

Bates, Tamara

Subject: FW: WARD 3 URGENT STINSON/ENCAMPMENTS & CBS TEMP SHELTER

From: >**Sent:** Thursday, September 3, 2020 3:59 PM**To:** clerk@hamilton.ca; PHS - COVID19 Response**Subject:** WARD 3 URGENT STINSON/ENCAMPMENTS & CBS TEMP SHELTER

Dear Mayor and Members of Council

Sept 3, 2020

I, the undersigned, have resided in Ward 3 for 3 years and I request emergency action.

I request that this letter/email is entered into and be included on the Agenda of City Council Meeting of September 16, 2020 at 9:30am.

Five residents of Ward 3, only 5, were able to submit their personal letters in time for the Emergency and Community Services Committee of August 17, 2020. Their knowledge of our neighborhood and their sound objections stand on the record. Let the record reflect that those 5 voices do not stand alone. I commend "the Awesome 5" for their presentation of the dynamics of our neighborhood. Their writings reflect my personal experience. The subject that is missing in their letters is the pandemic Covid 19.

The Elders who died unnecessarily in senior homes during the First Wave of Covid 19 are fresh in our collective memory. Their death was directly connected to unsound and negligent pandemic protocols, poor preparedness and slow reaction to the emergency. The suffering that we all experienced during the live-saving lock-down of Canada is also vivid. We want to avoid another lock-down in our neighborhood during the Second Wave.

I believe that during a pandemic a society is as safe as its most vulnerable members. The dignified and safe housing of the vulnerable and marginalized has not been addressed appropriately in the past and it has been neglected for decades by City Hall. This has created the crisis that we, the residents of Stinson neighborhood, are now facing and it is of our leaders' making.

I have been informed, after the fact, of the September opening of a new "temporary emergency shelter" to be managed by the Good Shepherd Ministries at the location of the Old Cathedral Boys' High School at 378 Main St. East.

To open an emergency shelter is an urgent necessity and an ethical and moral duty, but to open it in this precise location reflects negligent planning and a total disregard of the realities of our neighborhood. The community invites all the parties involved in the "decision making" to urgently "walk" the grounds with the guide of a few neighbors and a member of the police department (the area is "well known to the police") to open their eyes to the conditions and the risks in place.

I firmly believe that the Ontario Human Rights Code is intended to protect us all, and in particular to protect the human rights of the vulnerable and marginalized and that the legislation is not to be used to create an urban ghetto, which constitutes a violation of Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. 7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

In a Pre-Covid 19 time, it would NOT have been a sound and sustainable urban planning strategy to shelter more vulnerable and marginalized people in an already over saturated and vulnerable area like Stinson, because *de facto* this would create a ghetto.

But during the pandemic, the opening of the emergency shelter in an over saturated neighborhood, it is a scientific non-sense that sets the conditions for an outbreak during the Second Wave. *De facto* it sets the conditions for the Stinson neighborhood to become the first Canadian **Covid 19 Ghetto**.

WE LOVE STINSON! We choose to live here. Within Ward 3 we are a neighborhood of no frills low middle class, retired elders, small business, hard working poor and seniors homes, all solid people, good and compassionate people living in the midst of an unbelievable concentration of badly run, legal for-profit assisted living lodges, rooming houses, halfway houses, hostels and hard-drugs dealing dens. At the moment, Stinson is already a "special needs" neighborhood that asks for remedies instead of added stressors. Our vulnerability to Covid19 is being overlooked.

It seems that the opening of the emergency shelter is a *fait accompli*, something that has been decided before those affected hear about it, leaving them with no option but to accept it.

It seems that the lack of transparency was intentional. The Catholic Bishop Douglas Crosby and Brother Reginald Howson, Provincial Superior of the Hospitallers Order of St. John of God (Good Shepherd Ministries) are the Hamilton's heads of 2 of the interested parties. The secrecy of the process was unethical and immoral, especially during a pandemic.

As I understand it, the process began months ago, therefore there was ample opportunity to "robustly communicate" and contact ALL the residents of Ward 3 and, in particular, the residents of the Stinson neighborhood, especially during the lock-down, by mail and delivering a flyer to our homes. "Because not everyone is on social media."

Thus, we were denied our legal right to present our experienced and informed opinions and concerns to City Hall Council and the Emergency Committee. I view this as a grave neglect of fiduciary obligation. Councillor Nann's argument for the opening of the emergency shelter without consulting the community was that it was made possible by the State of Emergency but her argument is only valid in appearance but not *de facto*.

Since the news leaked to the community, many people have tried to exercise their civil duty to inform and their right to participate and ask questions. **Our duties and rights were denied** when twitter accounts were maliciously blocked and the multiple lengthy letters and emails continue to go unanswered in the past weeks.

It is a sound scientific prognostication that the opening of the shelter in the designated location will facilitate the transmission of the virus between the mobile 45 men (or more) that it will shelter and our dense local vulnerable population. Furthermore, because some of the local for-profit Lodges are run poorly and don't enforce the Covid 19 protocols, as the neighbors witness on a daily bases and it has been denounced, the transmission of Coronavirus between the mobile males and the local vulnerable people; the mentally ill, the addicts and other at-risk residents will accelerate. Add to this, the

countless people frequenting the numerous drug dealing outlets well known to the police. This is unavoidable.

