

Good afternoon,

I understand that there will be an emergency meeting of council on Aug 28/2024, to discuss the current situation downtown.

As someone who has worked in the downtown core for over 15 years, and has been a resident of this city for 57 years, I have to say that the current state of our downtown and especially its core, is disturbing and disappointing.

The increase in vagrancy, and drug usage and abuse, has grown at an alarming rate, and although I understand that this is no fault of our city council, I do believe that there has not been much done to deter it.

When we have to avoid parking our cars in areas where we fear that someone will just decide to defecate on it, or use it as a resting spot, or potentially try to break in. Its disappointing and unfair. And we are ticketed if we are even a few minutes over the time, if we do park downtown.

When we have to avoid entering our place of business because someone has taken up lodging in the entrance way, or is screaming and yelling gibberish, while walking towards you. It is disappointing and unfair.

When we have to hear our clients voice their fear and concern because someone is laying in front of our entrance way, or they just witnessed a drug deal, or they had to walk past someone shooting up, while trying to get to our place of business. It has become a threat to our business.

As a tax payer, and a parent, I find it very frustrating to know that if you are 'residentially displaced' or without employment, you can enjoy setting up residence, without payment or respect for the space, and at no consequence. . The amount of junk and garbage that is all over the square and surrounding streets and parking lots is disgusting! We (myself, my family and all other tax payers) have worked extremely hard, with our own sacrifices, to purchase homes in a city that we want to be able to enjoy, paying the taxes to support this. My kids have worked hard to purchase homes, and now pay taxes(which are high as it

is in comparison to other cities) , and we can't come and enjoy our own downtown space, without having to look at a pile of tents, garbage and illicit behavior in our city center. We are expected to take care of our property, keep up with it, put our garbage out etc, at our own expense, and yet, individuals are allowed to pitch tents, leave garbage, bath and defecate in the fountain and alleyways, and that's ok.

I am not trying to be insensitive to a growing crisis, but the fact that we have all of the support centers, free food, free injection sites and obviously free lodging, all in our downtown center, makes it a core that becoming more of a threat and eyesore and is not welcoming to anyone who wants to spend time enjoying local restaurants or other businesses.

It feels like, if you work hard, pay taxes and have pride in your home and business, you are not important. If you don't, you have all the rights. There has to be another answer, and I hope that council is able to come up with an alternative, and that doesn't involve increasing our taxes to do so.

Paula Dal Bello