

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Letter to Council re: 2024 budget

From: Joshua Weresch
Sent: November 20, 2023 3:41 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
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Dear Clerk,

Hope this finds you well.

Below, please find a letter to Council regarding the 2023-4 rate-supported and tax-operating budgets. Thank you for your time and attention in these regards.

Kindly,

Joshua Weresch

To the mayor and councilors of Hamilton, Ontario:

Hope this finds you well. I write as a life-long resident in Hamilton, regarding the budgets to be considered and passed later this and early next year. I am encouraged to read of Council's endorsed priorities between last year and 2026, priorities for sustainable economic and ecological development, safe and thriving neighbourhoods, and responsiveness and transparency (see <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/council-committee/2022-2026-council-priorities-outcomes-measures-success>).

An outcome for sustainable economic development is the reduction of the burden on residential taxpayers and as a resident in the city it is a reduction I am hopeful to see reflected on property tax bills. While the reduction of storm-water fees for residences whose storm-water foot-print is reduced by the use of rain barrels and de-paving and the use of permeable surfaces is one I hope to see reflected in the budget, as well as an equalization of the tax burden between other sectors be they institutional or commercial, and an end to the subsidy of single-family dwellings by multi-residential units whose taxes are almost three times as high, I am most deeply concerned with the percentage of each tax dollar that is directed toward policing services. It is the largest budget item in the 2023 budget, \$717 of \$4784 dollars, \$0.14 of every tax dollar. The other outcomes in sustainable development can handily be addressed as more money is diverted from policing services toward an accelerated response to climate change, further investments in public transit and a reduction in GHG emissions by lowering the use of private transit, the protection of green spaces and waterways by planting more trees, and the growth of key sectors in the city by enhancing the city's reputation as it lurches toward flourishing.

Safe and thriving neighbourhoods can also be garnered by the immediate expropriation of any and all available housing for people in need on a temporary, emergency basis. Under the province's Expropriations Act s. 5(1)(a), the council of the municipality is legally authorized to expropriate land for municipal purposes and I can think of no better way to increase supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness, short of petitioning the province to increase welfare and disability-support payment rates and to tie further increases to the cost of living in a given municipality. The safe and

efficient movement of people can again be had by a continued investment in public transit and the re-direction of 90% of the provincial gasoline tax revenue into public transit and not into road maintenance, roads which are already \$100,000,000 behind in repairs. Increasing public transit supports will lead inexorably to the support, growth, and use of public space.

Responsiveness and transparency can be helped by the clear, safe, and dignified organization of city-run town halls. As the recent town halls on the tiny shelters have demonstrated, it remains important for the city's staff and councillors to talk with and to neighbours about placement and care for all neighbours. Establishing a network of neighbourhood associations which can meaningfully engage both with neighbours and with councillors, sharing information openly and democratically so that those who are most impacted by decisions have the most say over how those decisions happen are ways that such transparency can be had. As trust improves in institutions, as councillors are shown to be reflective of all residents' concerns in a ward, this priority, too, can be met.

I hope that the budget passed by Council with community input, direction, and over-sight is a budget that reflects the lived experiences and concerns of many residents in the city, particularly those who are poorest and have the most deeply-felt and lived concerns of all.

Respectfully,

Joshua Weresch