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From: Matthew Higginson
Sent: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 12:01 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Letter: Dec 8 General Issues Committee

Hello,

Please accept this letter in regards to the hate mitigation report received by Council.

Dear Chair, Members of council, mayor and city staff thank you for giving me a chance to speak up on recent issues that relate directly to the mitigation of hate in our city. And thank you to the contributions of other community members that have spoken on this and other important concerns surrounding encampments in our parks.

Citing recommendation B from the city-wide Hate Prevention, Mitigation and Community Initiatives Action plan:

That staff be directed to engage with local organizations that are culturally-specific and serve equity-seeking groups or groups disadvantaged by discrimination, to determine opportunities for City staff to coordinate and accelerate existing initiatives, in response to the hate prevention and mitigation recommendations;

Every day spent on evictions is a day not spent securing safe and permanent housing. Or securing access and beds without discrimination. Or addressing the upstream preventative supports.

As I have stated before in delegations to you, council can defund the Police and turn their surpluses into housing. The current approach appears to be to fund the policing of how people are living, criminalizing folks rather than funding the support they ask for most.

If it is a question of it being more profitable or comfortable for a few versus providing housing for the many - we must be clear and explicit about those priorities.

But I have to believe we can be more imaginative about what this could look like. In the staff report you have before you it asks you to reach out to groups - and I implore you to include the HCCI and HESN in these efforts

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as part of your commitment to the EDI workplan.

Because with my kids on our way to school drop-off we walk past properties that are sitting empty - a Dairy Queen boarded up for the season, Delta High, empty parking lots - how can we justify this when people are being chased into the woods?

As land sits empty for speculation - we have the technology and the know-how to remediate brownfields and build the things our community needs.

As pointed out by the HESN, we have somewhere around 11,350 homes vacant across the city.

We can shake off the binary thinking of legal versus illegal for a moment - and think compassionately about marginalized folks in tents -

If the laws meant to protect are causing harm we have a duty to rethink them.

But we're adjusting to the destructive system rather than abandoning it.

Because that same energy enforcing bylaws could raise city property into housing and meet the needs of our neighbours.

The HESN has also put out very clear demands - many of which are echoed here today and I encourage you to read them and consider them with respect to the budget.

Let us think in terms of Love for Hamilton - on one of those recent walks my oldest said it finally feels like home.

I want everyone here to feel that way too - Hamilton is for all even if our lifestyles and needs are vastly different.

I am given hope when I see that many of us here today with a roof over our head are sitting in solidarity with folks who have been marginalized - we believe they deserve a home.

To quote from Dakota author and historian Vine Deloria:, "fields purporting to be scientific should devote considerable time to reexamining what they can really prove and what is speculation... There's got to be some discipline and courage."

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Evictions - in the way they are handled and the treatment of those defending our unhoused neighbours are indeed a form of hate. Please explore and do something about this.

Thank you,

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Matthew James William Higginson