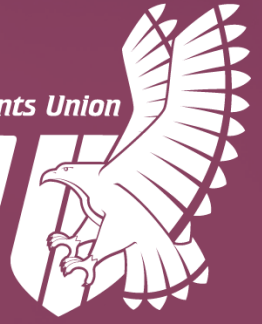


McMaster Students Union

**MSU**



# MUNICIPAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2022

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THE McMASTER STUDENTS UNION

LIVING AND  
LEARNING

# RENTAL LICENSING AND ZONING

**Recommendation:**

The City of Hamilton should proceed with the Rental Licensing Pilot in Wards 1, 8, and parts of 14.

After McMaster Students Union representatives delegated to the City of Hamilton's Planning Committee with ACORN Hamilton and a number of other community members in August of 2021, the committee passed a motion to go forward with a licensing pilot for rentals in Wards 1, 8, and parts of 14. These areas each have substantial student populations and high-density rental units that have been flagged for being unsafe and in ill-repair. It's critical that the City of Hamilton move forward with the pilot as landlords must be held accountable for maintaining rental units to safety codes. The operating budget estimate of \$2 million over the two years allocated for the pilot will directly impact the lives of McMaster University's nearly 30,000 undergraduate students, most of whom live in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus.

The need for a change has been demonstrated numerous times in the past few years as people from vulnerable backgrounds have fallen prey to predatory leasing practices. Most alarmingly, the number of students who have been exposed to dangerous living situations is unacceptable with 12-bedroom houses without fire or safety inspections advertised to international students and those with limited finances. In 2016, a fire at an unlicensed lodging house killed three people after inspectors were unable to investigate due to a lack of resources for city staff to ensure responsible and accurate zoning and licensing.<sup>1</sup> In Windsor, Ontario, the municipality is drafting a bylaw to enact a rental licensing pilot in the wards surrounding the University of Windsor and

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/burned-rooming-home-would-have-been-inspected-yearly-if-licensed-1.3792676>

St. Clair College, due to similar problems with the "deplorable condition" of rental housing.<sup>2</sup> As highlighted during the August 2021 delegation for the City of Hamilton's Planning Committee, there is a need for landlords to be held accountable for complying with City bylaws and safety measures, but also a need for data to determine whether the rental licensing is effective in Hamilton.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/windsor-pilots-rental-license-ward-1-2-1.59411193>

# TRANSIT

**Recommendation:**

The City of Hamilton should commit to retiring the Area Rating system so all residents pay equally into the HSR.

In 2008, the City of Hamilton staff presented the Area Rating Policy Update and Area Rating Options (city-wide) to the City Council with the recommendation to remove the HSR’s area rating system. As of 2021, Hamilton is one of the only municipalities to maintain an area rating system which has garnered negative feedback and hindered transit development across the region. With the recent adoption of the Hamilton Light Rail Transit, there is no better time to phase out the area rating system for Hamilton transit. The Hamilton public transit system is an essential service to everyone in the city, including McMaster University students. However, the area rating system has continued to stunt the HSR’s growth and serve as a barrier to residents. Currently residents pay based on the following scale:

Area	Rate
Stoney Creek – Urban	0.029%
Stoney Creek - Urban with Rural Fire	0.029%
Glanbrook - Urban	0.039%
Glanbrook - Urban with Rural Fire	0.039%
Ancaster - Urban	0.032%
Ancaster - Urban with Rural Fire	0.032%
Hamilton - Urban	0.102%
Dundas - Urban	0.028%
Flamborough - Urban	0.025%

**Recommendation:**

The City of Hamilton should ensure timely and consistent connections between the McMaster University campus and HSR routes through the LRT and buses.

