

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Proposed Resolution for GIC

**From:** Scott Gardner

**Sent:** July 2, 2020 10:23 AM

**To:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Proposed Resolution for GIC

*Please accept this submission for the City of Hamilton's General Issues Committee meeting scheduled for 9:30 am on Monday, July 6, 2020.*

*Thank You,  
Scott Gardner*

Dear Chair and Members of the General Issues Committee (City of Hamilton):

On behalf of [ink-stainedwretches.org](http://ink-stainedwretches.org), composed of a group of former newsroom employees, I ask that you please consider the accompanying resolution requesting your support in encouraging elected leaders to build an ecosystem in which local journalism can provide vital service to people of the City of Hamilton and beyond. Before recently retiring, I was a journalist with The Hamilton Spectator for close to 30 years. During that time I have witnessed the importance and the steady decline of local, professional journalism in our community. Twitter rants and other social media posts with obvious agendas should not be the main source of information for members of our community.

Region of Waterloo councillors, during their council meeting on June 3, 2020, unanimously passed a similar resolution. The wording of the motion they passed is as follows:

***"Therefore Be It Resolved** that Waterloo Regional Council recognizes that a healthy, professional news media is essential to the proper functioning of democracy in the region; urges other municipal councils within the region and across Canada to recognize that a robust news media is essential to the proper functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions; endorses legislation and regulations to support and rejuvenate news outlets across Canada; and urges the federal government to move quickly to pass legislation to ensure an ecosystem for a healthy news media to serve all Canadians. And that the resolution be forwarded to the area municipalities, local M.P.s and M.P.P.s and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Association of Municipalities of Ontario."*

As we have outlined in our proposed resolution to your council, and in the accompanying backgrounder document, we are concerned by the fact that residents in our municipality and throughout Canada have already lost vital services provided by local journalism outlets — and are in serious risk of imminently losing more.

According to the university base journalism website [j-source.ca](http://j-source.ca), from 2008 to 2018, 190 communities across Canada lost about 250 established news outlets due to mergers or closures. And more recently, in six weeks from the time the novel coronavirus pandemic struck in early March, more than 100 media outlets across Canada made cuts; roughly 50 community newspapers shuttered; and about 2,000 workers were laid off.

So we are asking your help to encourage our elected leaders, at the provincial and federal levels, to help build an ecosystem in which local journalism — which is essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy — can thrive.

Please find attached the resolution as well as background on our cause.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Scott Gardner  
City of Hamilton

Proposed resolution for The City of Hamilton, Ontario.

Purpose: To support a healthy ecosystem for local journalism

Submitted by Scott Gardner on behalf of [ink-stainedwretches.org](http://ink-stainedwretches.org)

**Whereas** a healthy, professional news media is essential for the proper functioning of civil society and democracy at the local, regional, federal and international levels;

**Whereas** the Public Policy Forum declares — on its website for the 2017 report *The Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age* (commissioned by the federal government) — that “real news is in crisis” in this country;

**Whereas** the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) cited eight “critical information needs” the media help to provide including emergencies; other public risks to health; education; the environment; economic opportunities; civic and political knowledge of policy initiatives; and the conduct of public officials, and candidates for office (*The Shattered Mirror* p.4);

**Whereas** Canadians have lost the essential services provided by roughly 2,000 media workers in 100 communities across Canada due to layoffs in only six weeks from the time the COVID-19 pandemic began — a time it became clearer to the public how important it is for Canadians to receive accurate information — and advertising

revenues have plunged, prompting an emergency \$30-million advertising-buy by the federal government;

**Whereas** residents of 190 Canadian communities — including residents of Kitchener, Elmira and Guelph — lost 250 established news outlets due to closings or mergers between 2008 and 2018;

**Whereas** two thirds of Canadians agree or somewhat agree that because of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak the federal government should treat widespread media bankruptcies and lay-offs as an emergency , according to a Nanos

Research poll of April 2020;

**Whereas** the federal government allocated nearly \$600 million in aid for Canadian media over five years in its 2019 budget, including a 25-per-cent tax credit for newsroom salaries; a 15-per-cent tax credit for digital media subscribers; and charitable tax status for non-profit news outlets;

**Whereas** Canada's federal government acknowledged in its 2019 budget (p. 173) that "A strong and independent news media is crucial to a well-functioning democracy.";

**Whereas** at least six municipal councils in Ontario have **already passed**

resolutions similar to the one proposed below;

**Whereas** the news media in the Hamilton area have been instrumental during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring local citizens have accurate local information;

**Therefore Be It Resolved** that the City of Hamilton council recognizes that a healthy, professional news media is essential to the proper functioning of democracy in our city, urges nearby municipal councils and across Canada to recognize that a robust news media is essential to the proper functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions; endorses legislation and regulations to support and rejuvenate news outlets across Canada; and urges the federal government to move quickly to pass legislation to ensure an ecosystem for a healthy news media to serve all Canadians. And that the resolution be forwarded to the area municipalities, local M.P.s and M.P.P.s and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Association of Municipalities of Ontario.



Backgrounder for the Chair and Members of the General Issues Committee, City of Hamilton  
Re: Proposed resolution supporting local journalism By:  
[ink-stainedwretches.org](http://ink-stainedwretches.org)

- The name of our group is [ink-stainedwretches.org](http://ink-stainedwretches.org) (Yes, our name is the same as our URL.)
- Our project promotes support for local journalism in ALL FORMS (print, broadcast, digital) not only newspapers.
- Whereas our campaign is a local grassroots effort started in the Region of Waterloo, Ontario, we hope that it will spread across Canada because residents across the country are experiencing a dwindling supply of reliable local journalism.
- We have support from every province and territory in Canada: As of July 1, 2020, our [online petition](#) has been endorsed by nearly 800 people from all provinces and territories save Nunavut. (However, an Ottawa-based editor working for a Nunavut news outlet has signed the petition.)
- We have not sought the blessing of media executives because this is a grassroots effort by media workers past and present. Of course, we welcome endorsements from news media executives. But they have their own associations and avenues for advocacy.
- Three possible action items for council:
  - We would be happy if council would write letters encouraging nearby municipal councils to adopt a similar resolution.
  - We would be delighted if council would send letters to the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) asking them to encourage their members to adopt similar resolutions.
  - And we would appreciate it if council would write and send similar letters of support — to ensure an ecosystem for robust local journalism — to elected federal leaders including local MPPs, MPs; Steven Guilbeault, minister of Canadian heritage; Bill Morneau, federal minister of finance; and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.