

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Community Feedback

From: Emily Kulpaka

Sent: December 1, 2020 12:07 PM

To: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca

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Subject: Community Feedback

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I'm sure (or rather, I hope), you're receiving a flood of e-mails right now regarding the week long protest that took place at City Hall.

What I'm not hearing is your engagement. Councillor Nann showed up and made her statement. The rest of you? Councillor Whitehead, I know you came down, and yet said nothing. Councillor Wilson put her name to the poster and yet, silence. Where are you all? Why are you not sharing your community's outrage (on either side of the issue).

The mayor tells us that you don't control bylaw or the police, but it most definitely appears that there is a code of silence around their actions at the very least.

What happened on Monday, was unacceptable. Destroying belongings because someone didn't comply, is atrocious. The number of alternative options that could have occurred were staggering, but the city went for destruction. Your city workers. Your police force. Your bylaw officers. And you stay silent about it.

Many of the street involved or precariously housed folks who spent the week at City hall are folks who require intensive support. If our support systems were adequate, and we had funding, many of them would qualify for 1:1 support in a day program or residential facility, where their needs could be met. They would be on intensive case management, with action plans. But at some point, they fell through the system, and the system is too overburdened and under-resourced to help them. Now, as they started to feel safe and build community networks, our city fractured their support once again.

Don't tell me there's a shelter space for them, or a hotel room. Those are not solutions for the needs of these community members, and that's known to all of us who interact in person with them (and many of them are service restricted anyway!).

For those of you who didn't make it down, let me tell you about the beauty of community support.

People patched wounds that fester from street living, administered naloxone, bandaged self-harm, monitored sugar levels, and got multiple street involved folks to the hospital. On their vacation time. They treated each and every person, as a individual, with their own needs and stories. They listened to who they were as a person, and what they needed to feel safe and well again.

People navigated conflict between participants. They helped folks with mental illness navigate their delusions. They kept note of any unusual behaviour. They consistently ensured masks were being worn, and were clean. They sanitized items and hands.

People sorted donations, kept them dry, helped fit those who needed items and put calls out for specific items that would help quality of life for our community.

People navigated conversations with officials and ensured no one was left alone to navigate situations they felt uncomfortable in.

These people are just like me, and like some of you. They are just community members, who work on having skill sets that benefit others. Who learn and practice restorative justice, de-escalation, and people-centric frameworks. They were not organizers, they simply saw the callout and knew the community needed them, so they showed up.

We show up for our community. Police and bylaw fractured community. You have a chance to show that you're going to show up for the community in real, tangible ways. I urge you to do so.

Don't tell us it's a process, that there are plans. Show us action now. You can do that. We're ready to help.

Stop allowing Hamilton police to run the city. Reduce their budget. Cancel their surplus. Try something new!

Sincerely,

Emily Kulpaka