After years of supporting Hamilton’s LRT project, the MSU is committed to standing behind the development of more efficient and cost-effective transit within and beyond the city of Hamilton. That said, McMaster University students provide a significant portion of the HSR’s budget with each student currently paying a mandatory fee of \$233.94 for an HSR bus pass. With close to 30,000 McMaster students holding a pass, the HSR must be held accountable for providing reliable and effective service. In the fall of 2021, the HSR cancelled trips along the 51 route due to COVID-19 vaccination staffing shortages without warning or consultation with McMaster students.<sup>3</sup> The global pandemic has provided challenges for everyone, and students have undoubtedly felt these struggles, however every effort must be made by the City of Hamilton to provide essential services like transit. The City of Hamilton should review the HSR’s practices to ensure students and those with limited means are supported and informed during unprecedented times, especially as the LRT progresses and students begin to live and commute from communities farther from the McMaster University campus.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2021/11/04/covid-vaccine-mandate-go-bus-hsr-route-cancellation.html>

# CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

## Recommendation:

The City of Hamilton should guarantee funding for the Hamilton Bike Share Inc. to promote healthy lifestyles, accessible transportation, and community initiatives.

As of 2020, the Hamilton Bike Share Inc (Sobi), has 900 bicycles used by 26,000 visitors and residents annually. In addition, the bike share system facilitated 13 million kilometers traveled, as well as a savings of over \$1 million in gasoline burned, and therefore close to 1 million kilograms of carbon reduced.<sup>4</sup> Despite the clear health and environmental benefits of the shared bicycle program, Hamilton's Council decided not to provide funding for the bike share after Uber Inc terminated its contract with the City.<sup>5</sup> Although the bikes are used predominantly in Wards 1, 2, and 3, with Councillors Wilson, Farr, and Nann advocating for the collective benefits of the program, the bike share program was ultimately saved by the community. Funding provided by Cogeco and the Downtown Hamilton BIA, along with donations from the Patrick J. McNally Charitable Foundation, LiUna, and just under 900 other individuals and organizations allowed the program to continue providing a safe and accessible method of transportation across Hamilton.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hamilton.ca/streets-transportation/biking-cyclists/hamilton-bike-share>

<sup>5</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/6996333/hamilton-sobi-bike-share-funding-denied/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://hamilton.socialbicycles.com/>

# LIGHTING

## Recommendation:

The City of Hamilton should conduct a review of lighting in neighborhoods around McMaster University and prioritize improving effective lighting.

In the McMaster Students Union 2021 *Your City Survey*, 55% of students surveyed said that feeling safe in their neighborhood was the most important factor in finding a rental unit in Hamilton. As part of this survey, students elaborated their concerns with Hamilton's neighborhoods saying "Hamilton isn't the safest city so it's important to me that I feel safe on my street" and the need to be " ... able to walk home and feel safe, especially at night".<sup>7</sup> In the McMaster Students Union's 2020 *Lighting Survey* students were asked how important street lighting was in neighborhoods around campus with 94% responding with "extremely important" or "quite important" in regard to their feelings of safety. In particular, students living in the Ainslie Wood North and Ainslie Wood East neighborhoods noted that lighting was particularly poor.<sup>8</sup> The areas that were flagged as particularly concerning were **Glenmount Avenue, Sanders Boulevard, Broadway Avenue, Hollywood Street North and South, and Whitney Avenue.**

<sup>7</sup> McMaster Students Union, *Your City Survey*, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> McMaster Students Union, *Lighting Survey*, 2020.



The need for improved lighting in the neighborhoods surrounding McMaster University has been ongoing since 2018 when the McMaster Students Union engaged with the City of Hamilton's Senior Project Manager for Street Lighting and Electrical. The subsequent improvement in lighting on Thorndale Avenue, Leland Street, Bowman Street, Stroud Avenue, and Cline Avenue allowed McMaster students residing in the area, as well as community members, to feel more secure. Although the areas where lighting is being requested in generally safe, there have still been a number of serious crimes reported in the neighborhoods that surround McMaster University. In October of 2020, there was a fatal stabbing near Main Street West and Haddon Avenue South. That incident was after another altercation which resulted in two stabbings in September of 2019. Also, there were a series of break-ins in the Westdale area in Fall 2019.<sup>9</sup> With better lighting, McMaster students will not only feel safer, but communities will feel more protected.

