

Pilon, Janet

Subject: We have to be better

From: krista binnington

Sent: November 30, 2020 6:48 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: We have to be better

To the members of City Council

I am joining my fellow Hamiltonian in pleading with you to take the bold and necessary steps to immediately end the criminalization of encampments, and to transfer some of the Hamilton police budget into housing and mental health supports.

Our city and our people are desperate. It has been telling to see the amount of police resources and city funds used over the recent week to patrol people in front of city hall. Being a person without shelter is not a crime, however our city has been treating folks without shelter as criminals. While being unhoused is not a crime, it is criminal to turn our backs on fellow humans and charge them for being unhoused. The disproportion of funds for housing vs policing is startling.

While I understand some of the comments about not wanting to meet with community members without the safety of distancing, I am troubled that the mayor would not meet with the tax-paying community members in public. Social distancing outside IS possible and many would argue even safer. I am concerned that folks who are vulnerable cannot have open dialogue with the mayor and others in public- why is this? As public servants it is necessary to meet the public where they are; that is what your role is.

We must do a better. We have to- I ask that each member of council works to remove their judgments and instead try to be curious about why people are experiencing houselessness. It is so easy to be judgmental when you have the privilege of a warm home, supportive networks, stable employment, and enough income to cover your needs. Our people are suffering and judgment will not fix this; removing encampments will not fix this; ticketing people who are unhoused will not fix this. We need an affordable housing strategy NOW that includes crisis housing response for the many folks who are CURRENTLY unhoused. I plead with you to take leadership in this area and take a stand to support housing- this will be your legacy and I have faith that you can help make a difference for these Hamiltonians.

Thank you so much
Krista Binnington,
Ward 1