

June, 2024

To Hamilton City Councillors

Regarding: downtown tents / garbage and people panhandling at intersections

Hi Councillors,

I am writing this letter to all of you because I am getting sad and mad with how our city is looking for residents and visitors. Every thing I am saying in this letter is how my friends, neighbours and family feel regarding the look of our city.

I had a birthday the other day and took my family on Sunday for dinner at the Blackforest Inn on King Street for 4:00pm. As we drove down Upper Gage at Mohawk Rd there were panhandlers on the centre median asking for money. Today they were not sitting in chairs at the centre medium as I saw earlier on Upper James. As we drove down the Sherman access we get to see tents and garbage as we turned onto Charlton Ave. We turned onto Victoria Ave. and viewed people walking apparently stoned / drunk across the road forcing the vehicles to stop or they would be hit. As you know, crossing the road and forcing vehicles to stop is against the law for pedestrians. This is also against the law at a flashing red hand at a crosswalk if the pedestrian has not already entered the crosswalk. We then turned left onto King St. to see 15 to 20 tents in front of Browns funeral home with people sitting beside garbage bags all over the lawn area. We continued down King St. and had a person with just pants and bare feet walk out in front of us as we slammed on our brakes not to hit him. He was dragging a belt on the ground and stopped in front of us and would not move. Against my spouses wishes I opened my door to tell him to move, but he moved on as soon as I opened up my door. Again if a vehicle is forced to stop in the middle of the road, the pedestrian is breaking the law. I have a dash camera on my car windshield, to protect myself from possible charges if I should ever hit someone to prove I was not at fault. Too many times when drivers hit pedestrians or bicycles they are immediately blamed including condemned in the media. As we continued down King St around Denningers Store we saw about 20 people lazing around under an overhang where I believe the rail street cars parked years ago. They appeared to also be homeless and wandering along the sidewalks so most pedestrians walking had to go around them.

We finally found a parking spot on King St., since the city so graciously has taken away most of the parking in the area which most people in the city disagree with. We want parking and car lanes for visitors and Hamiltonians including the approx of 250,000 more people who will be moving here over the years to come. Stop changing 4 lane roads to 2 lanes and start putting bicycles on the sidewalk system for better safety, including having bicycle riders walk in the pedestrian crosswalk as per the law. This is also 100% safer for everyone including vehicle drivers turning. Your Vision plan to get fewer cars on the road and less parking because of gas cars is outdated because we have electric and bio fuel cars for less Greenhouse gas emissions. In the short term, as you convert the 4 lanes to 2 lanes you are creating more fumes as vehicles are stuck in traffic congestion. Now that we have parked, we got out of the car and crossed the street to go to the Blackforest Inn restaurant. We looked to the left, two buildings over and there was a person spread out over the width of the sidewalk, including their belongings. People walking down the street had to step onto the road to get by.

Now that I gave you my ride information to the restaurant, I will not bore you with my ride home; I would like the city to start to have an end plan and do more regarding non working productive people. The city allowing homeless or transients to take over our city is wrong. A known fact is some people in tents are paying extortion money to not have their tent or belongs stolen when they go out. This is wrong and against the law. Unlike small groups of people, we the majority of citizens of Hamilton do not want the police to be defunded. We want safe streets and if our taxes go up to pay for more police, so be it. It will be partially paid for with the tickets given out. To not ticket these people because they might not be able to pay the ticket is wrong. If I should break the law as in the above examples am I going to get a free ride too? Please inform the public if the above laws no longer apply to Hamilton because apparently the laws do not apply to the people I have talked about in the above letter. Councillors if you have not already figured it out, laxing the above laws is getting known and homeless and transient people are moving from the surrounding areas to Hamilton. Tell and allow the police to do their jobs and hire more if needed. This is truly a problem and the reserve funds should be fully used.

I worked for a company for almost 40 years in the golden horseshoe and have seen the people ripping off welfare. It is suppose to be for up to 6 months of payments until you find a new job, not a life time paycheque. Also the abuse of the gear to income homes is terrible. Recently the city gave a single person a 3 bedroom townhouse and said they can rent out the

rooms if they want. Shame on the city for letting this happen. I also know of people/family who lived in a 3 bedroom townhouse and 1 person moved out. The city said you must move to a 2 bedroom. The people complained that they like it there and the city let them stay. This is the tax payer's money and these people should be forced to move as per the rules. If they want to stay tell them to get a job to pay for the extra. Many days I wonder why my spouse and I worked 50 to 60 hours a week for most of our life's to pay for our children, house and put money away for retirement. Maybe I should have just taken my hand outs and complained how bad it was for me. Then the city would give me cheap or free housing including free money. I know it is not that simple but the city needs to get an end game for these people so the tax payer is not supporting them permanently. I don't see anything in my property taxes that says give free housing, free food and free money to people who do not want to work or help society. Remember the same laws apply for everyone regardless of their stature. As an example, if you drive down a 2 way road it does not matter if you are old, young, handicapped, etc. If you are a licensed driver, you must drive the maximum speed limit when a vehicle is behind you on a 2 lane road or you are breaking the law and could be fined +loss of points on your licence. This is the same law for all licensed drivers. The city should remember this law as they continue to take 4 lane roads out to put in 2 lane roads. For 100% increase in safety the bicycle lanes should be on the sidewalk system and have bicycle riders walk their bicycles in the pedestrian crosswalk.

