

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Homeless Encampments

From: Jessica Merolli

Sent: July 30, 2020 10:29 AM

To: Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>; Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>

Cc: hclc.cjch@gmail.com; info@keepingsix.org; info@hamsmart.ca; Rob Pettapiece <rob.pettapiece@gmail.com>; clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Homeless Encampments

Dear Councillor Farr and Mayor Eisenberger,

I am writing today to offer support to the demands being made by The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, Keeping Six, and HAMSMaRT in relations to the encampments in Hamilton. During this pandemic, I have seen the City suspect the application for certain by-laws to accommodate for the unprecedented challenges we are facing. For example, parking restrictions are not being enforced on the street where I live, which has time-limited parking. This benefits homeowners on this street immensely and I expect the City to give similar consideration to others in our community.

Our priority should be ensuring those in encampments have access to clean water, food, and toilet amenities. It should not be focused on displacing people (again). This does nothing to address the underlying causes of homelessness but simply appeases people who would rather have the problems we face as a community hidden away.

My husband and I have donated to money for the purchase of tents because we believe that the encampments are currently necessary due to the failed housing policies of the City, Province, and Federal governments. To dismantle encampments without a viable alternative, and without working with those the City is displacing is simply an attempt to cover up these failures, while also repeating the same mistakes that created these conditions. More critically, it puts Hamiltonians lives at risk.

To summarize, I fully support the following demands:

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

Councillor Farr, I have heard you speak on the issue of encampments with the acknowledgement that displacement is not a long term solution. I hope that you continue to make decisions about the current encampments with the same care.

I would like the Clerk to include this letter in the correspondence for Council or committee to review at their next meeting regarding this matter.

Kindly,

Jessica Merolli (& Rob Pettapiece)