



Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

157 Carlton St. Unit #201, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2K3

Phone: 416-925-6939 Email: ocap@tao.ca Web: www.ocap.ca

July 24, 2017

Al Smith, Executive Director
St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA
By Email: alsmith@stlawrencemarketbia.ca

Dear Mr. Smith,

I contacted your office on Thursday July 13, 2017 because a homeless man had contacted us seeking assistance. He reported that he was being harassed by a security guard under your employ in St. James Park.

I spoke with your receptionist who informed me you were in a meeting. I asked her to have you or someone else from the BIA call us immediately to deal with the situation and for you to call me the next day or following week to discuss the larger issue of having private security clear the park of homeless people. That day, I spoke with another staff member at the BIA about the immediate situation. I have yet to hear from you or anyone at the BIA about the broader issue of security in the park and the BIA's treatment of homeless people.

Since July 13, a colleague and I have spoken with a number of homeless people who frequent St. James Park. They have informed us that the guard routinely attempts to prevent people from sleeping in the park, kicks people off benches, has chased people through the park and has banned a number of people from the park.

You have no authority to police the park, even if you have a permit to hold a public event. You have no authority to ban people from the park or from sleeping in the park.

In addition to the ongoing harassment of homeless people, it is unacceptable for you to hire private security to push poor people out of public space in the interests of neighbourhood businesses.

We demand that you immediately end the private policing of the park and cease the intimidation and harassment of homeless people. Failure to do so will result in swift and decisive public action.

Govern yourself accordingly.

Sincerely,

A.J. Withers,
OCAP Organizer