

Pilon, Janet

Subject: VUT- Empire Building or Tax Grab

From: Robert Bean

Sent: February 6, 2024 11:48 AM

To: Office of Ward 3 City Councillor Nrinder Nann <ward3@hamilton.ca>; Ward 4 <ward4@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Fwd: VUT- Empire Building or Tax Grab

Please see my thoughts below.

Bob Bean

Begin forwarded message:

From: Robert Bean

Date: January 30, 2024 at 4:29:32 PM EST

To: Hamilton Spectator <opinions@thespec.com>, Toronto Sun <torsun.editor@sunmedia.ca>, Toronto Star <lettertoed@thestar.ca>, mayor@hamilton.ca, brad.clark@hamilton.ca, Jeff Beattie <jeff.beattie@hamilton.ca>, Esther Pauls <esther.pauls@hamilton.ca>, Ted Mcmeekin <ted.mcmeekin@hamilton.ca>, Esther Pauls <esther.pauls@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Re: VUT- Empire Building or Tax Grab

Kudos to the Hamilton City Councillors who voted against this undemocratic idea. The remainder need to give their heads a shake or get them out of the sand.

Out of a survey of 5000 households 3860 responded, with 3590 agreeing to the VUT idea. The City touts that as 91% approval. Well, according to the City there are about 177,000 households in question, so very far from a majority. So, 3590 people are going to dictate what the other 173,000 will have to do. And have to do this every year. That's not democracy.

As a home owner and tax payer the City should not be able to dictate what we do with our property, providing it's not of a criminal nature. We shouldn't have to prove we live in our house. The onus should be on the City to prove we don't. They've already estimated how many are empty. Land Registration Documents indicate the names of the homeowners in question. Residential Water Bills would indicate longtime non-usage at empty houses. No need to require that all homeowners have to mandatorily declare occupancy status. This an edict one might expect coming out of China or Russia.

Of the reported 1135 empty houses in the city about 500 are City owned, which are sitting empty due to needed repairs to be liveable. The VUT will also apply to them at tax payers expense. Why aren't the pro-VUT Councillors, or any of them for that matter, putting that issue into the housing shortage. A councillor recently stated that "every unit counts" and "we're trying to get presently vacant units in the market..." Why not sell the City owned homes to generate legislated geared-to-income housing.

The City's website previously reported that 60 part-time-equivalent positions would be required to administer this proposed tax. Issuing 177,000 letters every year, evaluating the responses, verify the accuracy, revising taxes to suit, formally advising those affected, and dealing with administrative errors. Is this why their individual office budgets went up by \$60,000, at a time when they need to be looking at cost reduction. Empire building?

A 1% tax increase on an assessed value of \$380,000 is \$380. Do they really think that amount will cause many of the 1135 empty-house owners to sell their property? Estimated revenue in the first year is reported to be around \$3.8 million. Tax grab?

Have the VUT proponents even bothered to investigate how successful Vancouver has been with their program before trying to venture down this quagmire?

Bob Bean