

A Presentation for General Issues Committee, Hamilton City Hall, November 2nd, 2015 by Norman Newbery, President of S.A.S.H. (Senior Activities for Southwest Hamilton) and a Kirkendall Resident

Mayor Eisenberger, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I stand before you this morning because I am concerned about the security and safety of Hamilton's citizens – and in particular senior citizens. Seven years ago I decided to focus my attention upon the needs of seniors in Hamilton. One result of this was the formation of S.A.S.H. – a Registered Charitable Organization which in partnership with the Recreation Department of the City of Hamilton, offers social, educational and exercise programs for Senior's (55+) to help them maintain their health and wellbeing.

S.A.S.H. recognizes that our society values the ability of senior's being able to choose to age in place and that with the right support, seniors are often able to stay much longer in their homes. However, we also recognize that a major reason that seniors are hospitalized and are forced into nursing homes is the result of falls. ¹ It is for this reason that our S.A.S.H. group was formed – that with guided exercise all major muscle groups are strengthened; balance is increased and co-ordination is improved.

The City of Hamilton bears a major responsibility for providing safe walking environments – particularly for older seniors who no longer drive and who need to get to stores and services for medical appointments and necessary shopping. You will notice that in Kirkendall most of our bus routes follow connecting arteries like Aberdeen Avenue and Dundurn Street. Also a major destination for nearby residents is the Rexall Pharmacy on the corner of Aberdeen Avenue and Dundurn Streets.

It is not just the necessity of these residents going to these locations to shop or obtain buses that concerns me. It is also necessary for them to obtain exercise to maintain a high quality of life. Walking is not safe for most people in many parts of Hamilton. This is particularly true for vulnerable populations like mothers with strollers, expectant mothers, and seniors. Our sidewalks on many streets are in complete disrepair. They are uneven and filled with potholes. The concrete in many places is crumbling. In places they are narrow and in most situations there is no buffer between the sidewalk and the street. In addition our bias towards automobiles means that private vehicles often race at dangerously high speeds immediately next to the sidewalk where pedestrians are walking.

People will not choose to walk often to a destination because it is an unpleasant experience, and therefore there is a lost opportunity for physical activity. After all, who wants to do something that's not pleasant?

It is because of this that in September 2014, Hamilton's Plan for an 'Age Friendly City'² was approved by City Council implying, among other things, that it would focus its efforts upon making Hamilton safe for people of all ages. This implicitly needs to include the concept of complete streets where the needs of Walkers; Transit; Bikers and Motor Vehicles are considered in a balanced way. This principle needs to be applied both in our Master Transportation Plan and also in specific plans such as the rebuilding of Aberdeen Avenue.

Presently our focus as a City has been to focus upon the convenience of the automobile at the expense of other modes of transportation....and our seniors are in the forefront of this neglect. I call upon this Committee of Council to help redress this balance and to value the safety and quality of life of all of our citizens.

Sources: (1) Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians with 20-30% seniors experiencing one or more falls each year. Falls cause 85% of seniors' injury-related hospitalizations, 95% of all hip fractures, \$2 billion a year in direct healthcare costs, and over one third of seniors are admitted to long-term care following hospitalization for a fall. Public Health Canada http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/seniors_falls-chutes_aines/infographic-infographie_2015-eng.php

(2) City of Hamilton, Annual Report 2014, page24, Strategic Priority 3