

**From:** Mary Aduckiewicz

**Sent:** August 10, 2023 11:11 AM

**To:** Office of the Mayor <[Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca](mailto:Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca)>; Qureshi, Uzma <[Uzma.Qureshi@hamilton.ca](mailto:Uzma.Qureshi@hamilton.ca)>; Office of the City Manager <[CityManager@hamilton.ca](mailto:CityManager@hamilton.ca)>; [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Cc:** Patrick Denninger; Troy Thompson; Morgan Mackenzie; Mateos Kucuqi; Mary Gossifidou; INternational Village BIA; Herb Wodehouse

**Subject:** The Proposed Encampment Protocol

To the City Clerk,

Please see the below letter from Denninger's & GW Thompson Jeweller & Pawnbroker Inc in regards to the proposed encampment protocol. As directed by members of the City Council, we would like to have our email added to the agenda as a written deposition for the General Issues Committee on Monday, August 14, 2023.

Thank you

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To members of Hamilton City Council -

We are writing to you on behalf of Denninger's and GW Thompson Jeweller & Pawnbroker Inc (Thompson's). Our 2 companies are family owned and have collectively had a presence in the downtown business core for 120 years (70 years for Denninger's and 50 years for Thompson's). Between us we employ 50 staff @ these locations.

Over the course of the past 6 months, members of Denninger's Management Team & Troy Thompson have met with numerous City representatives regarding our ongoing concerns with the state of the downtown core. We thank them for all of the time they accorded us. It was recommended during our various meetings that we submit our ongoing concerns and recommendations directly to the City Council for consideration in advance of this very important discussion on encampments that will take place on Monday August 14th.

The ongoing homelessness crisis that we are currently experiencing is the worst we have ever seen and unfortunately has had an increasingly negative impact on our businesses. Our concerns originated in the downtown business core where we both have retail locations on King Street East. However, the issue has spread throughout the City and is impacting Denninger's other Hamilton locations on Upper James Street and Queenston Road in Stoney Creek where Denninger's employs an additional 90 staff between the 2 locations.

During conversations with other business owners and leaders, there has been a general fear of speaking out about this matter due to the potential repercussions to our businesses. We however feel compelled to raise these serious concerns as the current state and its trajectory is not sustainable for us. Simply put, our customers and staff do not feel safe anymore and this is not good for business or the community @ large for that matter.

We thank the Hamilton Police Services for the recent introduction of the "Core Patrol" in the Downtown Core. This has certainly helped the situation in the short term but @ best is a band aid to a more serious problem.

We have received feedback and complaints from our customers regarding the aggressive panhandling they experience in the parking lot and on the street while trying to shop with us. A number of customers have stated that they will not return to our downtown locations due to these types of interactions.

Our staff have experienced acts of violence and harassment by individuals who are intoxicated and / or experiencing mental health issues at an alarming rate and do not feel safe walking through our own parking lots after dark. On a daily basis, we pick up drug paraphernalia, human feces and personal belongings such as sleeping bags, clothes, etc. Our staff have had to call 911 on multiple occasions as there have been individuals unconscious on our properties due to drug use. It is becoming extremely challenging to engage and retain staff when encountering these types of incidents.

These types of occurrences are not occasional. We are experiencing these types of occurrences on a daily basis. The sheer anticipation of "what can happen next" causes great anxiety with our employees and many of them have advised that they are looking for other jobs outside of the downtown core as they need employment to live.

Additionally, we believe that it is extremely disheartening that the children's summer camp at JC Beemer Park on Victoria Avenue North in Ward 3 was cancelled due to the encampment in that park. These inner city children not only need but deserve these types of programmes. Wouldn't it be unfortunate if encampments become so accepted and the norm in our parks that the result is more childrens' programmes are cancelled?

We understand that our City Hall which is a public building is effectively on a "restricted access" as a result of several incidents with the unhoused individuals and we must not forget that Hamilton will be hosting the Grey Cup later this year and an international golf tournament in the spring of 2024. We will be on display to our country and the world respectively and as it stands right now, we do not believe that visitors will leave with a favourable impression of Hamilton.

Our purpose in writing to you is not only to raise our concerns regarding the impact of this crisis on the business community but to also to hopefully propose a solution. We hope that we can all agree that we should all be compassionate to those experiencing homelessness, mental health issues and / or addictions. However, we also believe that it is not compassionate to allow individuals to live on the streets or in our parks which creates safety risks for both the housed & unhoused throughout the City as evidenced by today's news release that on average, 1 unhoused individual dies on the streets every 10 days.

We believe the medium and long term solution is to create more affordable and transitional housing within the City. However we currently live in the short term and need a more

immediate solution. It is our recommendation that the City utilize one, specific property (either City owned or leased) outside of the downtown core and not in a city park to allow the unhoused individuals to live in a safe space. This would effectively become 1 large encampment area. It would allow City social service agencies to carry on their mission of helping these persons with the required supports (mental health, addiction, transitional housing options etc) and provide much needed sanitation and food facilities. The property should be secure for the unhoused's safety and regulated by the City, enforcing the same laws and policies that the city's population @ large and its businesses are subject to. One would think that a large location should be a lot easier to monitor and measure meaningful progress through social worker assistance (and also more cost effective) than many "sanctioned sites" throughout the city as suggested by city staffers. If a homeless person chooses not to participate in such a facility they must not be allowed to squat on public property anywhere in the city as an alternative.

Our recommendation would not only provide the unhoused individuals the access to the required support they need to get them off the streets but also reduce the burden that the numerous unregulated encampments scattered throughout the City have on our first responders.

We all want to see the unhoused individuals provided with the proper support and resources to get them off the streets and into housing. As businesses, we also need a plan for a sustainable future and ensure that our city is livable for all.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary S Aduckiewicz FCPA, FCA, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer  
R Denninger Limited

Troy Thompson  
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