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February 5, 2024

City Council
1 Carden St
Guelph, ON
N1H 3A1

Subject: Encampments in the Downtown

Dear City Councillors,

We are writing to you as concerned members of our community and as business owners in the downtown area of Guelph. We are reaching out to you to share some of the challenges we have been facing in recent months related to the presence of tents on City property, and the conduct of those who occupy and visit these encampments on Chapel Lane and in St. George's Square.

First and foremost, we want to emphasize that we understand the complexities surrounding the issue of homelessness, and we are empathetic to the challenges faced by those who find themselves without stable housing. We believe that everyone deserves access to safe and supportive resources to help them get back on their feet. However, the growing presence of tents and homeless individuals in the vicinity of our business has begun to negatively impact our operations, the safety of our patients and employees, and the overall atmosphere in the area.

We fully support initiatives aimed at addressing homelessness, and would also like to bring to your attention some specific concerns:

Impact on Business: The presence of tents has deterred potential customers from visiting our establishment. We have noticed a decline in foot traffic and we have heard from an increasing number of clients that they no longer feel safe coming downtown. As a small business, this is a significant concern for us.

Safety and Sanitation: There have been many instances of public safety concerns and unsanitary conditions near our premises. We routinely have to clean up garbage, used drug paraphernalia, and even human waste outside both our Wyndham St. and Chapel Lane entrances. In addition, our staff feels unsafe walking through encampment areas at the end of the work day and now feel compelled to travel in groups. We want to ensure that our patrons and employees feel safe and comfortable while visiting our business.

Community Well-being: We believe that addressing homelessness is not only a moral imperative but also a community concern. We would like to see resources allocated to support these individuals effectively, providing them with the help they need to rebuild their lives.

As downtown business owners, property owners, and users of downtown shops and services, we support the proposed bylaw. Hopefully we can find better alternatives for the inhabitants of these encampments, and help the individuals in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We hope that together, we can find a solution that ensures the well-being of our fellow community members while also supporting local businesses like ours.

Sincerely,

Meghan Knox and Paul Lucas from BioPed Guelph