

**RE: Motions 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.6 on the Hamilton General Issues
Committee (Budget) on 7 February 2025**

Dear Mayor Horwath and City Councillors,

We are writing to you today regarding the motions being presented at the 7 February 2025 GIC (Budget) meeting. While we had not intended to make a particular comment on the Hamilton City Budget this year, beyond what we have stated more broadly around all municipalities this year, these motions require a direct response from Disability Justice Network of Ontario.

Ending Austerity Politics in Ontario

Before we get into the specifics of these motions, however, we wanted to echo something we have said elsewhere: we are faced with an all-out polycrisis that impacts every aspect of our social system across Ontario and, indeed, this is true for Hamilton most acutely. We have delegated many times about the impact of a lack of strong social assistance, accessible housing, and many other areas of the parts of our system that support disabled Hamiltonians. We believe it is time for a massive reinvestment in our social systems—from housing to social assistance to home care to education *and more*—and we know that now is the time to do it. And now, more than ever, is the time to be pressing your Provincial and Federal peers for that reinvestment. These current motions, however, distract from the need to work together to achieve this and, instead, create chilling conditions against service agencies and community organizations.

Elimination of City Enrichment Fund Increases

As a proud past recipient of the City Enrichment Fund, we are concerned that cuts to this fund will undermine the possibilities and potential of so many community organizations' projects and critical opportunities for all Hamiltonians. These funds have a long history of building a base for new innovations, marginalized voices, and creating space for all communities in this city. Ultimately, these funds are not made up for equally across Hamilton by the additional initiatives of Councillors and cuts to these funds would not reflect the increased need for these supports within the city. If you truly want to see marginalized communities grow new, innovative, and community oriented projects throughout Hamilton, continuing to support a robust CEF is critical.

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

As we have written this Council and said many times before: everyone in Hamilton and around Ontario wants to live in a world where encampments are not necessary. A world where accessible, affordable, permanent housing is a reality for all unhoused Ontarians. We all, also, know that we are not living in this world yet. To then take time out of a busy budget season to, instead of allocate more resources to housing or to support our unhoused neighbours and—instead—take time to engage in rehashing grievances against community organizers and unhoused Hamiltonians is not a good focus for this Council. Indeed, as others have mentioned, there is an immense unmet need in Hamilton for support for unhoused and precariously housed Hamiltonians. A better way forward would be to expand supports while actually investing time in pressuring the Provincial and Federal governments to take up their responsibilities to construct accessible, affordable housing in Hamilton. Community organizations are not the enemy, rather we *should* be

more concerned about coming together to make sure all Hamilton residents get what they need.

Taxpayer Funding Exclusion for Organizations Involved in Litigation Against the City of Hamilton

As a transparent and bold-faced attack on poverty law services in Hamilton, this particular motion is a deeply concerning position against fundamental access to justice for working people in this city. But above and beyond this reality, this motion is worded so broadly that unintended consequences will be the obvious result. What happens if a community member slips and falls on city property, should they lose access to funding for housing? Should the family of a city employee who files at a Tribunal to protect their human rights lose access to other city programs? Should someone who files a lawsuit around discrimination on a city service, face barriers for Ontario Works? The way this is presented leaves open so many disturbing possibilities.

Moreover, the risks posed to Hamilton's Tenant Support Program are another concerning avenue of undermining the city's precariously housed, marginalized residents. These services are critical for supporting access to justice against bad faith evictions—making this motion another action to undermine supports and worsen the housing situation in Hamilton. Attacks on access to justice fundamentally undermine the ability of working people to hold the powerful to account—a reality we cannot abide by.

Climate Change Initiative

Finally, we must also stand against cuts to the proposed 2025 Budget aimed at reducing the Climate Change Initiative budget—cuts to the Feasibility Case Study for Air Conditioning in Hamilton Rental Housing *again* undermine the availability of accessible rental units in the city. We know that Disability Justice and Climate Justice are fundamentally linked together. We also know that increasing heat stress and heat injury are sites of disablement for Hamiltonians and are even more threatening to disabled tenants. This study and those surrounding it is a critical means to move forward initiatives to support disabled tenants in the city and we cannot simply cut around the edges of health and well-being to save money.

With all this said, I urge you all to reject all four of these motions and refocus your attention on what will make the most positive impact on all Hamilton residents: reinvestment in our social systems—from housing to social assistance to home care to education *and more*. Now is the time to put aside the politics of austerity and end undercutting the services and supports of working people. Now is the time to come together and build a better Hamilton, together.

Regards,



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