

From: [REDACTED]
To: [McRae, Angela; clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:McRae_Angela; clerk@hamilton.ca)
Subject: Fwd: An Open Letter to Hamilton City Council Regarding the Homelessness Issue
Date: Friday, September 13, 2024 12:44:39 PM

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hi angela -

please include this letter in the gic meeting package that is sent out to the committee - i will be referencing certain points in this letter for my delegation to the committee on wednesday the 18th and it would be helpful if all committee members had this in advance of the meeting

please do not hesitate to reach out if you require further information

thank you

mary a-z

----- Forwarded message -----

From: mary aduckiewicz [REDACTED]
Date: Sat, Sep 7, 2024 at 9:30 PM
Subject: An Open Letter to Hamilton City Council Regarding the Homelessness Issue
To: <mayor@hamilton.ca>

Dear Madam Mayor and Members of Hamilton City Council -

I am writing to you as a private citizen and lifelong Hamiltonian rather than as a member of the Hamilton business community. As Council is about to embark on discussions on sanctioned site(s), I respectfully offer a few thoughts of my own. Mayor Horwath, I would appreciate it if you would have your staff circularize this email to all Councillors prior to the upcoming meeting.

Sanctioned Site(s) and the Encampment Protocol

Encampments and potential sanctioned site(s) were @ best intended to be a transitional measure until more permanent policies and initiatives were developed to increase the supply of affordable housing. We are now about to "round the horn" of 1 year since the encampment protocol was instituted with no relief in sight. In fact, the issue is getting much worse.

I believe that it is generally recognized that the encampment protocol adopted last year by Council has been a failure. Unfortunately, the sheer number of encampments makes it extremely difficult to enforce the protocol and provide services to those who may be suffering from addictions or mental health issues. Gage Park and the Delta encampments which are proximate to my house are 2 of the "poster children" of lack of enforcement @ least until very recently. We have all heard about the numerous unfortunate occurrences and the damning evidence from everyday taxpayers living close to these and other encampments and what they have had to put up with over the past year. Simply put **ENCAMPMENTS DO NOT BELONG IN OUR PUBLIC PARKS OR IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICTS OF THE CITY.**

I believe that 1 sanctioned site (not 6 as suggested by City staffers) with "wrap around services" is a more acceptable alternative to the status quo. This could be set up in a way to have separate functional areas to accommodate diverse needs within the large site. There are large swaths of unutilized land in the City away from parks, the business districts or neighbourhoods for such a site. The encampment in front of City Hall earlier this calendar year proved that with some supervision for those living within who needed some support services were better able to access these services and had some degree of security. Although unsightly in front of City Hall, it did offer some albeit temporary stability.

A sanctioned site needs to have "RULES" to which all persons living within must adhere. This will protect the vulnerable and poor unhoused that need help to find permanent affordable housing. Persons living in a sanctioned site must not break the law, consume illicit drugs or have weapons. Those with addictions or mental health issues **MUST** take mandatory treatment if they want to live within the sanctioned site. There must be sufficient security to prevent the crime that we hear about in some encampments and ensure that all persons living in the sanctioned site are safe. There should be basic sanitary services that must be respected by those living within and accommodation for pets. Failure to follow the rules should result in **EXPULSION** of the person breaking the rules (in effect "TOUGH LOVE" - people need to try to help themselves and we need to help people but not enable them). All Hamiltonians have to live by the law and the unhoused are no exception.

A sanctioned site should not co-exist with encampments. It is one or the other but not both. The Court ruling in Kitchener Waterloo of over a year ago (which if I am recalling it properly) specified that encampments on public land could not be disbanded unless the City was able to offer an alternative. A sanctioned site would be that alternative and negate the need to have any encampments @ all and allow for bylaw enforcement of same.

