



April 11, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the owner of Meraki Salon, a well-established business that has been proudly operating at 313 Division Street for nearly 9 years. Our business model is centred around providing premium services with a luxurious atmosphere, delivered by highly trained stylists and accomplished professionals. A standout feature of our space is the expansive windows, which fill the salon with natural light and offer our clients a stunning view of our neighbourhood. Our business is located directly across the road from 310 Division Street. Over the last several years, there has been a deterioration in the quality of experience we are able to provide as well as massive distractions during our daily operations. However, despite our best efforts, the area's increasing instability has made it difficult to maintain the level of comfort and security that our clients and staff expect.

Over the years we have found it necessary to make several modifications to the way we operate. Some examples include:

- Implementing additional security measures, including the installation of cameras and an upgraded 24/7 monitored security system, both of which incur substantial monthly fees.
- We have added extra locks to our doors that can quickly be utilized in the event of an escalating individual passing by.
- Formerly, we could walk downtown to the bank for cash deposits along Buck Street and down George, but given the presence of individuals near the creek and concealed in the brush, we no longer feel comfortable doing so.
- Additional monthly fees for parking to provide a closer arrangement for clients and staff. They are reluctant to use the free Municipal parking lots and free parking on Chapel Street, due to safety concerns.
- Recently, we added window coverings to help employees feel less visible and vulnerable to the individuals loitering and occupying 310 Division. Additionally, they aid in concealing the eyesore that has been created with the garbage and guests of 310 hanging around the building.
- Reduced hours of business operating because staff doesn't feel comfortable being there in the evening during high risk times = loss of income and convenience for clients when we used to be open until 7pm.
- Implemented a staff "buddy system" for walking downtown to get lunch or coffee, which rarely happens anymore

-Implemented a staff "buddy system" to ensure staff is not working alone in salon, which has created many scheduling challenges and additional unnecessary expense to business, which isn't sustainable.

Some examples of situations we have encountered, along with the challenging environment in which we operate our business, include:

-Individuals with escalating behaviour swearing, yelling, knocking on windows passing by or loitering in front of salon

-Individuals exhibiting erratic behaviour on the sidewalk and into traffic, potentially due to a severe mental health crisis or substance use, have been observed on several occasions (videos are available as examples).

-Our team is afraid of the unpredictable nature and inability to effectively communicate with individuals who are in visible distress

-Last summer, an individual we often see who we know as [REDACTED], entered the salon without a shirt and asked where one of "our beautiful stylists" was. He mentioned she always works at the station by the window, which made her feel extremely uncomfortable. On March 12, 2025, the same employee filed a police report for [REDACTED] yelling at her while she was walking into work calling her by her name. He was standing across the road at 310 Division street during this altercation.

- This past summer, a man came in several times asking for services with [REDACTED] (Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)). He was very persistent and threw wads of money on the counter. He had bottles of open alcohol in coat pockets and was very intimidating. Our receptionist was afraid to upset him by saying no, and attempted to deescalate him in the middle of the day while the salon was full of clients, putting her in an uncomfortable and potentially unsafe situation.

-A couple years ago, a woman by the name of [REDACTED] entered our business and asked to use the phone to call a cab. We called a taxi for her and while she was waiting she was trying to hide and kept ducking from the windows. The police drove by looking for her and after they spotted her they came into the salon full of clients and placed her in the back of the police cruiser. This caused a lot of distress for our staff and clients.

-Many instances of open drug use on our front steps during business hours where we need to ask them to move along so they aren't blocking our entrance.

-Food containers, bottles and drug paraphernalia left on our door step and window ledges

-Heckling of clients, specifically in recent months, one of our elderly clients was heckled by a guest of 310 Division. He was wearing a black balaclava and was shouting at her as she entered our building. She was quite shook up when she arrived. In attempt to rectify the issue, an employee walked her to her car following her service hoping she feels safe to return again.

