



February 9, 2017

Open Letter To: Mayor Heyck and The Council of the City of Yellowknife
Premier Bob McLeod, NWT
Representative Julie Green, NWT Legislature, Yellowknife Centre
Representative Cory Vanthuyne, NWT Legislature, Yellowknife North
Michael McLeod, Minister of Parliament, NWT
Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Canada
The Yellowknifer
CBC News

The city of Yellowknife is alluring, vibrant and its people warm and welcoming. The Aurora Borealis and the twenty four hour sunlight are attractions that few other destinations can match. You can golf at three a.m., cross the majestic Great Slave Lake on an ice road or visit an ice castle. Amid this backdrop however a crisis plays out daily on its streets with a portion of its people in need, neglected and marginalized in this, one of the richest countries in the world.

Ask anyone who does business at or frequents the epicenter of 49th Street and 50th Avenue. From early morning until late at night this area is occupied primarily by a group of fifty or so homeless men, women [and teens]. Substance abuse, cold, hunger and abandonment are their existence. They beg for coins, food and cigarettes. The EMTs and RCMP are overwhelmed. One day we found a gentleman, seemingly lifeless, in our vestibule. We called for assistance from the RCMP and EMTs who arrived, 40 minutes later. The gentleman was comatose due to substance abuse. I reflect that had he been dressed in a suit like me and looked different, the response time would have been different. Recently, one of our employees was swarmed while trying to remove a group of homeless people from our premises. He was the recipient of several punches. Our General Manager has been assaulted. Our security person suffered bruising to the ribs from punches last week. All have been spat on. A plate glass window was broken. Most recently the glass entrance door was smashed. Holes punched in the walls are frequent. We keep a detailed log of all incidents and a typical day is 4 to 6 significant occurrences. This area is under siege and businesses struggle to keep customers and staff. Families do not bring children on these streets.

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We have done business in Yellowknife for 12 years and employ approximately 60 people. One location does well as it is in a safe area of the city. The second location at 49th and 50th however is marginal and losing its customer base due to this situation. Our tenants and customers state the “war zone” concerns are the overwhelming reason. We contribute to the tax base of all three governments but our repeated attempts to waken our elected officials and see action have failed.

Initially, our calls were politely answered and meetings were granted. The Mayor and Ministers were gracious and expressed their concern also. Committees were being formed! Our offer to provide free rent for an RCMP community office was welcomed and it seemed things were going to happen. One year later we have seen no action. We are told variations of ‘*sorry but we don’t have the budget*’, ‘*sorry but I don’t have the jurisdiction*’ or ‘*sorry but I have nothing more to offer*’. And, the tragedy continues to play out daily on the corner of 49th and 50th.

We invite those who share our concerns to raise their voice and lobby with us. When the noise gets loud enough governments eventually listen.

To the addressees of this letter, we await your response.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Felix Seiler".

Felix Seiler

Felix Seiler CHA | Chief Operating Officer | Holloway Lodging Corporation Inc. (HLC/TSX)

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