

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Bayfront Park Encampments

From: Justin Rotsaert

Sent: May 19, 2024 3:53 PM

To: Mater, Grace <Grace.Mater@hamilton.ca>; Graham, Cynthia <Cynthia.Graham@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Bayfront Park Encampments

This is the second round of people this email is being sent to. I have been provided with your contacts as people who have the ability to address this ongoing issue, please take the time to read. Please feel free to forward this message to anyone who is capable of addressing this issue.

To whom it may concern,

My Name is Justin Rotsaert and I live at [REDACTED]

Just a few days ago, I was the victim of a home invasion/robbery, vehicle theft, and was subsequently threatened with a knife. The culprits of these crimes have been identified as residents of the Bayfront Park encampment. For those of you in law enforcement, the Incident # for these crimes are as follows: Case # [REDACTED] (Break and Entry), Case # [REDACTED] (Vehicle Theft), Case # [REDACTED] (Knife Incident). Prior to this incident, other residents of the Bayfront community and I had expressed our concerns about the growing encampment and the risk this posed to our safety only to be met with a disappointing lack of urgency from authorities. I experienced this same disregard after reporting the overnight home invasion and vehicle theft. Had the police taken an appropriate response to this report, the same perpetrators would not have been able to return to my street and threaten me with a knife later that day. Luckily, I was young and fit enough to evade this attack, but it concerns me to think that any of my elderly neighbours could have found themselves in this same situation.

As I am sure you are aware of the growing encampments in Bayfront Park, I won't waste your time with a detailed explanation of what is happening in my backyard. I have multiple topics to touch on so please take the time to carefully read this email.

The first of these topics is the crime rate in this area which has skyrocketed to levels I have never seen in my 20 years of living here. According to other residents within a one block radius of my house, these crimes include but aren't limited to Break and Enter, Theft, Assault, Organized Crime, Distribution of Controlled Substances, and Vandalism. I'm sure if I took the time to survey the Ward 2 neighbourhoods, I would be able to create a much more comprehensive list. Although these crimes are not uncommon in a city, they are a direct result of the city's failure to control the state of the Bayfront encampments. These unwelcome "Residents" have seemed to have band together in an organised fashion in an effort to exploit this neighbourhood's residents for their resources. These offences have been reported to police on multiple occasions and have seen zero actions taken to fix these issues.

This leads me to my second point, the removal/relocation of these encampments is crucial to stopping these offences from occurring in my neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is home to many vulnerable individuals who are being taken advantage of by these criminals. Is it not the responsibility of the police to protect our community from these attacks, rather than just react to the attacks they let happen? I am further unsettled by a comment made to me by police officer [REDACTED] that was taking my statement on the Knife Incident, She claimed that "everyone in that encampment is in possession of a knife and bear mace" confirming that authorities are aware of the threat these individuals pose to residents, yet still do not take action.

Myself along with many others have sent detailed emails and made phone calls to every person that has the ability to do something about this matter and it seems that you are all diffusing the responsibility to someone else. Considering the situation has escalated to one where residents are being threatened in their own homes, I expect that you will prioritise working together to restore the safety of our community by removing this encampment. I was betrayed once when the city officials did not take action after countless calls about the state of the encampment, betrayed again when the police did not appropriately respond to the home invasion and auto theft that broke the security of my home, betrayed further when this lack of action led to me being threatened with a knife presumably by the same culprit (blatantly in possession of goods stolen from my home the night prior), and still I have to go to sleep at night knowing these people are in my backyard.

I would finally like to make the point that I don't believe these crimes are being committed by every resident of this encampment. That being said I do believe that the actions of a substantial proportion of them is enough of a reason for action to be taken on this matter.

Since directly addressing the people responsible for the safety of our community has proven insufficient in the past, I have taken the courtesy of including some news outlets as the recipients of this email as well.

I look forward to your prompt response,

Justin Rotsaert