

Pilon, Janet

Subject: City Manager Position

From: Shahzi Yasmin
Sent: February 5, 2019 2:04 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Cc: Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>; Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>
Subject: City Manager Position

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of Hamilton City Council,

I have been living in Hamilton for approximately 10 years. I initially moved here from the GTA to study at McMaster University. My intention was always to go back to Toronto, where I wanted to live and work. Over the years of my studies in Hamilton, I had grown to love the many facets that the city offers. I love the landscapes, the easy access to nature, the humble long time residents, the warm feeling from grassroots movements advocating for the environment, for sustainability, for locally sourced products and services, as well as the advocating for fair representation on council.

As a woman of colour in this city, I have faced systemic racism on many fronts. I have faced it at the university, at work, in accessing any kind of service, in advocating for better supports, etc. Although I love Hamilton and consider Hamilton home, there is immense potential for the City to respond to its ever-growing population. Hamilton has sponsored so many refugees who now consider Hamilton home. The city has also taken in so many immigrants, who have so much potential to thrive right here in this city. We are seeing so many moving here from Toronto, like myself (though I came before the housing crisis) who have experienced all kinds of diversity in Toronto and the GTA.

With the current rise in extreme right-wing display in our city via protests, posters, as well as attempted fire bombings (if you remember, the mosque on King St was attempted to be set on fire, and the surrounding community of refugees and immigrants safely held on to the perpetrator for authorities). There have been several hate crimes that we have witnessed and heard of in this city.

In the spirit of this new era of the Woman and of folks of colour, it would be tremendously important for Hamilton to support a hiring committee that reflects the city of Hamilton and to put into action the things you all claim Hamilton to be: the best place to raise a child and age successfully. The only way in which we can do that is by modelling behaviour. Half the population of Hamilton identifies as a woman. Now we finally have fair representation of this on council. However, the City has lost Shylo Elmayan. The City has defunded the Access and Equity office.

We need to further push for and fight for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Hundreds of women, non-binary, and men have shown up at the Women's March events in Hamilton three years in a row. Take Back The Night, organized by SACHA, sees hundreds and hundreds of women taking to streets to fight for street safety at night. Women still do not feel safe. Women still do not feel heard. Women still are disbelieved and disregarded. Gender equity is incredibly important for any city to thrive, but more so, we need women of colour, queer persons, persons with disabilities, etc. to be prominently placed as the City's leaders in order to shut down ignorance and bigotry. We need a City Manager who has empathy, who has first hand experience of the issues residents face in Hamilton. We need a City Manager who supports marginalized folks and experiences. We need a City Manager who looks like us. We need a City Manager who inspires young marginalized persons to instill within them the possibility of leadership, the possibility of success, the possibility of respect, the possibility of representation, the possibility of a turning point for the City of Hamilton to respect all women and marginalized persons in Hamilton

Let's show the rest of the province, especially the likes of Mr. Doug Ford, that Women, especially Women of Colour, are not just welcomed and supported in Hamilton, but are respected enough to take on such a big role. Because we are capable. Because we have earned it. Because it's time.

Please make the smart decision to expand the Selection and Hiring Committee in time for the City Manager hiring. Keeping the hiring committee as is would be an example of how the City of Hamilton does not want to keep up with the times. In this era of the Woman, please include new councillors in the Selection and Hiring Committee.

Sincerely,

Shahzi Bokhari
Resident of City of Hamilton's Ward 2