

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Social Benefit of Hamilton Bike Share

From: Valentin Brown

Sent: Monday, June 1, 2020 6:19 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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Dear Hamilton City Council,

I am writing to you to share my lived experience around cycling in hopes that it might be useful to you in your efforts to ensure that Hamilton's Bike Share continues to run. Since acquiring access to a subsidized ERI pass, I have started riding again, and so I've discovered the importance of cycling in my personal journey towards interdependence.

In a way, riding a bike is one symbol of my autonomy--when I was a little kid, I taught myself to ride a bike because my parents couldn't be bothered to help me. I got tired of waiting for them to show up for me and figured it out on my own. Learning to ride a bike gave the little child that I was a way to feel confident and joyful in an environment that was soul crushing in so many ways.

When my family moved to Hamilton in 2004, I stopped riding. And yet, just a few weeks ago, I started to go on bike rides with my roommate, almost a year after I was finally able to flee my family home and the abuse that occurred there. It's powerful that, after a hard won year of trying to find safe housing, I was able to find a wonderful roommate who helped me get a SoBi pass so that I could ride again--to pursue an activity that is a symbol of the same innate courage I had as a child that gave me the strength to leave my family so many years later.

It is my goal to continue to practice cycling, so that I can become confident enough to share the road with the cars, without my roommate's assistance. In addition to my trauma therapy, and in absence of being able to swim because the rec centres are closed, cycling is one way that I can build on my experience of autonomy and work towards a life worth living.

One part of a life worth living, for me, is being able to process the developmental trauma that I experienced to the point that its symptoms no longer radically hinder my ability to work, which would mean that I would no longer need to be on ODSP. I hope that my story shows how the social benefit of programs like the Hamilton Bike Share outweighs the lack of a monetary profit. The Hamilton Bike Share is one way our city can invest its people as individuals.

Sincerely,

Valentin Brown

(pronouns: he/him)