

To Whom it may concern,

I would like to address the homeless encampment that exists outside of the church and BMO in downtown Guelph.

As I began my job at BMO, I have been witnessing a growing concern in the safety of myself, clients and pedestrians around the branch. I have had numerous individuals who live in these encampments harass pedestrians walking by the bank, bank staff and customers in the bank. I want to state that I sympathize completely with individuals who need help and are sick. However, as a branch we have had to call bylaw and 911 a number of times for safety related concerns. Unfortunately, it seems the City of Guelph's police service has been strained due to this as the last time we had to make an emergency call no one arrived for 3 hours.

The downtown hub has unfortunately become an unsafe and undesirable area to both live and operate in due to the lack of action done around these encampments. As a town predominantly for students, my concern does not lie as heavily with me as it does with the young people who come down to the bars for the first time. A group of 18–21-year-olds who are intoxicated may be having a fun night at one of the bars. but if they mistakenly walk up one block, they are putting themselves in danger. Many of the individuals who live in the tent cities are on drugs, erratic and dangerous. If four 19 year old girls wander one block up while they are intoxicated everyone of them is now at danger on what should have been a fun night out.

Furthermore, I have personally been at the end of this assault. Leaving the bank on November 10 I had walked by three gentlemen who frequent these encampments. I was yelled at and had a crack pipe thrown at me; the walk from the branch door to our parking lot is less than 25 meters. Furthermore, I had a man bang on my windows of my car and try to get in when I wouldn't give him a lighter one afternoon. It does seem the city of Guelph just tolerates this behavior, which is unfortunate because this was not the case 5 years ago when I moved here. Originally coming from Scarborough, I would expect this negligence to the homeless problem there, but never here.

In conclusion, watching the city of Guelph deteriorate for misguided attempts at help is putting more people in danger than it is helping. From having items thrown at me and customers to being yelled at and almost physically assaulted, it is time for the city of Guelph to take action. The effects on businesses, pedestrians and the overall quality of life and environment of downtown Guelph are undeniable and depressing. Please turn this city back into a safe, fun, clean space for families to enjoy.

Best,

David