<sup>9</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7373548/hamilton-homicide-westdale/>

# SNOW CLEARING

**Recommendation:**  
The City of Hamilton should fund snow clearing services across the entire city.

In 2021, the City of Hamilton passed a motion to expand their snow clearing service to sidewalks on transit routes after decades of staff reports on snow clearing. Despite the progress being made to improve Hamilton's accessibility, snow clearing in Ward 1 neighborhoods remains underfunded. McMaster University students come from intersectional backgrounds with a varying needs and resources to support not only their academic pursuits, but also their ability to engage with local communities and organizations. Without snow clearing services, many students are limited in their ability to access critical services. As noted in the City of Hamilton's *Sidewalk Snow Clearing (PW19022(d)) (City Wide)*, the tax impact to cover the addition 469km along Priority 1 and 2A roadways for a total of 866km was estimated to be \$4 in 2022 and \$6 in 2023 for residents. Currently, Ancaster already receives snow clearing services however it is not limited to transit routes.<sup>10</sup>

In the McMaster Students Union 2021 *Your City Survey*, students were asked to rank how strongly they felt about increased snow removal by the City of Hamilton with 10 being very strong and 1 being impartial. The average answer among surveyed students was 7.98 with 'accessibility' flagged as a major cause of dissatisfaction and ten respondents noted they had received a by-law violation for snow and ice clearance.

<sup>10</sup> <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=295084>

# RACIAL EQUITY

**Recommendation:**

The City of Hamilton should continue to support and invest in the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre.

Systemic racism and barriers experienced by underrepresented communities have been particularly prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic, as equity-deserving groups continue to be excluded from conversations and community initiatives. In 2018, the City of Hamilton, McMaster University, and the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion launched the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre (HARRC) in response to the growing demand within the region for increased resources and supports.<sup>11</sup> The need for this centre rose from the lived experiences of Hamiltonians, where 79% of people have personally experienced or witnessed racism.<sup>12</sup> As McMaster students come from diverse backgrounds both across Canada and the world, the need for resources in all communities remains a priority. With the federal government introducing Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy in 2019 and Ontario presenting the Ontario Anti-Racism Strategic Plan in 2017, the City of Hamilton should continue to make active efforts to support Black, Indigenous, and people of colour.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> City of Hamilton, "Anti-Racism Resource Centre", City of Hamilton, 2021-8-23, Anti-Racism Resource Centre | City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2019-12-05/harrc\\_survey\\_summary\\_report\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2019-12-05/harrc_survey_summary_report_for_web.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022 - Canada.ca, Ontario's anti-racism strategic plan | ontario.ca

The McMaster University population is known for its diversity and the large variety of clubs, services, and offices that are devoted to support people from all communities. However, McMaster students, faculty, and community members are also valued members of the greater Hamilton community and deserve to feel supported regardless of whether the supports are offered on or off campus.

# POLICING

## Recommendation:

The City of Hamilton should review the Hamilton Police Services budget and reallocate funds to social services, community initiatives, and incentives for learning and education.

In the past decade, there has been a shift in public perspectives around policing and community-based safety initiatives. As of 2020, the Hamilton Police Services' budget was over \$170 million after a 3.87% increase from 2019 and made up approximately 18% of the City's municipal levy on taxpayers.<sup>14</sup> Compared to the \$582 allocated to education, \$129 for the Library system, and \$385 for Fire Services, the Hamilton Police Service receives \$648 from the \$3,689 of municipal tax charged to the average residence.<sup>15</sup> In 2021, the Hamilton Police Service reported a \$2.1 million surplus from 2020 and yet Hamilton Police Service chief, Eric Girt, argued reducing the budget would negatively impact public safety.<sup>16</sup>

McMaster University students have made it clear that police presence does not instill comfort or feelings of safety, especially given the Hamilton Police Services reputation for aggressive methodology. Though crystallized following the murder of George Floyd and the wide scale coverage of the

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/2020/07/02/hamilton-police-budget-by-the-numbers.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.hamilton.ca/budget-finance/city-budgets/2020-tax-and-rate-budgets>

<sup>16</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7355196/hamilton-police-budget/>

Black Lives Matter movement, McMaster University students have long called for the dismissal of McMaster University's Director of Parking and Security Services, Glenn De Caire, the former chief of the Hamilton Police Service.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, in January of 2021 the McMaster Students Union passed a motion calling on McMaster University to remove the former chief of police as Director, to phase out Special Constables, and to end working relationships with the Hamilton Police Service and Halton Police Service.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/7073242/mcmaster-students-union-petition-glenn-de-caire/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://msumcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2021/01/Motion-Security-Services-Stance.docx>



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