



January 7, 2021

Hamilton City Council  
 attn: Mayor Fred Eisenberger  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 71 Main Street West  
 Hamilton ON, L8P 4Y5

To Mayor Fred Eisenberger and members of Hamilton City Council:

As the Board of a community choir that draws its members from all corners and strata of the city, we urge council to give highest priority to addressing the desperate need for affordable housing in Hamilton.

We welcome the initiatives that have made the news recently, such as the partnerships with Indwell that are or will be providing affordable accommodation for dozens of people who cannot afford the rapidly increasing housing prices caused by the surge in demand over the last few years.

However, the disturbing reality is that, as you are well aware, there are still about 6,000 individuals or families on the wait list – which translates to a 3-5 year wait.

This is obviously a serious situation for those most directly affected. But it also has a ripple effect that threatens to swamp much of the progress the city has made in the recent past. Also, it seems clear from the city hall demonstrations in December, that current policy and practice is not doing enough – and in fact may be helping to create non-productive confrontation and divisiveness.

We are not experts in public housing; Hamilton Sings! is a non-audition choir that offers adults and youth from across the city the opportunity to experience the enrichment and pure joy of singing together, joy that we spread to hundreds of Hamiltonians at major concerts every year.

Our choristers range from beginners to those with extensive experience. We encourage members to help each other not only learn and grow in musical skill and confidence, but also to better appreciate the strengths of people from all walks of life in our community.

That said, all of our 60+ members are touched in some way by this affordable housing crisis. We therefore request that Council make affordable housing the absolute priority in budgeting and planning. For example, when any request for the use of city resources is made, council should first ask if the money could not be better invested in creative solutions to the affordable housing issue. More than that, we suggest councillors should actively look for funds that can be diverted from existing programs to accelerate the progress that has been made to date.

We further believe that our city has numerous subject matter experts in our academic, professional and business institutions and that council should redouble its efforts to tap into that expertise, as well as the  
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expertise of those with lived experience. Almost every week, there are news report of other jurisdictions implementing creative solutions, yet our planners have been quoted saying that we cannot create affordable solutions for less than \$330,000 a unit. It is unlikely that kind of thinking will appreciably change the current unacceptable reality.

You have an opportunity here to show leadership. Please do not let it pass us by.

Respectfully,

Hamilton Sings! Community Choir Board of Directors

Tibor Bocz, President  
Hanna Bech, Music Co-Director  
Sue Crowe Connolly, Music Co-Director  
Tom Ciancone, Treasurer  
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