



February 6, 2025

Written Submission to the General Issues Committee Budget Meeting February 7, 2025

To Hamilton Mayor and City Councillors,

I am writing today to urge all members of council to vote against motions 9.1, 9.3, and 9.4 brought before the February 7 General Issues Committee Budget Meeting. If passed, these motions would set precedents that would greatly impact the ability of organizations and individuals in this City to carry out their mandates to support those most marginalized by current systems.

City Enrichment Funding is a crucial source of support not only for established organizations, but for newer grassroots community groups seeking to get started on projects. Many of the groups that seek funding through this program are doing so to fill gaps in community support and create spaces that are designed for and by communities that have historically been excluded culturally and politically. The fact that the city sees more applications come in each year for this funding is an indication both of the need for resources and the initiative of Hamilton residents to start new and meaningful projects and participate in their city. As crucial services continue to need ongoing funding year over year just to keep offering services amidst multiple crises, eliminating increases to CEF has the potential to leave new initiatives with no source of funding which will have a direct impact on the most underrepresented communities.

Motions 9.3 and 9.4 also serve to stifle civic engagement and would set precedents for participation by organizations and individuals that run counter to the openness and transparency that this council has said it seeks. Working collaboratively with the City to support people with unmet needs can also include challenging the City where it has failed to meet its mandates. For example, organizations like the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic have the explicit mandate to provide legal representation for low-income residents even where that includes holding the City accountable. The potential impact of these motions is also about their vagueness and their potential applicability to any number of issues. In the case of 9.4, what is meant by individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in litigation against the City? Does that apply to any and all legitimate actions taken because of a violation of Human Rights by any department of the City? Does it include individuals who may have experienced discrimination or harassment who are also active



members of a local community group seeking funding? Does this include any individual or group that needs to take action against Hamilton Police Services for unfair treatment or excessive use of force? Does this apply to recipients of OW and ODSP, or people who live in City Housing who may need to file a complaint against their landlord? The breadth of this motion has profound implications for civic engagement and free expression. It also particularly has implications for those residents most marginalized including Black and racialized, unhoused and low income, disabled, and 2SLGBTQ+ residents. At a time where this City is concerned about resident participation, it seems counterproductive to implement even more barriers.

Finally, motion 9.3 uses the language of “good faith” to talk about social services, but this argument for accountability is not being presented in good faith. The groups being targeted by this motion have demonstrated their commitment to responding to the needs of unhoused residents. Even where there may be a difference of opinion on the best strategies for the City to be undertaking right now to increase access to housing, and even where organizations or individuals are critical of the City’s efforts, the claim that this is somehow “bad faith” or working against the shared interest in finding just and dignified avenues for people to move from living in encampments to appropriate housing is disingenuous.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject these motions and move forward with providing the supports residents need to build a more just and inclusive city.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caitlin Craven". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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