

From: kimalke [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, January 17, 2025 2:28:34 PM

To: Stevenson, Kirsten <Kirsten.Stevenson@hamilton.ca>

Cc: Ward 2 <ward2@hamilton.ca>; Office of the Mayor <Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Police Budget Feedback from Downtown Hamilton Business

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Dear Ms. Stevenson,

Happy New Year and apologies for this arriving months after the deadline. My feedback regarding the Police Budget follows.

I am against a budget increase for the Hamilton Police until a proper budget for serving our vulnerable and unhoused community is sufficiently prepared and passed. I have owned and operated retail businesses on main streets in Toronto and Hamilton for over 20 years and, despite consistent Police budget increases, I have witnessed the safety and health of our community decrease. Businesses have experienced an increase in theft, threats, vandalism, and break-ins year-over-year alongside the growth in the Police budgets.

It is no longer acceptable to ignore the need for increased Harm Reduction, Mental Health, and Addiction Support in our cities. Cattle-driving those without homes from park to parking lot by City and Police with no further plan for their care is incomprehensible. Our Premier is now speaking out about closing Harm Reduction Sites to "increase" our safety. Yet, we have study after study clearly showing alternative paths to "policing" like harm reduction and street health actually reduce crime and improve the health of our communities.

I am closing my retail business on one of Hamilton's Main Streets despite being 250 metres away from The City's largest Police Station. Numerous uniform cars turn the corner in front of my business daily - ignoring blatant disruption, violence, and even business owners like myself trying to flag them down from five feet away. Filing online police reports for violence, theft, break-ins, and vandalism over the years has only left me feeling more frustrated as I have not received a single update on tens of thousands of dollars worth of *reported* loss and damage. Calls to 911 sometimes receive no response at all - I've had members of the public locked inside my store for their safety during violent events out front and no one attends to help. Even response times for an ambulance during serious health events is slow to the point of obsolescence.

Walking five minutes to the bank over the last year, I've "accidentally" passed two shootings during daytime business hours. Another time stopped by a news crew asking for a comment on the double shooting the night before. Tell me how the increase in budget is helping me feel safe enough to walk to the bank? Tell me how the increase in budget is going to help my customers return to the area or fill empty spaces when we see for ourselves the blatant disregard for our communities by the Police and The City.

Talk to your BIAs if you don't hear our screams - and I don't mean the ones in Ancaster.

I spend the majority of my workday in downtown Hamilton addressing various aspects of harm reduction and street health, yet my business revolves around selling candles and home goods. I was unable to open a permitted patio due to the unsanitary and unsafe conditions directly outside my business this season. Who do I invoice for the time and money I've spent on first aid supplies, cleaning masses of human waste off the Main Street, or providing food, water, sanitary supplies, sleeping bags, gift cards, cash, and other support for my immediate community? These efforts and expenses directly impact my ability to run my business and have led to significant losses. Most recently, I lost the income from sharing my space with another business as they were forced to move to a "safer street" after winning a grant directly built for improving our main streets.

Business after business has shuttered, commercial spaces are vacant for *years*, we have people living in tents - literally hiding in the woods for their "safety". The resources required for supporting the "aftercare" of people we leave out can no longer be ignored: I have not met a single woman living on the street who isn't bruised, battered, and on the verge of mental and physical collapse simply for what she faces day-to-day. A un-housed friend almost lost a finger from a coyote bite downtown last winter (I can give you his name if you'd like to reference his hospital bills and temporary housing at Good Shepherd). This lack of care in budgeting and policy costs *your* system unmeasurably large amounts when spending on prevention would cost a fraction.

Our population is hungry. Our population cannot afford safe housing. Our population is extremely vulnerable and living in mental health crises. Our "Police System" can do nothing for these issues - issues one could argue are a large force behind the "crime" occurring in the first place. The disregard by those who are tasked with running the system is no longer acceptable. This is more important than festivals and planters. People are dying by your hand in policy.

I cannot understand how this remains an ongoing source of debate—it is both inhumane and an embarrassment. This issue demands your full and undivided attention. Not your ego, but your commitment to detail and your willingness to accept the facts.

I invite anyone from The City to 'work remotely' from my downtown location for one day should you have questions or feel 'unclear' about the situation. I can no longer safely attend my business alone, so I'd welcome the company for my own safety any day.

Most Sincerely,
Kimberly Alke

(Formerly, Spruce Home Decor Inc)
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