I believe the city should amend the rules / bylaws to allow, that if there are 3 single people on the geared to income list and a 3 bedroom townhouse comes up 3 people move in and put locks on the bedroom doors if needed. If people need housing, we as a city must stop thinking everyone should have a 1 or 2 bedroom apartment. Build rooming houses is a better direction, including the use of good solid dividers if bedrooms are of a good size to make it into 2 smaller rooms. In studio apartments use solid dividers to put in separate bedrooms. Hire and train more investigators to look into the people ripping off the system. Hamilton is a magnet for homeless people because you put in bylaws and give out freebees that most cities do not. Regarding the homeless, the city does not appear to have an end game regarding getting a job, being part of society and taking care of themselves in the future.

I listened to several homeless persons who have got their life back together that spoke at city organized meetings. They told the people at the meeting to stop accommodating the homeless or they will never leave. They also said the homeless tent people should be forced to move regularly if not daily and

inform them of shelters and if they don't move, ticket them. The tents being set up are not pup tents as in the past. The tents seen today are full weather tents made for all seasons and made for at least 6 people long term. As you know, some people are giving up their geared to income homes to live cheaper in tents. Hamilton by the end of the summer will have a very large amount of people who are already moving here because of the new lax rules for tents and homeless people. This will only increase the drug addiction rates.

We are still going through with the so call Palestinian protests, which I do not want to get into with you. I will only say protesting in Canada is fully legal but setting up tents or encampments and not leaving is against the law and should have been stopped on day one.

We all have grown up in a British Colonial county called Canada. Sir John A. McDonald (our first Prime Minister) brought the East and West together to form Canada as one of the architects of Confederation and helped to create the national railway. It also brought democratic rule, which entails that the majority of people create the laws and rules we live by. Not groups of minorities or people of the neighbourhood, but by the majority. That is why we live in such a good country today.

Hamilton Councillors have an opportunity to make changes for the better too. Start with the enforcement of our laws. It may seem mean to some people, but our laws are for everyone and if you break laws you should expect consequents. The laxing of laws is where we start to create further problems. Start to clean up the problem because it is already starting to get over your heads. As a good start, please enforce the rules regarding the panhandlers in the middle of the road before a vehicle kills someone by accident. As you know or the media makes it seem it is always the vehicle driver who is blamed if someone gets hit unless they have proof such as a dash cam video.

As a citizen and tax payer of Hamilton I should have a right and also feel safe to walk around the city. I want my Property tax dollars to pay for Policing, Fire Department, Roads and Sewers (oh the sewer tax you put on my water bill, Thanks), Public parks (for children), EMTs and Paramedics, Public Transit and Pubic Schools.

Since the beginning of civilization we have had people who do not want to work or contribute to society. As a child I remember walking through Gore Park looking at the Statues of people who helped to start Canada with pride. I also thought how much work was put in to make such amazing statues. There were always homeless on the benches or in the park. They usually did not bother any one and people would sit on the other side of the bench on

their lunch time. There seemed to be some respect between everyone, which has been lost today. Many of the homeless have no respect for anyone and do as they please. A simple walking on the right side of the sidewalk would be a start. This would be good advice for everyone, to walk on the right side of the sidewalk or hallway including the store aisles.

I implore the city councillors to spend our property tax dollars on the things that the money is suppose to be spent on. Constantly finding new places to spend more money is wrong. Sometimes, the right answer is No. Example, you pat yourselves on the back for putting in Pride colour crosswalks. These need regular expensive maintenance and road closure. You should instead colour 3 to 4 sidewalk squares in front of city hall. Now, there is almost no maintenance. Instead the pride participates could be supplied the paint yearly to paint it themselves as part of their events and no need to stop traffic. You need to go back to the beginning on what property tax money was to pay for and find the true priorities.

Thanks for taking the time to read my letter. My hope is Hamilton City Councillors enforce the Rules, Bylaws and the Laws (with the help of the police) to help bring Hamilton back to a wonderful city again.

Regards,
Rob Maschewski

From Ward 6