

On 2021-11-05 09:25, laura@katz.net wrote:

Hello - can you kindly include my email as official correspondence for the Nov 8 Budget meeting?

My name is Laura Katz and I am a resident in Ward 1. I am calling/pleading/begging you all to take immediate action to ensure all unhoused individuals , including encampment members have the means to survive the winter. I am asking you to allocate any and all necessary funds during this budget deliberation to adopt the below policies in order to stop the displacement and criminalization of encampment residents. Housing is a basic human right.

The housing crisis in Hamilton is so very real. I recently was looking at rental properties with my father, who was recently renovicted, and it was GRIM. We saw multiple units which were totally unsuitable, including a 2 bedroom with a shared kitchen, going for \$2200/month. As of today I believe he has found something: a nice 1 bedroom in a multiple unit dwelling for \$2500/month. Unfortunately compared to what we've seen, this seems rather reasonable. It's not! Not many can afford this. I certainly couldn't.

Winter is coming. Last night I turned off my outdoor water tap so it wouldn't burst. Did you do the same? Let's provide our houseless neighbours with dignity and respect.

This absolutely must be prioritized in the budget.

Policies:

Housing Policy

1. The City of Hamilton must **adopt a compassion and universal houselessness policy** eliminating any waiting periods to access additional supports towards housing.
2. The City of Hamilton must embrace a legal **responsibility to house**.

Accessibility Policies in Shelters

1. Shelters systems are reactive measures to systemic failure of governments to offer housing to all members of the public. Shelter systems are spaces where members of our community are subjected to strict qualification requirements and can even be banned from accessing shelter spaces. Shelter systems, like other systems which seek to criminalize members of the public rather than prioritize alternatives, must be abolished.
2. **Establishment of a Shelter Advisory Committee** of present and past shelter residents advise on improving shelter operations and appropriate housing options. Consultations should include discussions about accessibility, vaccine uptake, and general administration.

3. Pending the access of all to safe, dignified housing, **the City of Hamilton will unilaterally adopt accessibility policies around harm reduction**, including but not limited to:
 1. Policy around **the right to exist in shelter space as you are**, including but not limited to allowing use of drugs in designated shelters
- **Identifying shelters friendly to drug users**
 1. Funding shelters to **permanently hire staff trained in safe consumption**
 2. **Collaborate with shelter residents who use drugs** to determine and help implement what harm reduction policies, programs and practices work best for the residents at the sites where they reside.
 3. Shelter systems are spaces where members of our community are subjected to strict qualification requirements and can even be banned from accessing shelter spaces due to what is often called disruptive behaviour. **The labelling of disability related and mental health related symptoms as disruptive is ableist, and this practice must end.**
 4. **Only two accessible women's shelters exist in Hamilton.** The City of Hamilton must build more.
 1. There is no housing standard through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, though disability activists at the AODA alliance have pushed for this for years. **The City of Hamilton must be in compliance with AODA, but also work beyond AODA to ensure these policies centre accessibility**
 2. The City of Hamilton **will secure accessible temporary housing options specifically for people with disabilities immediately.**
 3. **Keep shelter bed access transparent.** The City of Hamilton must publicize daily Wrap-up Code data (no suitable bed available at time of call) and Service Queue Daily Close-out (no bed provided by 4 AM), information made online for access by all.
 4. **Provincially-funded exceptional relationships with Hamilton Police Services**, such as "reserved" crisis centre beds, and extended stays afforded to only police-referred cases at the expense of general referrals, create a surmountable inequity within the shelter system. They must end.

Expropriation Policy

1. The expropriation of municipal lands for infrastructure should be extended towards the apprehension of infrastructure for affordable housing. The City of Hamilton must advocate for the expropriation of buildings towards housing and supports.
2. The City of Hamilton must develop expropriation strategies that include, but are not limited to:
 1. expropriating buildings owned by landlords with repeated health and safety violations
 2. expropriation of abandoned / vacant buildings
 3. expropriation from landlords with over 1000 units
 4. expropriation of unused lands to protect against speculation and commercial development

Cold Alerts, Inclement Weather and Warming Centres

1. Issue a cold alert / inclement weather alert when Environment Canada forecasts, for the City of Hamilton:
 1. **Cold:** A temperature of -5°C or colder, or a temperature above -5°C with a windchill -10°C or below.
 2. **Freezing rain:** When freezing rain is expected to pose a hazard to transportation or property or when freezing rain is expected for at least two hours.
 3. **Snowfall:** When 15 cm or more of snow falls within 12 hours or less.
 4. **Rainfall in winter:** When 25 mm or more of rain is expected within 24 hours
2. During active inclement weather alerts, require City operated and funded facilities to:
 1. **Drop-in centers accept as many clients as possible** within COVID, Public Health and Toronto Fire Occupancy standards.
 2. **Refrain from refusing walk-in access** to any sector-appropriate shelter, admitting individuals without forcing them to undergo typical intake and eligibility procedures
 3. **Allow clients to access any sector appropriate shelter**, not only assigned shelter for the night
 4. **Staffing.** Fully staff warming and respite centres, including such as:
 1. harm reduction services and supplies
 2. hot meals
 3. wi-fi
 5. **24H respite/warming centres.** Activate at least two 24H warming centres to address overflow and social distancing protocols.
 6. **No shelter bans.** No shelter suspensions or sanctions can be carried out during cold weather alerts. Any clients who have been sanctioned/suspended/banned can return to the shelter during these periods.
 1. The City of Hamilton must make public its shelter ban/suspension procedures and anonymized data around their application.
3. Create an Inclement Weather Staffing Fund and make it available to warming and respite centre operators to place additional staff on shift during inclement weather alerts.

With thanks,

Laura Katz