

CITY OF HAMILTON

NOTICE OF MOTION

General Issues Committee (Budget): January 23, 2025

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR J.P. DANKO.....

Re-Alignment of Taxpayer Funding to Good Faith Encampment Support Organizations

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton relies on many local social agencies, harm reduction, homeless and encampment organizations that provide various levels of support to vulnerable populations throughout the City.

WHEREAS, in 2024 the City of Hamilton invested a total of \$186 million dollars towards housing and homelessness, \$125 million funded by municipal taxpayers, equivalent to approximately \$215 per resident per year.

WHEREAS, on December 23rd, 2024, Ontario Superior Court Justice James Ramsay, issued a ruling dismissing the claim of fourteen homeless applicants that the City of Hamilton breached their right under the Charter to life, liberty and security of the person (s. 7) and to equal benefit of the law (s. 15).

WHEREAS, paragraph 4 of Justice Ramsay’s ruling states “I observe that the most vulnerable includes not only the homeless but also the elderly person and the child who want to use a sidewalk or a city park without tiptoeing through used needles and human feces.”

WHEREAS, paragraph 24 of Justice Ramsay’s ruling states “Many of the affidavits of the applicants contained boilerplate. Parts were obviously drafted by lawyers.”

WHEREAS, paragraph 61 of Justice Ramsay’s ruling states “...there is a developing, false narrative that encampments are a safe alternative form of housing. That narrative appears in the affidavits of some of the applicants’ witnesses. From talking to her (expert witness Dr. Koivu) patients it appears that it has been a factor in the decision to leave safer environments.”

WHEREAS, paragraph 64 of Justice Ramsay’s ruling states “...Dr. Koivu’s concern about the false narrative encouraging people to leave safer alternatives is supported by the evidence...a member of the Outreach Team, who has observed organized groups encouraging encampment residents to resist options other than encampments.”

WHEREAS residents have reported observing instances where homeless individuals have received organized assistance to set up, relocate and provision encampments in City parks.

WHEREAS, limited taxpayer resources should be prioritized to fund organizations that are proven good faith community partners, working collaboratively with the City of Hamilton in alignment with the interests of the City, residents, and the wellbeing of homeless individuals.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- (a) That Housing Services staff be directed to identify and itemize all City funding allocated to homelessness support social agencies, harm reduction, legal advice, and encampment outreach organizations; and,
- (b) That Housing Services staff propose opportunities to re-align City funding, limited to organizations that are proven good faith community partners committed to collaboratively working with the City of Hamilton in alignment with City and Council interests, approved by-laws and policies.