

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Homeless Encampments – Urgent Call to Action

From: **Parnika Godkhindi**

Date: Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 5:44 PM

Subject: Homeless Encampments – Urgent Call to Action

To: <Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca>

Cc: <hclc.cjch@gmail.com>, Hamsmart Information <info@hamsmart.ca>, Keeping Six <info@keepingsix.org>

Hello Councillor Wilson,

I hope you are doing well in these unprecedented times. My name is Parnika, and I am a McMaster student and resident in the Westdale area. I emailed you two months ago regarding the City's decision to move encampments, and I am alarmed to once again hear that Hamilton city staff are planning to dismantle the encampments at the First Ontario Centre and the Ferguson Street encampment on July 31, 2020.

The City cannot and should not dismantle encampments, unless it is able to provide encampment residents with access to safe indoor spaces and interim to permanent housing with the appropriate supports. Dismantling homeless encampments will cause harm to encampment residents and this harm is heightened by the current pandemic. As I mentioned in my previous email, the CDC itself has recommended that encampments not be moved to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Rather than dismantling encampments, I urge you to consider the following demands, compiled by Keeping Six and the Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team. We ask that:

1. The City not dismantle homeless encampments
2. The City provide interim and permanent housing for encampment residents with necessary supports
3. The City prioritize individuals experiencing homelessness for urgent housing placement
4. The City engage encampment residents in assessing their needs prior to dismantling
5. The City remove barriers in shelters and hotels in order to accommodate the individual needs of encampment residents
6. The City allow for sanctioned encampment sites and/or designate specific parks/public lands where individuals are allowed to set up tents/temporary structures
7. The City allow for a streamlined, low-barrier, accessible process of issuing permits allowing for tents and temporary structures

Until the COVID crisis passes or people can be permanently housed, it is essential that the encampments are protected; while the City has said that there are shelter options available for folks, the reality is that shelters are often at capacity and some people simply do not succeed in the shelter system. If the City wants to meet its stated aim of housing folks, we need to support people to be in a known, consistent, and stable location--moving encampments accomplishes the exact opposite of this aim.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Councillor. Please let me know if you have any questions and I'd be happy to chat further. Take care.

Sincerely, Parnika Godkhindi