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To Hamilton's mayor and councillors:

I write as a life-long resident in Hamilton, Ontario regarding the use of strong mayor powers and Council's ability to support or deny the mayor's veto.

I urge Council to deny the mayor's veto. While affordable housing is absolutely and crucially important in this place and in other locations in the city, it can and should be had by the mass expropriation of properties, which the city is legally capable of doing under the *Expropriations Act*. Moreover, Councillor Cassar's motion sought ways to balance the concerns of Stoney Creek's residents about parking by finding 36 spots elsewhere and Councillors Francis and Beattie's motion sought affordable housing elsewhere in the ward; debate on these motions would have been welcomed. Finally, according to a letter to the editor in the *Hamilton Spectator* (Tom Winning, "Housing needed, not LRT", 30 March 2024), the funding for the LRT project could be directed to affordable housing, if Council requests it, and could have been done in 2017. Given the power to expropriate lands, these motions, and the re-direction of LRT's funding, the acquisition of housing for the poor does not require the subversion of the principle of majority rule, which is fundamental to democracy, in favour of the minority rule enacted under Bill 39's 'strong mayor' powers. All people in Hamilton require both a functional democracy and many places for those in need to rest their heads, but the price of the latter should never be the former: we need structures which allow all, particularly minorities', voices to be heard as well as places to rest those voices at day's end. What is to stop the mayor, after affordable housing is built, from invoking 'strong mayor' powers on an issue which may not be as politically palatable as building affordable housing? Once these powers are used, it is very hard to stop using them, and democracy and the participation of the public is better served by setting those powers aside and doing the more difficult work of listening and responding to the varied needs and voices of citizens, abiding by the will of the majority while clearly and deeply listening to and responding to the voices and concerns of the minority.

Public housing must be built. About that, there is no question. People need places to call home. It is equally important, however, to enact a public process in which the voices of all peoples can be equally heard. I urge Council to deny the mayor's veto and continue to work and flourish and model the difficult necessity of democratic majority rule.

Respectfully,

Joshua Weresch

30 March 2024