

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Shelter services

From: Sandra Smith

Sent: November 26, 2020 10:51 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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Greetings,

I am a tax-paying Hamilton home owner and resident who lives near the rail trail at the Wentworth stairs.

I recently spoke to a paramedic on the trail where I usually walk my dogs. Currently, I avoid the area due to an excess amount of human feces strewn about since there is evidence that feces can transmit the Covid 19 virus. Plus, dogs have a habit of getting into them unfortunately.

The paramedic said that there are about 600 homeless people in & around Hamilton right now. I see tents going up daily east and west of Wentworth. It is unsightly and disgusting that there is no garbage cleanup in these areas that are now providing shelter.

My husband recently encountered a middle aged, homeless woman in bad health who was obviously anxious and stressed about her situation and trying to change in the woods. This level of desperation is not necessary in a rich Province like Ontario.

I asked the paramedic why the City hasn't yet set up porta-potties as people defecate in the woods. She said that they were set up at First Ontario Center to start but deemed too difficult/expensive to keep clean. While I have sympathy for the situation,

the amount of feces and garbage is problematic as many citizens would like to enjoy this recreational area. Also, winter is approaching and people need to be housed indoors to keep this public health crisis at bay. Hamilton has the housing stock and it doesn't make sense that First Ontario Center is not remodeled into a shelter that allows for housing for all homeless in the city with social distancing. It is a huge space that can easily be sectioned off with tarps or plastic.

Also, given that the Hamilton Police Force has a large operating budget surplus, I would like to know if some of this surplus can be diverted to build more shelter space and supportive housing for the homeless population. I am not a "defund the police" advocate. I simply believe that the excess funds should be used to address this issue during this emergency situation. It currently looks like the City of Hamilton is trying to save money in the wrong places. You don't want your tax base to vacate Hamilton now that revenues have been severely impacted by the pandemic. If anything, you want to attract investors and taxpayers to flock to Hamilton. The way the city is responding (actually, by not responding at all), to the issue of homelessness has the opposite effect.

Thank you for taking note.

Sincerely,
Sandra Smith