

Pilon, Janet

Subject: For the record: my email on homeless encampments to Councillor Pauls

From: Mary Love

Date: July 30, 2020 at 12:58:07 PM EDT

To: Esther Pauls

Subject: URGENT! Please help people in need TODAY, Councillor Pauls!

RE: Encampments slated for dismantling tomorrow

Hello, Esther, Zora and Lyndzee.

I hope this finds you all well and enjoying a break from the intense global warming effect lately.

Just as poor and homeless Hamiltonians will increasingly suffer from the unequal effects of the ongoing climate crisis because of the inequity of our society, the poor and homeless have been suffering much more than people like us who have a secure roof over our heads, enough food and water whenever we need it, etc. etc.

I have a personal stake in the City not removing the encampments tomorrow because I funded one of the tents that is in danger of being dismantled, and its inhabitant's meagre possessions being handled by strangers, possibly even lost. I have also walked past both these encampments recently, and have had no trouble with anyone hassling me for money or anything else. People in these encampments, as I hope you can imagine, are thoroughly exhausted by months of near total disruption of their usual life supports such as public washrooms, meal programs, and the public library which is supposedly opening today, but not for overnight visitors. They just want to be left in peace to try to survive their nightmare which is for us by comparison a "bit of a pain".

Why does the City think it should dismantle these camps? Why break up something which is working for the most disadvantaged, vulnerable people in our city, and is not harming anyone else? (I don't want to hear anyone call human beings, our fellow Hamiltonians trying to get by in what is for them a nightmare - "an eyesore". That's really distasteful to me, and I trust to all of you too. Our common humanity demands a deeper, more imaginative and compassionate response!)

And what are you as Council and City willing and able to replace these encampments with? At the very least, that should all be properly set up for each person evicted BEFORE dismantling the camps. And if you cannot or will not provide inside accommodation for those threatened with eviction, are you then willing to allow homeless people to join the yellow vester and his tent on the city hall forecourt? If not, then where? I am sure land can be found that would be agreeable to all. The will to do so has to be there, and on such a measure of compassion, our civic representatives and our citizens and city alike will be judged.

I am sure, being compassionate people, that you realize that only permanent homes that are linked to grassroots social supports can ever really “solve” the social ill of homelessness. Affordable housing linked to life supports appropriate to the needs of homeless people, including drug users, has to take priority over luxury condos in our city and it has to happen now!

The people of HAMSMaRT and Keeping Six have done so well to keep these vulnerable people, some of whom have the misfortune to be addicted to drugs, safe and reasonably well during this pandemic. That is because the people they have been serving actually trust them, because they know that these physicians, nurses, midwives, etc. respect them as people and understand that the inequities of our society make it very difficult for everyone to thrive. I fear very much that the City workers who would be dismantling these camps do not share that understanding and true compassion. Homeless people don't need more trauma, and having what is essentially your home dismantled is one of life's most traumatic events. You can stop this from happening!

So, I am asking you, Councillor Pauls, knowing as I do that you always want to help people, to step up and talk with your fellow councillors and the City staff today to halt this wrong headed plan to dismantle these camps. Here's what I wish you to call for and lobby your fellow councillors and City staff on today, as my representative:

I am asking 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

Dismantling homeless encampments will cause harm to encampment residents and this harm is heightened by the current pandemic.

I respectfully urge, implore you even, to act today on these requests! I know you have the human warmth and compassion this needs!

Cordially,

Mary Love
Hamilton Mountain