

**Written presentation to Hamilton City Council General Issues Committee
for pre-budget consultations -- January 19, 2026**

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I had intended to present to Council in person, but unfortunately now have that wicked respiratory flu that is making the rounds. I don't want to spread this flu further, therefore ask the clerk to distribute this to the council or allow it to be read.

I'm an active senior. Despite five years of post-secondary education, 4+ decades in the workforce, a strong work ethic, and frugal spending habits, my total income from all sources is \$2100 a month. I'm not an extreme case. Rents are now dramatically out of whack with moderate and low incomes.

Steep rents and the omnipresent threat of a no-fault renoviction or yet another rent increase are causing extreme unrelenting stress – the kind that damages the mental and physical health and frays people's social and family relationships. People should not have to uproot themselves – and sometimes disrupt their children's education or their frail spouse or parent's ties to the community, or leave the old folks behind. They should not have to couch-surf with friends or relatives, or work 60-85 hours a week or drain their meager savings, simply to meet the demand of for-profit landlords for steep rents.

Overt homelessness is dreadful, but it is simply the most visible tip of Hamilton's "housing crunch iceberg". The reality is that steep rents are making life harder for the least affluent half of the population. They are also sucking the life-blood out of our local economy. Instead of having cash to spend in local businesses, people are spending 40 to 80 percent of their incomes on rent (or a mortgage payment).

Please continue the **tenant protection program**. It is urgently needed, now more than ever, as the tariff wars shake up the Hamilton economy, which has yet to recover from the gutting of our manufacturing sector.

The **tenant support program** is also crucial to mitigating the dreadful impact on Hamiltonians of the gutting of rent control. Please ensure full funding for this program. Hamilton Community Legal Services and Housing Help need more resources, not less.

I urge you to establish a mandatory rent registry--it's an idea whose time has come --and to prohibit numbered companies.

The renoviction bylaw that you passed seems to be working, inasmuch as it is reducing the number of people who have approached the grassroots group, ACORN, about spurious renovictions. Please ensure the bylaw gets vigorously enforced. In fact, Council should increase staff resources for that purpose, to ensure that there is no resumption of the nightmarish proliferation of renovictions experienced in previous years.

The pilot program for rental licensing, established last year, should be expanded city-wide. Every rental unit in the city should be regulated and meet certain standards, whether in a building with lots of units, or a building with few, and regardless of which ward the building is located in.

Tenants need a comfortable temperature range in their home -- remember, a rental apartment, house or flat is the home of the person renting it--whether it is winter or summer or in-between. I'd suggest that a range of 20 to 24.5 C (68 to 76 F) is appropriate. Some developers, construction firms and landlords skimp on insulation and window quality and maintenance, then install individually metered electrical baseboards in each unit. This only downloads onto tenants the consequences of the landlords' or builders' own failure to insulate properly. That isn't fair.

It should be noted that in very large buildings with lots of seniors and/or people in fragile health, and somewhat dysfunctional thermostats and heating/cooling systems, the temperature in each apartment sometimes fluctuates from a very chilly 17.5 C to an overly warm 26 C, or higher, in winter. This wastes

energy and interferes with the comfort and health of the tenants. Many of the older buildings, be they owned by the City or by for-profit landlords, were designed before the extreme weather events resulting from galloping climate change were well understood. Council would do well to press landlords to also install ceiling fans as options to ensure human comfort in a cost-effective way on sizzling days and reduce over-use of air conditioners.

As well, ventilation (i.e. fresh air) standards should be established and enforced. Air must not only be a tolerable temperature, it must be fresh. Ventilation is essential to reducing the spread of pandemics, and to making life bearable during them.

Given how dangerous extreme heat can be to human health, **Hamilton public transit** should be free on extreme heat days, so that people can safely get to and from work, services, medical appointments, cooling centres, libraries, grocery stores and food banks, healthy recreation, their churches, friends and relatives, etc. without risking heat stroke. Shade trees on major streets and in parks, and benches under them, also merit City investment, while we adapt to the climate changes that have already taken place, and the more extreme ones on the immediate horizon.

Indoor air quality: Improvements are needed in many rental buildings. Cooking fumes should be moved out of apartment air as promptly as possible, but all too often the kitchen exhaust system is dysfunctional or non-existent. As well, it is time to wind down the grandfathering of the alleged “right” to smoke in one’s apartment.

Transit: I have personally noticed a significant improvement in the public transit along Main and King in recent weeks. A trip that used to take up to 45 minutes or an hour is now 18 to 22 minutes. Thank you! As we age, long waits either for the first bus or at a transfer point, are exhausting and hard on one’s feet, knees, hips and back. However, we still need more ways of moving north and south. Key streets in the lower city, such as Victoria, Wentworth, Sherman, Gage, Ottawa, etc. should be two-way, as their “Upper” counterparts on the Mountain usually are. I and many others would welcome a route along King, up Dundurn to Aberdeen, then looped, and back down to Main and out east. Ditto for routes to hospitals and health care facilities.

Given the challenges already faced by disabled people and low-income people, it would be appropriate to make their transit fares free, or nearly so. In fact, there would be much less traffic on our streets if we shifted to free public transit for all, as some cities in other countries are experimenting with.

I strongly support the City’s efforts to leverage its own publicly-owned land as potential sites for new social housing. Ideally, it should be mixed-income coops, or non-profit buildings run with strong tenant input.

About a year ago, five key faith leaders in the Hamilton region – the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran bishops, their counterparts in the United Church and the Unitarian church identified Hamilton’s housing situation as a “moral crisis”. They made specific recommendations. Heed their words. They know from the impact of steep rents on their own congregants and on their congregants’ adult children and relatives, just how wide, deep and permanent the damaging impacts of steep rents has been and will continue to be.

Even seniors whose current housing is adequate and affordable to them (for the moment!), are alarmed by the excessive rents being demanded in the for-profit rental sector when relatives, adult offspring and adult grandchildren look for a place to live.

Thank you for reading this, and for the courageous steps taken by the mayor and some of the councillors.