

To City Staff and Council

**Please accept this letter as a formal appeal to the vote on this item Friday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Please table the vote regarding Encampment Protocols and HATS project and follow the protocols that are in place to serve your citizens.**

*To Councilors Francis, Jackson, Pauls, Clark, Beattie and Spadafora*

I thank you on behalf of the citizens of Hamilton for voting against the Encampment Protocol and HATS project.

*To Mayor Horvath and Councilors Krotch, Maureen Wilson, Nann, Hwang, Danko, Tadeson, Alex Wilson, Cassar and McMeekin*

Firstly, I would like to point out that someone who live across the street from the Strachan St Linear Park was left off the agenda for Mondays meeting, despite submitting his request on time. I wouldn't doubt that it was intentional as he is the president of the North End Neighbors Association. In the off chance it was a clerical error, I believe council and staff need to hear from him as he represents our neighborhood interests. He should have the opportunity to speak before you ratify, otherwise it is just a suspicious coincidence.

Secondly, I implore you to reconsider your vote for the encampment protocol and HATS project and site. I am writing to you as a concerned, life long north end resident and mom of 4. I have never felt unsafe in my neighbourhood, I have never questioned my decision to raise my children here, until recent years, coinciding with the encampments that have grown in the north end. Knowing my background may help to see where I am coming from. I grew up impoverished in the Jamesville Survey. My sister died from addiction 11 years ago. I have an uncle who was chosen homeless in Toronto and who died an early death just two weeks ago, years of homelessness taking its toll. I can and do empathize with their plight, yet I can also disagree with your protocol and the approach of a tiny shed village and its horrible location you have chosen. I refuse to call it a home because a home has a bathroom and kitchen and running water and room to store belongings without being an eyesore.

**I disagree with the idea of the tiny shed community and the associated costs.** The 2 million dollars can help a lot more people by having rent directly paid to landlords. The additional security costs of 1.5 million can help an even larger number of people, with more **DIGNITY**. What is the exit strategy if this doesn't work? Where will they go? Who will continue to fund this after the 2 years and the ensuing growth? I also do not feel that anything that requires 24 hour security belongs in a residential neighbourhood. My son is scared to use the Strachan St Linear Park. There has been marked decrease in use since the spring/summer began. I have witnessed people openly boiling drugs on a spoon, someone doing CPR on another, someone giving someone a blowjob, someone pooping in the bushes, all in one week-I actively avoid the area myself now and I live around the corner. Security also at the bathroom/shower facilities also? This does not make children and families feel safe as you might think. It makes them think wow what is going on in there that there needs to be a security guard? Also I thought tax

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payer money wasn't to be used for the HATS project. If you are providing money from the budget for security for the HATS site, that seems to be a lie. If there was no HATS, you wouldn't need that money for the site. I want to know your plans to mitigate every criteria HATS prefers/would like that is not present and that the homeless deserve.

**Cameron Kroetsch**, in January you tweeted that you were aiming to “address the conditions within encampments and provide access to basic services such as clean water and sanitation facilities, electricity and heat.” Your support of this site is not in keeping with what HATS envisioned or what you tweeted. You were also quoted in this past Mondays meeting saying “we just need to pick a spot”. To be honest you came across as an impatient child who wants what he wants and when he wants it, it was a little tantrum like.” It was like watching a kid throw a tantrum over a pair of shoes because he wants them so badly even though they don't fit.

**Councillor Wilson**, in Jan 2023, you were quoted in the SPEC saying that the city cannot endorse a project site, without first consulting area residents, “we have an obligation to do so” also echoing several councillors at the meeting. What has changed. No one knocked on our doors, no one called us, no one put a flyer in my mailbox and your timing is strategic no doubt, 3 of the direct residents across the street from this project are actually away on vacation and cannot even have a voice.

**Council**, how disappointing you just tried to pick a site without any feedback. I understand a couple of months ago you committed to public engagement regarding the HATS site. The last site didn't go over well due to lack of engagement from the community directly affected. What makes you think our feedback is not that important. It is futile if you do it after the fact. North Enders are understanding and have helped out considerably to the plight of the marginalized such as Indwell and Covid recovery Center. This was all done with public feedback/engagement. Converting our park space into a homeless shelter/encampment is significant, should we not be made aware as a community? Councillor Kroetsch, did you not seek extra tax paying dollars for this exact purpose-public engagement?

