

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Encampment Residents are Neighbours Too

From: **Miriam Novick**

Date: Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 1:24 PM

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To: <jason.farr@hamilton.ca>, <maureen.scally@hamilton.ca>, <ryan.leverton@hamilton.ca>

CC: <hclc.cjch@gmail.com>, <info@keepingsix.org>, <info@hamsmart.ca>

Dear Councillor Farr,

I am writing today as a resident of Ward 2 (on Wood St E) in support of the calls by medical and legal experts with the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic and HAMSMaRT, frontline workers with Keeping Six, and many other ordinary people in Ward 2 **against dismantling encampments**.

I understand there are many factors in this situation and that many other residents will have strong views. While in some ways this situation is complex -- people living in encampments have a variety of needs, priorities, and preferences, as does anyone else living in the ward -- in other ways it is very simple: **these experts are saying dismantling encampments without long-term, sustainable, non-coercive housing solutions will not work**.

These are experts in medicine and public health as well as in human rights law; these are people who work directly with affected communities. There is **no reason not to listen to their calls to allow encampments to remain while other solutions are put in place**. Designated areas and/or low-barrier permits for temporary structures while assessing the needs of encampment residents **in their own terms** for stable and supportive housing are one such option.

Other residents who want the encampments removed will invoke safety; dismantling encampments without putting any of the other supports called for in place -- assessing the needs of encampment residents with their input as above, as well as establishing supportive interim **and** permanent housing, removing other barriers in shelters and hotels, and prioritizing people experiencing homelessness for urgent housing placement -- means deciding that some people's safety is worth more than others. **My safety is not more important than anyone else's** just because I have the privilege of stable and secure housing. In any case, I have walked through and among the encampments entirely safely on multiple occasions.

Under ordinary circumstances, dismantling encampments without any meaningful, consensual alternative would be wrong; in a global health crisis coupled with an established housing crisis on top of the overdose epidemic, doing so will have catastrophic effects. **Please listen to the voices with academic expertise and lived experience telling you what our communities need**. Every single person who lives in this ward is a member of this community and deserves to be treated with respect and value.

This is a moment to establish what community can truly mean and what values we put into practice. Following an evidence-based approach as outlined by the HCLC, HAMSMaRT, and Keeping Six that respects the rights and dignity of people experiencing homelessness is one step toward building a meaningful community for every single person residing within the bounds of Ward 2.

Thank you,
Miriam Novick (North End)