

December 7, 2021

City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON
L8P 4Y5

Submission to the General Issues Committee for Meeting on December 8, 2021

I write this letter to express my concern regarding recent events which occurred at Beemer Park on November 24th and at the Central Police station on November 26th. Among my concerns are: the excessive use of force demonstrated by members of the Hamilton Police Service and the manner in which unhoused individuals are forcibly removed from their living spaces, without long-term housing options being made available.

The fact that we have community members living rough in neighbourhoods is perhaps one of our greatest collective failures as a society. It is shared by all levels of government and by all of us who are safely housed. No one wants to live in a tent in the park, yet for many this appears to be the safer and perhaps the only option available to them as there is a gross shortage of long-term affordable housing in our city.

This issue is complex and longstanding and the result of declining government investment over decades. At the same time, the forceable evictions of our unhoused community and the increasing tensions between police, the unhoused and community supporters are further aggravated by municipal policy that has been put in place by this current city council.

The arrests and excessive use of force by members of the Police Service against housing advocates, many of whom were Black, is equally troubling.

These young housing activists have been providing support to people living in encampments for well over a year. They have given freely of their time and their compassion to help meet the needs of those "living rough" in our neighbourhoods. What these individuals experienced at the hands of police is unacceptable and in contradiction to building community relationships and trust. These actions are, in fact, endemic of a policing system that continues to criminalize Black existence and which ultimately sees Blackness as a threat.

I join many others in our community who are calling on Chief Bergen to:

1. Drop the charges against the six persons charged as a result of these events
2. Call for a judicial inquiry into the events which took place at Beemer Park and Central Police Station on November 24th and 26th, respectively.

I call on Hamilton City Council to:

3. Put an end to forcible evictions of our unhoused community members and prioritize long term housing solutions for the most vulnerable

Sincerely,



Kim Martin