



March 29, 2022

City Hall
71 Main St. W.
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
L8P 4Y5

Open letter to Hamilton City Council

Re: Enhanced Parks By-law - Encampment Enforcement

It's been two years that the Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team has been engaging in sometimes highly public conversations, debates and even litigation about encampments in this city. Really, we and many other encampment residents and advocates have made the best case we can for not displacing people with nowhere else to go. But we have not convinced you in the majority. And so, over two years into a pandemic that has exacerbated a housing calamity that runs much deeper than the 600 or so people staying in shelters and living outside, who are the subject of this discussion in council chambers, **we aim to appeal here only to your democratic sensibilities as governors.**

On January 13, 2022 a motion on a **Comprehensive, Human-rights Based, Health-focused Housing Solutions for Residents Living Encamped across Hamilton** was tabled by Councilor Nann and **unanimously passed** by the Emergency and Community Services committee. The motion directed City staff:

to host solution-focused planning session(s) made up of representatives from the health sector, housing service providers, organizations that provide frontline support to the unhoused, people with lived experiences of being unhoused and living in encampments, and other community stakeholders be convened to identify comprehensive, human-rights based, health-focused housing solutions to directly address the needs of those 80 to 140 unhoused residents living encamped in Hamilton.

Before that table was even convened, Ward 2 Councilor Farr, who supported Councilor Nann's motion, brought a motion which can only be described as undermining the above, to the Planning Committee, where it passed 4-2. This resulted in the Enhanced Parks By-law coming

before council on March 30, 2022. We are not experts in governance, but **would appreciate understanding if and how circumventing one motion with a second at another committee is consistent with good governance practice.** As non-experts we certainly can assess that it is not within the spirit of it.

Regardless of your position on encampments or people experiencing homelessness, we hope you will consider that, **on this principle of democratic process alone, there is reason to reject this motion.** Your constituents and the electorate deserve accountability on this question of process and the precedent it sets. **We hope that this and the way that this motion undermines council's stated commitment to engage people deprived of housing and those doing the work on the ground in real solutions constitute part of the debate around the motion Wednesday.** That is to say, we hope that those considering voting in favour of it can respond to why they support the circumventing of democratic process.

Sincerely,

The Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team
CC: Office of the City Clerk