- Emergency vehicles are frequently parked out front of the salon to tend to calls from 310 Division which is extremely distracting and an eyesore for clients. This always

raises questions from our clients about the area, current state of the downtown and the expense on the tax payers for having emergency vehicles respond to calls so frequently.

- Visible drug deals in front of salon are frequent and create a hostile environment for clients, staff and tenants.

- Individuals hallucinating and in distress while waiting at the bus stop in front of salon

- 310 Division is a popular topic of conversation and concern from clients. We attempt to downplay the challenges and issues we face to keep them feeling safe coming to the salon.

- Learning in the news about a man beat to a pulp on Chapel Street around the corner from salon unprovoked, along with violent incidents at Trinity United Church parking lot kitty-corner to salon requiring security to be in place during La Jeunesse rehearsal caused fear for our safety and image of neighbourhood

- One of our clients, concerned for our safety, purchased everyone a personal protective device that attaches to a keychain. This device is intended for employees to carry while walking to their cars, in case they encounter an escalating, violent individual in distress. We have declined using them, however, the gesture stands out as cause for concern on the severity of the issues we are dealing with.

- Individuals hiding in bushes along COSIC's parking lot and behind The Blue Box property while we are getting in and out of our vehicles asking clients and staff for money

- Staff has placed numerous phone calls with the Cobourg Police for well checks on individuals lying on the sidewalk, slouched over on their bikes or folded in half nearly falling into the creek on Buck St. This is a huge distraction for operating our business effectively while we are trying to make sure individuals are getting the assistance they may need.

- Incidents where clients have arrived at the salon upset after witnessing an individual in distress or appearing unresponsive in the parking lot or sidewalk, prompting our client to make calls to the police.

- Clients witnessing individuals on sidewalks surrounding salon being resuscitated with naran during business hours.

- On March 12, 2025, we called the Security Line for 310 Division St. to address an ongoing issue of dog feces on the sidewalks surrounding our business. This appears to be a direct result of the guests of 310 Division neglecting to clean up after their dogs.

- On March 12, 2025, we contacted the non-emergency Cobourg Police line to report an individual who we frequently see at 310 Division Street. The individual was observed crossing the street and entering the private parking lot to the rear of COSIC (301 Division). The individual proceeded to sit in the middle of the parking lot and was witnessed using illegal substances on the premises. This incident occurred during peak operational hours for COSIC and Meraki Salon, presenting both a safety risk and

a disruption to our business operations. Given that the parking lot is private property and actively used by employees, patients of COSIC and clients of Meraki, the behaviour was deemed unacceptable and prompted immediate reporting to the authorities.

We wish to express our frustration and provide examples of how our business has been directly impacted, as well as to voice our concerns for the future operations of 310 Division Street as the new hub for Transition House. We sincerely hope that the Northumberland County and Town of Cobourg will act in the best interests of the residents, taxpayers, and business owners.

We felt deflated when the solution to the problems our downtown has been facing was to place an expanded Transition House on a main artery, directly across from us, further exaggerating the issues and already tarnished image. We are concerned the neighbourhood and downtown core will continue to be seen as undesirable, and ultimately affect the image of our business.

We are very familiar with the cycle the weather creates with a quieter season during the cold winter months seeking shelter and respite from the cold, however, when the warm weather returns they come out of the woodwork and the shenanigans return. We have already noticed the increase in activity on the milder days.

As a small business that has weathered significant setbacks—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic—our focus has always been on maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for our clients. Yet, despite our efforts, it feels as though we are fighting an uphill battle against forces beyond our control. The decision to place a larger transitional housing facility so close to our business threatens not only our ability to operate, but also the safety of our staff and clients.

We ask for your understanding and consideration in addressing the challenges that businesses like ours face in the community. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to a resolution that balances the needs of all involved.

Sincerely yours,

Andrea Symons  
Owner, Meraki Salon

Personal privacy (MFIPPA s.14)

