

November 5, 2024

City of Hamilton Mayor and Council,

For several years now, Environment Hamilton has been part of a growing chorus who explicitly recognize the housing crisis and its direct connection and contribution to global climate change. For too long Hamilton, Ontario, and Canada have had a single approach to housing - which is to rely on private developers to build sprawl endlessly as a means of providing housing for everyone. This approach has had horrendous consequences for our shared environment, such as increasing private vehicle traffic, which worsens our air quality, and the permanent loss of agricultural land and ecologically vital wetlands. It has devastated biodiversity, and aggravated flooding, especially as climate change increases precipitation. This approach has left our community without affordable, let alone attainable, housing options that would enable sustainable and enjoyable living in complete communities in our city - and as a result not only has our environment been adversely affected, but so have members of our community who already suffer from marginalization, who have no choice but to exist without safe housing.

Environment Hamilton has long been involved in efforts that recognize the intersection of ecological sustainability and justice - from mapping out the association of income disparities and tree canopy coverage to promoting and ensuring racialized communities are safe and welcome across the city using active transportation. This is why we are calling on the City of Hamilton to create the housing encampment residents need - not to ban encampments. This is not the first time Environment Hamilton has spoken out against policies that prioritize the violent displacement of people without homes over providing them housing - previous terms of Council have received similar letters to this one from us and countless other organizations, but yet again we find ourselves calling for empathy and investments that would solve this crisis and respect everyone's rights.

We have treated the natural environment as something that is disposable, and it has led to a growing climate crisis that threatens our way of life. Let's provide the basic human needs that our fellow community members need instead of treating them as disposable as well. The Board of Directors and staff members at Environment Hamilton urge City Council to vote against the proposed motion regarding the banning of encampments at City parks.

- Environment Hamilton's Board of Directors and Staff