I have other concerns as well. I understand that there has been recent confirmation (Wednesday August 16<sup>th</sup> 2023) of planning justification via use of an extremely rare section of bylaw 05-200, specifically section 4.4. which speaks to the ability to allow for Public Uses Permitted in all zones with no exceptions. The above planning justification excludes the community from participating in any further project proposals from HATS on this site that may include auxiliary buildings and other ancillary uses. By use of this rare clause staff have confirmed that this is not a HATS project but rather a City of Hamilton initiative with HATS being a provider of the service, otherwise the clause is not usable in this instance.

This is also concerning as opposed to most other planning initiatives throughout the city, due to this “notwithstanding” clause being utilized the following does not apply:

- Zoning definition (P4)
- Adequate serving of the zoning bylaw does not apply
- Parking requirements do not apply
- Permitted Uses List for a P4 zone does not apply

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This has been confirmed from email from Director of Planning – Steve Robichaud who states that the use of this rarely utilized clause is merely a workaround to prevent a zoning change that would spark official public consultation.

Please accept this letter as a formal appeal to the vote on this item today, please table the vote and follow the protocols that are in place.

**Regarding encampments in Park Spaces overall**, you talk about lived experiences. We who live close to any encampment in our recreational spaces also have lived experiences that you ignore. Just because we have a roof over our heads and jobs, it does not mean our experiences do not matter. You have catered to a small number of people to the detriment of your entire wards and communities. ***They do not belong in parks as residents who pay taxes can no longer safely enjoy them.*** **No, one should have to witness public nudity, sex acts, OPEN DRUG USE, especially children.** Unless you live by an encampment or would welcome one into your street, I don't think you have the right to tell us what we should have to endure.

I would like to know if you considered the following spaces for encampments and HATS projects and why they are not suitable. They fit as many if not more criteria than Strachan ST and have lower impact on residents

- 1) Barton and Tiffany Lands
- 2) York BLVD across from the Cemetary (also P4, partially fenced, larger area, shade, accessible)
- 3) St Joseph's hospital W5 lands
- 4) Down by the waterfront where there is lots of room to spare
- 5) Develop your sidewalks for the scout house location
- 6) SJAM site

I do purport that you are holding onto some of these larger lands to bring in developer bucks, but perhaps you need to rethink and use these as a more suitable place to house people.

Sincerely and Concerned with the state of the encampments and your protocols,

Kelly Oucharek and family

Hello

I am writing to you as a concerned, life long, north end resident and mom of 4. I have never felt unsafe in my neighbourhood, I have never questioned my decision to raise my children here, until recent years, coinciding with the encampments that have grown in the north end.

I also live quite close to the newly proposed village of 25 tiny sheds that is planned to be erected on Strachan St N, between James and Hughson. This is a mere 110m from Bennetto School (just 10m over the proposed acceptable distance) and 450m from St. Lawrence School. I will attach the proposals here for ease, but note the tiny sheds is to be a 2 yr pilot, with no bathroom/kitchen facilities onsite. They are expected to use "existing recreation and City Parks facilities". The tiny shed location only meets 2/8 "preferred" criteria and 2/7 "would be nice" criteria.

It is important to note, these bathroom facilities require and will have 24 hr security as will the tiny shed community. Walking by the rec center and tiny shed community that requires 24 hr security does not give a feeling of safety. In fact, it does the opposite. It makes one question the safety of the tiny shed community and recreation center, which is a place kids often go to escape already harsh realities. It gives an unsettled feeling.

I know many of your students and families walk back and forth to school over the bridge, it is unavoidable. There is no way for them to avoid the horrible visuals the City of Hamilton and our Ward 2 Councillor Cameron Kroetsch decided is acceptable. I am thinking of the tender aged students who walk back and forth to the LAFF program at Welcome Inn, to the after-school program at Bennetto Recreation Center and to the Jamesville daycare.

This is where I feel you, as educators and leaders in our community, have a distinct ability, and duty, to advocate for the students and families who attend your schools. You are well aware of the odds stacked against some of our more vulnerable students. You know the damage that can be done to young minds in their formative years, from being exposed to homelessness; individuals participating in open drug use and sex acts; to public urination and defecation. A lot of children in our community are already facing a unique set of challenges that other neighborhoods may not. Normalizing the above list of behaviours will do irreparable damage.

Further to the tiny shed community, the encampment policy has not changed and the encampments can continue to exist just over 100m of our parks and schools. This is acceptable to our City Council and Ward 2 Councillor. Our students and families will continue to walk by these encampments as they travel to and from schools.

I ask that you promptly speak up in writing, within your school boards to your trustees, to your superintendents, to our Ward 2 Councillor and use any tools at your disposal to

advocate for your students. Time is of the essence as Council will be acting on these matters in the coming days.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Kelly Oucharek