

To Mayor Cam Guthrie and the City Council,

I am writing this email in order to voice my concerns regarding the encampment in St. Georges Square in downtown Guelph.

I want you to know how this encampment has affected me ( and certainly many others) so that you have some firsthand views to reflect on when making decisions about the current situation.

I currently work in the downtown square, and have done so for about 6 years. I have always enjoyed the location, ( I walk to work) and have always felt relatively safe working in the square, but that feeling of safety has been slipping away.

Outside my office windows (which have been broken several times) on a regular basis, I see the rampant smoking of crack cocaine and other drugs, people openly injecting, physical assaults, a neverending barrage of verbal assaults and screaming, drug transactions, sex acts, people defecating and urinating and I have myself been verbally assaulted and physically threatened. Walking back to work one morning after going to get a coffee, a young man threatened to " bash my face in" and also verbally assaulted me repeatedly. Yes - that word. You all know the one I'm talking about. I can't even put into words how frightened and intimidated I felt.

Myself and my co workers have to be constantly aware of what is going on outside in case the police need to be called and we call the police on a regular basis.

Our square, which used to be for the enjoyment of all, is now not safe for anyone. Including the people who are encamped there!

I am not naive. I am well aware that this problem is not unique to our city and I am not without compassion, but a downtown encampment is not a solution for anyone, temporary or otherwise. These people don't need tents, they need real solutions - and I might add here - a solution with proper sanitation.

To thrive as a community, we need our businesses to thrive as well and they will not continue to thrive if people no longer feel safe downtown.

Lastly, I would like to say that being exposed to all of this for 8 hrs a day 5 days a week is definitely starting to take a toll on my own well being. Not just witnessing all the crime and violence outside our windows, and feeling anxiety about my safety, but also dealing with the commentary from almost everyone that comes into our office.

Of course, this may sound self-serving coming from someone who has a roof over her head and a family to go home to but that doesn't negate the problem.

The encampment downtown seems to have become a controversial topic, but this is a matter of public safety and you all need to act thoughtfully and swiftly to find solutions.

Respectfully,

Deborah Cameron