

Dear City of Hamilton Councillors,

My name is Robyn Deshaies, I'm a Ward 3 resident, and I'm writing to ask you to please vote against Esther Pauls's motion to ban encampments in all City of Hamilton parks.

I'm a healthcare worker in this city and have worked with many people living in shelters and tents. The number one thing I hear from people is the need for permanent housing - the city can't ban all encampments without offering permanent affordable and accessible housing for every resident in Hamilton. Doing so will only further add to the violence against our unhoused neighbours.

Even with the new sanctioned Barton site and the new shelter spaces being approved, there will still be dozens of people in need of temporary housing in the city, whether due to sheer numbers or due to the valid reasons people can't or choose not to live in shelters. People will still need to live in tents. Banning encampments throughout the city only increases encampment residents' exposure to danger and precarity through violent encampment tear-downs and repeated displacement. It will push vulnerable people into even more unsafe situations, like isolated areas where their access to food, water, and safety is at risk.

Voting to ban encampments does not solve the problem of homelessness - it only tries to make homelessness invisible. Please vote against this motion, listen to the people living in encampments, come up with solutions to the housing crisis, and stop the unnecessary suffering of people in our community.

Thank you,

Robyn Deshaies