Additionally, "the tenting population" has already scouted the 3 green spaces/parkettes situated on Hunter St. between Wellington and East Ave. This fact is terrifying the neighbors.

The first scouters with tents appeared after the announcement of the opening of the Good Shepherd shelter was made public. They left after 3 days when a neighbor informed them that the date in September had not been announced yet. The tenters themselves declared to this neighbor that we should expect a flood of tents coming 2 days before the opening of the new emergency shelter, which they call "Motel Cathedral". In their own words: "not even the cops can move us, you guys know that right"; when our neighbour tried to explain that the shelter will have some rules their response was: "been there done that, the Good Shepherd is a fuckin joke". Since the announcement, we have observed daily an unusual number of "unfamiliar faces" in our 3 green spaces/parkettes. They come in groups of 2-5 people, on foot or bicycles without tents and they stay for a couple of hours and leave; this is an indicator.

I believe that this solid information regarding the upcoming "tent encampment" in our 3 small green spaces reveals the ignorance the Good Shepherd's executives uttered in the Zoom meeting facilitated by Councilor Nann. This meeting was orchestrated AFTER the decision of opening of the "Motel Cathedral" was already made. Good Shepherd stated that "no tents will be allowed on the grounds of the emergency shelter" thus, either the "professionals" of the Good Shepherd Ministries were ignorant that the "tent encampment" would naturally settle in the proximity of the emergency shelter to access the services they offer, or they did neglect to consider the possibility, or they were cognizant and choose to be silent. How can Good Shepard control these encampments??

Ward 3 residents have contacted many City Hall departments pleading to temporarily close access to the 3 parkettes to avoid the tenting encampment to settle in and their response was: the only thing we can do is to monitor and wait for the injunction in the Courts scheduled for September. September? Act now before the encampment sets in or we will have to live under these Covid 19 stressors at least until June 2021 when, perhaps but "not surely", the Good Shepherd Ministries said that it may close, "depending of the circumstances", they avoided to give a direct answer when the question was raised.

In my opinion, the formula of an **over-saturated vulnerable neighborhood+ Motel Cathedral+Tent Encampment= Covid19 Disaster.**

I am aware of the grave problem present in Toronto and at Hamilton's First Ontario Place, and on Fergusen regarding human feces and urine. In my community we have lived with feces and urine and needles and condoms on our properties and back alleys; with the presence of the emergency shelter+the tent encampment, the amount of bio-hazard material will exponentially increase and so will be the risk of "community transmission" of Covid 19.

Furthermore, I have being informed that there was another location that was considered for the emergency shelter and was rejected. One of the reasons from Nann's FAQ flyer was "facilities on site such as showers, etc." Are you trying to tell me that there are no showers at the school?

We heard that the site of Sir John A. Macdonald School offers safer conditions to control and limit a Covid 19 outbreak, and thus AVOID A SECOND LOCK-DOWN of Hamilton, or Ward 3 or, to protect the city at large, the lock-down ONLY of our Stinson neighborhood. City Hall is gambling with our lives.

We have been informed that this other location is not only safer to open a Good Shepherd emergency shelter during Covid 19 but that it could be ALSO the key to remedy the present crisis of the "tent encampments". This population is cognizant of Covid 19, they are afraid to take refuge in shelters, lodges, hostels and rooming houses, but they access the services provided by the Good Shepherd.

Nothing is impossible if there is a will and a crisis. Because City Hall has not been able to remedy the present emergency in 5 months, then, the Canadian Military Engineers and Habitat for Humanity should be called to take immediate action. Our military excels in giving assistance to the population of other countries during and after a disaster, and they have the capacity to prepare John A. Macdonald School at great speed to house the Good Shepherd emergency shelter+ Safe encampment grounds with access to separate and dedicated facilities, showers, toilets, a clinic with nurses and doctors and other social services that they are entitled to for being Canadians and human beings. This would be a sustainable strategy at this moment. We can also use the counsel of the heroic troops that took control of the virus on the senior's residences.

What is the duration of the lease that the Good Shepherd has for the Catholic Boys' High School? Does it stretch beyond June 31, 2021?

What are the plans of Good Shepherd to find the next shelter once the **Temporary** Emergency Shelter at the Catholic Boys' High School has ended?

If our warning is not heard and the opening of the emergency shelter goes ahead in September 2020 as planned, the community will present a long list of necessary protective and sanitation measures to be implemented in our neighborhood immediately. The cost of the sound scientific protocols to prevent an outbreak in our dense neighborhood could be astronomical but we are morally entitled.

Guidelines from the Ministry of Health would be good place to start.

1. COVID-19 Proactive Surveillance Testing April 23, 2020
2. COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Congregate Living Settings May 23, 2020
3. Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks in Congregate Living Settings May 23, 2020
4. Additional Direction on Testing Strategy May 24, 2020
5. COVID-19 Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations May 28, 2020
6. Tenants Re-Engaging in Community Life Homes for Special Care and Community Homes for Opportunity July 17, 2020

If our warning is not heard and an outbreak occurs and contact tracing shows that it started at the emergency shelter or in the population they serve or from the tenting population that the Good Shepherd attracts, we will proceed legally and collectively.

Keep us safe!
Sincerely,



