

Dear Mayor Horwath and members of City Council,

My name is James Kemp and I would like to speak to you regarding Extreme Heat and the Response Plan BOH 24010 put before you as it affects people with disabilities. I apologize for not speaking before the Public Health Committee, but the agenda item was added too late for me to delegate.

I would like to take a moment and state that less than forty-eight hours to put in a delegation request is not adequate response time. We are supposed to have five days to review and respond, not less than two days and a weekend.

I came before Public Health last year and raised concerns that not enough was being done regarding people with disabilities during heat events and I must still raise that concern with you today. I have been a member of the Extreme Heat Working Group over the past year and have worked to raise our concerns in the creation of this document. We are more vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat than more able or healthier individuals and this has to be understood.

Over the past year, I have tried to add DARTS to the emergency response, as you cannot plan a week in advance of a heat emergency. There needs to be a flying squad that can be activated when needed to pick up and drop off individuals in need of cooling on an as needed basis. Furthermore, they are mobile cooling centres in their own right and can be utilized as such. If HSR riders will be permitted to ride free during heat events, the same should hold true for paratransit.

Another item I have been pushing for is a voluntary vulnerable persons list. The only thing worse than people with disabilities dying alone from extreme heat in their homes is them dying unnoticed, because we couldn't organize a system to check on them periodically. While I understand this is a complex issue that has several moving parts, it is something we should be working on now while we can. Having a maximum heat bylaw is an excellent start, but it will take many years for this to take effect and become enforceable.

The Air Conditioner Program with Special Supports (OW/ODSP/Low Income) has come up during the delegations last week and I would like to speak to that for a moment. This program is so strict in its requirements; very few people qualify across the City of Hamilton. At the Public Health meeting, Staff stated it was around 58 units. The reason so few are approved is that

you require a life threatening breathing problem like COPD to qualify. I myself have applied and though I have several comorbidity factors that are exasperated by extreme heat(including early signs of COPD), I was denied. I will be bringing a letter forward in the near future asking the province to increase the funding to this program as well as loosening the requirements to qualify so more people can receive some relief.

Another problem with the AC program is that it only allows for \$350 as a one-time payment. Air conditioners don't last more than five years without replacement or serious maintenance. Furthermore, this doesn't take into account installation fees as even CityHousing is requiring professional installation or requiring removal. A Councillor raised concerns about having to uninstall and reinstall the AC units every year and to that I will say that if it has been professionally installed, it should only require winterizing, i.e.: Wrapping in plastic wrap, creating a Styrofoam lid for the front, etc. Another item not included in that \$350 dollars is any operation fees; it is far more expensive in electricity than to purchase initially.

I would like to speak about Residential Care Facilities (RCFs) for a moment. This is referring to approximately 0.2% of the population of the City of Hamilton, a little less than a thousand people. While I am preparing a more detailed report on this issue that will be presented later this year, I want to talk to you about how they are particularly affected by the effects of extreme heat. It has already been explained how debilitating extreme heat can be on the body and mind, especially affecting cognition, mood and behavioural control. The individuals living in RCFs have those issues before extreme heat becomes a factor. Under extremes, it must be all but impossible to deal with. Now let's add their medications to the problem; the drugs they need to manage their conditions are heat sensitive; meaning, under extreme heat conditions, the drugs react badly and it has been reported to feel like your skin is literally burning from the inside. I have petitioned the extreme heat working group to give particular attention to this group and find ways to mitigate the effects. So far my only success is having public health add air conditioning questions to the annual review process, but much more needs to be done. They are fellow citizens suffering through no fault of their own and have no voice to speak for them.

I want to take a moment and ask this group to also consider your own employees. There are departments that only issue winter ready uniforms; to

give an example: Crossing Guards. Historically, crossing guards dealt with heat for only a short time in June and September, but were heavily protected from the cold. That is no longer the case. They are now outside in the heat and without shade on black tarmac wearing only the polyester uniforms they were issued. Even the raincoats are heavy and not acceptable for light conditions. We have to rethink how we do everything, given this new reality, including equipping our own people to face the elements.

I thank you for your time and am at your disposal should you need anything further from me.

Sincerely,

James Kemp