

Dear Mayor & City Councillors of Hamilton,

As Council considers the Commonwealth Games 2026 as item 5.2 - PED19108(e) at the General Issues Committee meeting on Monday, July 6th, we implore Council to reject the propitious proposal. The city of Hamilton is facing grave financial concerns and budget shortfalls from the Covid-19 pandemic. Budgets are being trimmed substantially, city-led long term infrastructure projects are being delayed. The 10-year transit strategy is now being pushed into a 13th year. Moreover, an endless list of items like housing, homelessness, expanding social programs, road infrastructure debt, expanding our CSO tank system would be a far better use for our local tax dollars. Spending upwards of \$300 Million local tax dollars and potentially more than a \$1 Billion of federal and provincial tax dollars on a mass sporting spectacle that has left other host cities bereft of benefit cannot possibly be up for consideration during this pandemic.

The 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, India, suffered from a lot of social and economic issues. It suffered from poor ticket sales, infrastructure and transportation issues, a debt the local government is struggling with today and came in at 100 times the original budget. The 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland's Athletic Village, was torn down just after the games to build housing with an additional cost beyond the games. The 2018 Commonwealth Games on Australia's Gold Coast also went over budget, saw local businesses and hotels deeply frustrated with a complete lack of business. The 2018 games cost USD\$1.33 Billion, returning USD\$1.5B in GDP boost. The 2014 Games cost USD\$829.35M with a return of USD\$1.0B. The 2010 Games are widely assumed to have cost the local economy more than they invested. These GDP boosts are less than would be gained from direct government investment in traditional physical infrastructure. ~CND\$1.2B in debt-financed tax paid money would return far more invested directly in the infrastructure needs of the residents of this city. Closer to home the 2015 Pan-American Games was found by auditor-general Bonnie Lysyk to be over-budget by CA\$342 million. The Toronto Athletes' Village highlighted as an opportunity to build affordable housing ended in upmarket condominiums. This was built on lands procured by the government to build a public housing project. The Tim Horton's field continues to be plagued with repair issues requiring further expenditures. Transit, social housing, parks, swimming pools, sporting and leisure facilities, upgraded public spaces, safer streets and health infrastructure all would benefit our economy and residents more than the Commonwealth Games.

Should this Council consider the massive expenditure of public sums of money on hosting the Commonwealth Games, it is incumbent on you as stewards of our tax dollars to ensure the expense benefits as many Hamilton residents as possible, especially those most marginalized. Community benefits processes offer a way for government and other institutions to multiply the impact of their spending. To that end, we ask Council to insist the Commonwealth Games bid comes with a legally binding Community Benefits Agreement. This agreement should be signed between community groups with expertise in Community Benefits Agreements, City staff and game organizers. The agreement should be used to bring community voice to the benefits of any Commonwealth Games opportunity. To create targeted hiring and training opportunities, provide economic opportunities, reduce poverty, build actual affordable housing and support community priorities among Indigenous peoples and equity-seeking groups. These agreements have been used successfully in many other cities around the world to ensure significant scale investments bring maximum return of public expenditures.

Yours sincerely,

Kojo Dampthey (Interim Executive Director) & Karl Andrus (Hamilton Community Benefits Network Inc – VP – Community)

