

**From:** Eshan Merali

**Sent:** Tuesday, November 5, 2024 12:00 PM

**To:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Written Delegation to GIC Meeting Re: Encampment Protocol - Nov 6, 2024

**External Email:** Use caution with links and attachments

Hello,

Responding to the Amendment to Item 2 of the General Issues Committee Report 23-023, respecting Public Feedback and Recommendations for an Encampment Protocol and Sanctioned Sites (HSC20036(g)) (City Wide).

My name is Eshan Merali and I have been residing in Ward 3 for the past 3 years. During my time here, I have been involved in building and maintaining the Roots to Justice Learning Garden at J.C. Beemer. The garden serves as space for youth and community members to learn about gardening, and access fresh produce. Throughout my time working at this garden space, I have witnessed the ever increasing repercussions of the housing crisis and the resulting increases in homelessness throughout the city. I have also observed the growing criminalization and displacement of our houseless neighbours, with funds being allocated towards 24/7 security officers as opposed to services to support these marginalized community members. Why are these funds not being directed towards addiction support services, housing services, food security services, and other means that serve to aid vulnerable populations?

I have developed connections with my houseless neighbours living in encampments while working in this park, who have expressed the garden as a valuable resource in accessing healthy foods that would otherwise be inaccessible. I do not want to see my neighbours be pushed further away from this resource, nor any other resource that aids in their living. The amendment to the current encampment protocol serves only those who are not experiencing any form of housing or food insecurity. Removing encampments from public space and further criminalizing homelessness does not solve the issue, but rather exposes people to more safety risks. It is abundantly clear that the shelter system is not a viable solution, and the real systemic barriers need to be considered as opposed to the implementation of band aid solutions. The city parks are for everyone, not just those of us who are fortunate enough to access housing, so I urge you to reject the amendment to ban encampments from all public spaces and shift focus towards tangible supports.

Eshan