

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Downtown encampments

**From:** Ani Chenier

**Sent:** July 29, 2020 5:35 PM

**To:** Farr, Jason <[Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca](mailto:Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca)>; [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Downtown encampments

Dear Jason Farr,  
Dear Hamilton City Clerk,

I am contacting you regarding the City's plan to dismantle the homeless encampments that have grown up around Ferguson Street and by the First Ontario Centre.

As a Ward 2 resident (North End), I walk by the First Ontario Centre on a regular basis. These encampments are not supported by adequate infrastructure or services, leaving inhabitants struggling to meet basic needs in a safe and dignified manner. And so I understand why some may wish to see the encampments gone: having to see fellow people struggle with the reality of being unhoused is genuinely distressing!

But the sad truth is that the people living there are choosing to do so because informal encampments are the safest sites and/or the sites most appropriate to their needs at this time.

**Forcibly removing people from their chosen temporary homes will only serve to further endanger, hurt, and isolate them.**

People need and deserve to feel safe where they live: safe from covid infection, safe from violence, safe from drugs/withdrawal. People need and deserve the right to feel fully human, and fully respected, at home (this is sometimes undermined by safety and other measures enacted in shelters). People deserve to live with chosen families, including pets (separation remains a real risk in the hotel rooms the city is temporarily making available to some). People need and deserve to live in places where they have access to services, amenities, and community connections. People need and deserve stable and reliable access to housing.

**The only humane way to close down the encampments is to provide residents with better options, so that they leave willingly.** If we offer encampment residents better housing options (options that are safe, durable, and dignified), the encampments will disappear on their own.

In that spirit, I am writing to urge you to follow the recommendations issued by advocacy groups that include and represent encampment residents (like Keeping Six and HAMSMart). They ask that:

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

Please let me know how you plan to deal with this complex situation.

Thank you,

Ani Chénier