

To: Members of General Issues Committee

From Julie Gordon, business owner, International Village BIA

CC: Susie Braithwaite – Executive Director International Village BIA

RE: Additional Encampment Protocol Considerations with respect to Wellington Park.

Dear Members of Council,

My husband I own a property on King Street East between Wellington and Spring Street, in The International Village BIA. I run a bookstore, and we live in the apartment above. The ongoing encampment in nearby Wellington Park has increasingly impacted both our personal lives and our business.

Over the last year we have seen an increase in disruptive behavior on the street. Every day we deal with people yelling in fits of anger, confronting pedestrians, and stumbling around in extreme states of intoxication. I have on several occasions witnessed people smoking drugs in front of my shop during business hours. Last summer, we were continually cleaning up human feces and drug paraphernalia from the back of our property – a problem we solved by putting in expensive fencing. For many years, I put a bargain book cart outside my shop in the summer months to attract customers. I have had to discontinue the practice after incidents where the book cart was knocked over or books were removed and tossed all over the street. In recent months, our property has been tagged with graffiti and several neighbours on our block have had their windows smashed. While some might argue that this is the price of owning a business downtown, I have run my shop here for twelve years, and prior to last year, incidents like this were rare, but now they are almost a daily event.

Many businesses in The International Village BIA are experiencing challenges related to encampments, but none more so than Dodsworth and Brown Funeral Home, which is located directly behind Wellington Park (Our BIA Chair Herb Wodehouse outlined these issues in a letter to the general issues committee dated May 14,2024). Due to the sensitive nature of this business, I would like to see an amendment to the protocol that restricts proximity of encampments to funeral homes. With respect to Wellington Park in particular, it is also adjacent to a major bus stop, across the street from the seniors' residences of First Place and sits at the highly visible entrance to our downtown business district.

I understand that encampments are part of a much larger problem, for which there is no easy solution. However, in the short term, I would ask council to consider assigning specific sites for encampments and look at ways to provide encampment dwellers with the services they need. Currently, we are asking desperate, vulnerable people, many of whom have serious addiction and mental health issues, to live in outdoor public spaces, without even the most basic amenities (i.e. washrooms, running water or heat) and to co-exist in these spaces with area residents. It is not surprising that frustration and anger has been escalating on both sides.

I thank you for your time and I hope you will take these concerns into consideration going forward.

Julie Gordon

Owner/J.H. Gordon Books