I was absolutely shocked @ the recent report from City staffers last month estimating that the cost of up to 6 sites would be \$112,000 per year per person. **YIKES!!!** This is an unacceptably high amount (actually an **INSANELY HIGH AMOUNT**) and is not affordable or sustainable for our City. How many Hamiltonians earn \$225,000 per annum and thus live on \$112,000 after tax??? I do not have recent demographic information available but would suspect not a significant percentage of our population. 6 sites as suggested versus 1 large site is a duplication of security, sanitation and other infrastructure. 1 site would be easier to monitor and keep track of the "wrap around" services that so many need. I would respectfully suggest that the target cost should be more in line with the cost of a Long Term Care bed for our seniors which is approximately \$36,000 per annum for a single room. Note that this includes meals, health care, sanitary facilities and 24/7 care in a secure environment.

Affordable Housing and How Do We Get There

Every city has its priorities and from my perspective, I would respectfully suggest that Hamilton's number 1 priority right now is to dramatically increase the supply of affordable housing. 15 years ago this main priority would have been transit, hence the birth of LRT.

Until early this week, I have not been able to drive for most of the summer pending the outcome of some medical tests. During this time, I therefore relied on the HSR for transportation. In my opinion, we have an **EXCELLENT TRANSIT SYSTEM**. From my home in the Blakely area of the Lower City in Ward 3, I was easily and quickly able to travel to Dundas, Stoney Creek, the Central Mountain and the North End. The King, B-Line and Delaware routes are extremely efficient and I found the bus drivers very

courteous and helpful.

Which begs the question, if we have a well functioning transit system why replace these 3 (profitable i believe) lines with a fixed rail system something that Hamilton had in the first half of the last century and got rid of. In other words "IF IT AIN'T BROKE, WHY FIX IT?". Metrolinx's track record is not stellar when it comes to building higher order transit systems on time and on budget. One only has to look @ the Eglinton LRT debacle in Toronto or the Ottawa Crosstown LRT as examples. Our business community is suffering from the recent York Boulevard and Garner Road construction areas which will pale in comparison to the disruption we will experience as a City for up to a decade during our own LRT construction. Again, **WHY FIX SOMETHING IF IT ISN'T BROKEN?** In my opinion, our business community will suffer incredibly and perhaps not recover for a very long time.

Mayor Horwath, my **Recommendations to you and City Council** are as follows:

(1) renegotiate the arrangement with both the Federal and Provincial levels of government and **REDIRECT THE \$3.4 BILLION** (or whatever the price tag is right now - speculation is the number is north of \$8 billion) **EARMARKED FOR OUR LRT TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING**. That will go a long way towards affordable housing and any excess can and should be directed to our crumbling infrastructure (sewers, watermains, bridges and roads). This will provide (again in my own personal opinion) much better value for our taxpayer \$. Is it too much to ask that if circumstances and priorities change, that our responses and funding should address those changed circumstances and priorities?

(2) ask Premier Ford to direct Metrolinx to donate to the City all of the expropriated land for use as affordable housing. A lot of affordable housing was eliminated as a result of Metrolinx's expropriations and this needs to be replaced and then some.

(3) jumpstart the redevelopment of the "Jamestown" housing community which has been derelict for @ least 10 years and

(4) ensure that protocols are in place to prevent existing Hamilton Housing units from again becoming uninhabitable (it was reported last year that over 400 units were uninhabitable due to tenant damage etc).

Mayor Horwath and Councillors, I am old enough to remember when the Hamilton Downtown was **BEAUTIFUL AND VIBRANT**. As a proud lifelong Hamiltonian, it sickens me to see what is happening to our City and the apparent inability to come up with a meaningful path forward to solve this issue. What I am suggesting are **BOLD and COURAGEOUS** steps which I do hope that you and Council will very seriously consider and adopt.

Yours Sincerely Mary A-z

PS - I was fortunate enough to attend a Michigan Wolverines football game in Ann Arbor over the Labour Day weekend. On the way back, we stopped in Detroit for lunch and a Tigers game in Comerica Park which is located in the Downtown area. I did not see 1 unhoused person the whole time we were there. There were no encampments in the Downtown Business District or in the parks nearby. I am sure that Detroit has its share of unhoused but the Downtown was pristine. I do not know what Detroit's protocols are but the Downtown was an inviting place that I would gladly visit again. I cannot (unfortunately) say this for Downtown Hamilton.

