



**Dr. Elizabeth Richardson**  
Medical Officer of Health  
Public Health Services  
*City of Hamilton*

September, 2015.

Dear Dr. Richardson:

My name is Monika Ciolek, and I am writing to you on behalf of the McQuesten Community Planning Team, our residents, volunteers, guests and partners, to address the concerns and needs of our neighbourhood in relation to Nurse Rachael Haalboom's *Community Nurse Networker* (CNN) position. As of the first day of September 2015 this role is no longer funded by the City of Hamilton, but it is in all of our best interest that this position remains intact, as we desire to continue helping our residents achieve their overall health.

As you may already be aware, the McQuesten neighbourhood faces many challenges that range from basic needs, like low income and mental illness, to more complicated issues, like social isolation and Children's Aid interventions, which people struggle to speak about. Regardless of what category those needs fall under, more often than not, the feelings of shame associated with these needs surpass the necessity to share its impact with others. This is where the role of the *Community Nurse Networker* is crucial; and while it is impossible to outline all the needs Rachael has identified and accomplishments she has achieved, I will do my best to summarize the ones that have made the biggest impact in our community.

Trust can take a very long time to build between people, especially for those deemed a minority, who have faced countless barriers throughout their lives. When opportunity for trust finally arises, it usually takes a community to encourage an individual that it is okay to ask for help. As someone who has been on the receiving and giving ends, as community leaders it is our duty to help people in our neighbourhood create a better life for themselves; especially for those who cannot accomplish it alone. Unfortunately, a lot of individuals who struggle to reach out for help may never reach that point.

Rachael Haalboom understood that. She saw the bigger picture as her vision for the McQuesten community reached far and wide, and as idealistic as it may have seemed at some moments, her commitment only proved her to be one of the most knowledgeable and passionate experts within McQuesten. Her desire for change, her awareness of the needs, and her professionalism toward issues experienced in our community, made her an ideal Nurse Networker.

Our CNN Rachael was always available during business hours. When she was not available, she made sure to get back to her clients as soon as her schedule allowed. She called and/or returned calls at specified times; allowed back and forth texting, which proved itself to be a very successful way of communicating, and she was great at holding people accountable whenever they required extra assistance in their daily tasks. She worked hard at advocating for the needs of those who put their lives in her hands. As a result of her consistent and persistent hard work over the two years in McQuesten, she was able to gain people's trust to help them move forward in life.

While in the St. Helen Centre, during her hours in our community, Rachael rarely sat still. When she was not answering questions and/or assisting clients, she would roam the hallways looking for things to do and people to speak to. She had excellent communication and management skills. She was extremely knowledgeable about the programs and services around our community, and the city, which brought forth rapid results in connecting people toward their desired goals. Most importantly however, while facilitating community engagement, Rachael created an extremely welcoming and inclusive environment for all, while building therapeutic relationships with McQuesten residents, community partners and guests.

Unfortunately, it is with great regret that we have had to say "Goodbye" to CNN Rachael due to discontinued funding for her role. We are saddened by the fact that the funds for this position have been stopped without any substitutes for her position. What is even more disappointing is that this decision came from people who hear about but are not consistently in the neighbourhood where we live, work, and play. Ending this position disregards how far we have come with Rachael's assistance and how far we have yet to go.

The success of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is built on trust. Taking away Rachael's role suddenly and without warning breaks that trust. It comes across as neglectful, irresponsible and in opposition with the city's commitment to make our neighbourhood the best place to live, work, play, and raise a child. After all, the McQuesten neighbourhood remains a priority neighbourhood, in spite of the positive changes created by residents and partners like Rachael. We are thankful for the positive progress and outcomes, but there are still many lives we must reach to make our community a safe, healthy and a desirable place to be for all. As a community, we wish the residents were involved in the decision making process. We feel disillusioned by this lack of commitment from Public Health, and the lack of communication between our partners and us about the choice that has been made, because building a community depends on building relationships. After spending two years building a trusting relationship with our CNN it is destabilizing for our community to lose such a vital asset.

With this being said, we believe that you want the best health for McQuesten residents. We also believe that you appreciate the value that the Nurse Networker has had in our neighbourhood, and the value that this role could continue to serve in any of our other priority neighbourhoods. We hope that you share our desire to continue making McQuesten one of the best neighbourhoods to live, work, play, and raise a child, and we ask you to help us continue to be an example of how one person, and one community can make a lasting impact on our city.

Sincerely,

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Monika Ciolek  
Resident (*past McQuesten Planning Team Chair*)

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Casey Eaton  
McQuesten Planning Team Chair

Cc:

Fred Eisenberger, Mayor, *City of Hamilton*

Sam Merulla, Councillor Ward 4, *City of Hamilton*

Chris Murray, City Manager, *City of Hamilton*

Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager, Community & Emergency Services, *City of Hamilton*

Suzanne Brown, Director, Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives, *City of Hamilton*

Dr. Lindsey George, Clinical Director, Mental Health Program, *Hamilton Family Health Team* (HFHT)

Michelle Stockwell, Coordinator, Centralized Child & Youth Psychiatry Services, HFHT

Brent Browett, Director, Community Health Planning and Integration, *City of Hamilton*

Terry Cooke, President & CEO, *Hamilton Community Foundation*