

FW: Sheraton Hamilton Concerns

From: Colin Watson <Colin.Watson@sheratonhamilton.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 2:12 PM
To: Stevenson, Kirsten <Kirsten.Stevenson@hamilton.ca>
Subject: Sheraton Hamilton Concerns

Hi Kirsten,

Hope all is well.

We have wanted to bring our concerns to the HPS Board for a long time now and after reading some recent news articles, in addition to our own experiences, we feel we need to add our voice on the ongoing issues being experienced at the Sheraton Hamilton. We appreciate if you can share our comments during the next HPS meeting on May 23rd

The Sheraton Hamilton, the largest Hotel in Hamilton, has been receiving an ever growing number of negative guests reviews. These reviews, at an unprecedented rate, detail negative guest experiences outside of the hotel. They list vagrancy, drug use, theft and vandalism, graffiti, open drinking and concerns for personal safety. We had various communications with our Ward 2 Council and the Tourism Hamilton Manager and are looking for additional support from Hamilton Police Services.

We are looking for help with the increased illegal activities and crimes around our business. The Hotel is concerned about Safety and Security of hotel guests, our staff and local Hamilton residents that use the retail businesses. Guests and staff are worried about safety and feel scared going outside the hotel and walking in the area. We have increasing cases of vehicle break in's and theft in our underground parking, drug dealing and use, public intoxication and drinking open liquor on streets and increased violence around the hotel. Counselor Cameron Kroetsch was recently quoted in the CBC

"Community safety, in terms of real safety and people actually being safe, isn't the same as people feeling like they are being looked after in a safe way."

Unfortunately when it comes to Hotels reputations the voice of guests posting reviews drives the sentiment about feeling safe. Visitors to a city do not check the official crime statistics before booking their travel plans, they look at reviews, social media and headlines. The perception of safety is a driving force in the travel and tourism industry.

We are hoping for solutions before it is too late for the downtown businesses including the hotels, restaurants and the Convention Centre who are losing repeat businesses. We had many discussions with our tourism partners and we feel as the major tax payers of the downtown area we deserve some support especially when the whole city 's reputation is at risk. With the power of social media and the impact of reviews it is showing Hamilton as a destination in decline and not a safe place to visit, stay or do business.

Historically Hamilton Police Service ran more patrols and had two dedicated teams (BEAR and ACTION) that were effective at addressing a lot of the issues raised here. Without that support we have seen increased issues We would ask that staffing be considered to restore these teams and work to support the business that help drive the Downtown. Can the HPS Board at least address this matter urgently with Chief Bergen?

Below are just few samples of the recent bad reviews we received, so as you can see how frustrating it is for us and how it is affecting our reputation:

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 30, 2023

Comments:

I was in downtown Hamilton and I am a big and tall guy, no homeless will try on me but I imagine a small lady or teenagers are not willing to go by themselves.

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 24, 2023

Comments:

The homelessness pandemic at your doorstep is disturbing.

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 23, 2023

Comments:

I was not comfortable allowing my teenager to go back and forth alone and was very anxious about doing it myself and her together. For the price of the room and the scene I arrived to I am in disbelief that people continue to book in this city. I would have before had confidence that a hotel name like the Sheraton held up to certain expectations but now I have no such trust in your organization..

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 20, 2023

Comments:

The hotel itself was very nice, however the neighborhood was terrible. We were harassed every time we stepped out of the hotel, and we did not feel safe at all.

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 11, 2023

Comments:

Crazy expensive and a unsafe part of the city. Rather disappointing. Parking garage felt unsafe - filled with homeless people.

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 10, 2023

Comments:

I don't feel safe in the surrounding area. To check in, I had to walk through a group of unfortunate people who were clearly disturbed. Taking a taxi from the hotel to a business meeting the next day, a man was outside the doors of the hotel drinking coffee (not Starbucks) and just throwing trash on the ground.

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 5, 2023

Comments:

Just unfortunate how many homeless people are hanging around. I didn't feel I could safely walk anywhere. I was approached in the mall attached to the hotel, and in the parking lot below by some questionable characters. Security kept a watchful eye...

Guest Name: Removed for Privacy

Response / Review Date: April 3, 2023

Comments:

Did not feel safe being at the hotel, due to some unwanted guest outside the hotel & walking through to get the Jackson Square. Hotel is not a safe space, due to unwanted guest who walk through or stay outside.

Let me know if you can bring these issues to the HPS Board to voice our concerns or if you want to have a meeting with the Tourism partners one day and I will be pleased to arrange it.

Sincerely,



Colin Watson
General Manager

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