable long-term funding to address growing infrastructure needs without putting additional pressure on property tax and rate payers.

One of the main ways that Guelph enables housing is through high-quality municipal infrastructure. Historical funding shortfalls have resulted in a mounting backlog of infrastructure renewal work in Guelph and across Ontario, while new growth is requiring investments in new infrastructure. As a groundwater community, Guelph will also require significant investment into bringing in external water capacity to support the City past 2051. One-time funding programs, while helpful, divert municipal resources and cannot sustainably address the scale of Guelph's infrastructure needs.

Nearly
\$2 billion
needed over the next decade to
repair and replace
infrastructure

70 per cent
of Guelph's drinking water is
supplied through a single aqueduct,
requiring investments to manage
risks to the community and to
increase system resiliency.

Community and Affordable Housing

The City of Guelph and other local governments require sustainable financial support to enable and provide community and affordable housing.

Nearly
6000 families
live in unaffordable or
inadequate housing in
Guelph

2x increase
in the number of families
accessing emergency
shelters from 2023-2024

Guelph is facing a significant shortage of community and affordable housing for individuals and families at risk of homelessness, with demand for housing services growing year over year. With an increased number of people using housing services, provincial funds have been increasingly diverted to operating expenses, leaving little funds available for the construction of new community and affordable housing.

While communities are working towards addressing these needs, the current local level of spending on housing is unsustainable, and cannot be supported by local governments.

Provincial-Municipal Market Housing Collaboration

The City of Guelph is urging provincial-municipal collaboration to develop housing policies which respect municipal jurisdiction, reduce reliance on municipal property taxes for growth, and meaningfully address the barriers to developing housing supply.

Housing start numbers across Ontario are not keeping up with provincial targets. Guelph is taking innovative action to support housing however, we cannot address this alone. Provincial legislative changes which took place since 2022, often without sufficient municipal consultation, have redirected staff time and attention, introduced uncertainty into the planning environment, and have made Guelph more reliant on property taxes to fund growth. Looking forward, provincial-municipal collaboration will be essential to address housing supply and affordability.

Priority Area: Community Safety and Wellbeing



Following housing affordability, social issues and wellbeing were the second most reported priority for Guelph's residents in 2024. 15 per cent of those surveyed indicated that poverty, homelessness, and social issues were the top issues that should receive attention from local leaders.

A significant portion of the Guelph community reports they are facing housing barriers, affordability concerns, or health challenges that are negatively impacting their quality of life. Service providers offering housing, mental health, and substance use services are facing increasingly high demand, with services often out of reach for many. Local governments are increasingly stepping up to compensate for lack of funding on areas of provincial responsibility in health and social services, however, municipal property taxes cannot sustainably fund these essential needs.

Provincial action is needed to ensure that community members experiencing significant challenges do not fall through the cracks. From providing predictable funding to local initiatives, to strengthening renter protections and addressing systemic gaps in care, there are opportunities for the province to work with Guelph to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community.

Homelessness, Mental Health and Substance Use

The City of Guelph calls for intergovernmental collaboration to address systemic gaps in mental health and substance use services.

Guelph and other communities across Ontario continue to face an unprecedented level of homelessness, substance use, and mental health challenges. In Guelph, there are significant gaps in the availability of mental health, substance use, and homelessness services, with those seeking affordable supports often finding themselves with no options or lengthy waitlists. A lack of integration of various support services makes it difficult for vulnerable individuals to navigate the system and find necessary support.

In the immediate term, there is a need for more integrated, wrap-around support hubs to stabilize the most vulnerable community members. Beyond that there is a need for systemic change and system-wide integration of healthcare and housing to meaningfully address this crisis. Continued funding to communities and intergovernmental collaboration will be essential.

81,515

**Ontarians
experienced known
homelessness in
2024**

**Over
50 per cent**
**of individuals
experiencing
homelessness are
chronically homeless**

Community-based Health Initiatives

The City of Guelph seeks permanent and predictable funding for community health initiatives, including the Community Paramedicine for Long Term Care program, to address healthcare gaps and reduce strain on hospital and emergency resources.

Community-based health initiatives have a proven track record of proactively addressing health needs in vulnerable populations, improving public health outcomes, and diverting individuals from hospitalization. In Guelph, the Community Paramedicine for Long Term Care (CPLTC) program sees paramedics provide at-home monitoring, basic care and health connections to individuals with long-term care needs, and helps reduce strain on hospital resources and caregivers.

Currently, the CPLTC and other programs are funded by the province under a contract model, with CPLTC funding ending in 2026. This makes it challenging to plan for the future, budget for capital investments, and hire permanent staff. Predictable and sustainable funding is required to continue the provision of essential and innovative community health initiatives.

1108
patients

served by Guelph
Wellington Community
Paramedics in 2024

Over
90 per cent
of patients were highly
satisfied with
Community
Paramedicine across
Ontario in 2023

Renter Housing Security

The City of Guelph calls for operational improvements to the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board, and coordinated Residential Tenancies Act enforcement efforts to ensure housing security for renters.

Renters account for
34 per cent
of Guelph's households

3x increase
in the number of N13
eviction notices received
by the LTB between
2017 and 2024 across
Ontario

While renters in Ontario are afforded various protections under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), enforcement of these rules remains a challenge. The Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) is facing significant backlogs, which have created a threat to tenants facing unfair evictions and unsuitable living conditions, with some waiting for months for action on situations threatening their housing security. Some municipalities are exploring local solutions, however these efforts are costly and see municipalities enforcing areas of provincial responsibility. Provincial action is required to address backlogs and streamline operations of the LTB, to allow timely case resolutions and protect renters from illegal evictions and poor housing conditions.

Economic Resiliency

Supporting community wellbeing in Guelph also means protecting the jobs and livelihoods of residents from economic uncertainty. With 16,500 residents employed in manufacturing, including 13,300 in the automotive sector, Guelph has the **4th highest per capita exports to the U.S.** of any Canadian city. The incoming provincial government will need to work with Guelph to ensure that our community remains economically resilient in the face of international developments, and continues to be a leader in manufacturing and innovation.