

David Simon



April 21, 2022

Councillor Farr,

I was disappointed to read in the Spectator, a few weeks back, that out of the array of tools available in the toolbox that the City of Hamilton has we chose, under your leadership, to punish certain citizens who find themselves unable to cope with circumstances and are at a low, this instead of helping them with a solution.

I was raised not to kick someone when they were down. Also, that our character is shown with how we treat those around us, especially those struggling or unable to cope.

Having lived for 50 of my 60 years in the City of Hamilton, I must say I really love the city. It's a city of grit and determination, a city of innovation and of tradition, a city of great beauty and amazing talent, and is the industrial heartbeat of the region. But when we remove compassion for our fellow neighbour from that mix, the city loses some of that greatness.

It is completely understandable that people in any neighbourhood would not want a tent city in their local park. Most likely you would not, and neither would I. However, just fining, arresting, or moving them out and away doesn't solve their or the City's problem.

I have two ways of thinking, first, we don't have problems, we only have opportunities for solutions, and as Einstein put it, we can't solve a problem with the same thinking that got us into it in the first place.

For many years now my church has had an outreach program, called the community around the table or CAT for short. Like so many other churches, our CAT program seeks to give each person a meal, some community maybe with a touch of counselling, clothing if we have it, and hope. What you quickly realize is that each person is different in their situation and for the reason coming to your door. It's not just us and them, as the city's website so aptly points out.

Without all the community organizations including churches like ours helping individuals in the city, the City of Hamilton itself would have a massive problem.

My church has seen the number of people more than double during the pandemic that are coming to our door for help. And I might add that our church didn't just hire security to shoo them away, we opened our doors and helped. Think about that.

I feel it would be unfair of me just to write you a letter of my disappointment, without giving some suggestions of how to resolve this multifaceted problem. Some of these ideas are admittedly crazy, but who knows it might spark something smart for someone else. Would it not be wonderful, if the City of Hamilton would solve a problem that so many cities deal with in the world? Becoming a leader rather than a me-too city?

1. Create a Council with all the charitable players and non-profits working together to solve a problem in harmony with the City. Include all groups large and small.
2. I don't think the City knows exactly how many people are in jeopardy, that struggle on a day-to-day basis and maybe are the ones living in a tent in a park near you. Somehow, we need to identify the individuals and then we can identify the issues. Maybe it is as simple as identifying each person with a card maybe even using an existing card like a health card. Or create a 'Hamilton Helps' photo ID card. Maybe this card could be used at a shelter or food bank or on the bus or at a church for a meal. It can be used as the new Council and City would suggest and direct.
3. Here is crazy number one. I believe that Confederation Park has a campground, that has been abandoned quite some time ago. I can imagine that the electricity out there probably still works. Could it be an idea to create a tent city campground for all these tents that are found in the city? As we all know there is pride in a community, and maybe that community could be developed there. This community would be safer than living in a tent in a park, or in someone's backyard, in an alley, abandoned lot, or wherever a tent can be pitched.
4. Approach the federal government and the Department of Defense for help with building a city of tents. After all they have experience regardless of weather to keep their people warm, clean, fed, healthy, disciplined, and entertained. The tents from the federal government would be of superior quality to whatever an individual would come up with.
5. I might add that the Spectator also ran an article that highlighted the Anglican Cathedral on James Street in its effort to create these mini homes. This is not the correct term, but it is the correct thought. These homes had a bed, fridge and a microwave. They are dry and warm and looked safe and secure and only needed a place to put them, that offered electricity and washrooms and wash facilities. There are also organizations that make these type of homes, mini homes, out of shipping containers. Outside kind of bleak, but inside a nice little home. Both of these could be placed on Confederation Park Campground. Or any other suitable location.
6. In this new community, a health unit could be placed there for both physical and mental health. I would guess that a lot of these people are on either Ontario Works or ODSP, and coverage for this is included. At the same time all the organizations that supply food in the inner city could be given an opportunity to work in this new community.
7. A prime goal for much of this is to increase quality of life for our neighbours, those citizens who need our help. A place to put their head down and call home.
8. As we all realize much of our problems comes because of the lack of money. The cost of living as it rises has way outstripped the zero increases from Ontario support. This is something the municipality must work on. To create affordable housing as a city or municipality is called for, but the Ontario government cannot offer such a minimal rate to individuals that they cannot pay housing costs. ODSP housing payment is \$472 a month for a single person. The days of \$472 apartments are long gone. Seriously folks, this is a big issue and a silent one because of those who are involved.

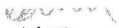
As you can see by the top of this letter I do not currently live in the City of Hamilton, I did however grow up living on King Street between Locke and Pearl, and then moving to Carlisle. When I became disabled, I decided to move into an apartment, and chose where I live in Aldershot. I was a businessman for 40 years until becoming disabled which forced me to close my business also located here in Burlington. My parents owned an auto parts business located on King Street in Hamilton for many many years.

I have been a member of First-Pilgrim United Church on Main Street East in Hamilton for more than 50 years. I also am a member of the Germania Club of Hamilton which is 158-year-old German Canadian service club located in the King Street near Sherman in Hamilton.

I am proud to have twice received a tourism award from the city of Hamilton and represented the city of Hamilton as an ambassador when visiting the city of Essen Germany presenting the Lord Mayor with a gift, Hamilton City flag and official greetings from our then Mayor Robert Morrow.

I may live in Burlington, but when I look out my windows or I sit on my balcony all I see is Hamilton.

Respectfully,

  
David Simon

cc Mayor Eisenberger  
cc Maureen Wilson  
cc Nrinder Nann  
cc Sam Merulla  
cc Russ Powers  
cc Tom Jackson  
cc Esther Pauls  
cc John-Paul Danko  
cc Brad Clark  
cc Maria Pearson  
cc Brenda Johnson  
cc Lloyd Ferguson  
cc Arlene Vanderbeek  
cc Terry Whitehead  
cc Judi Partridge  
cc Rev Jane Wyllie