



Hamilton Community Legal Clinic
Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton

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VIA EMAIL

Mr. Mayor Fred Eisenberger, c/o Chief Staff Person

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To Whom It Concerns,

RE: Metrolinx Owned Properties and the Prioritization of Affordable Housing

As you know, the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic provides services to the most marginalized members of the Hamilton community as we advance legal rights within a context of intersecting social issues to ensure individuals' basic needs are met.

Our role offers us a concrete window of exposure to the implications of the housing crisis facing the country, province and our locality. Reoccurring concerns are both immediate and long term: the first being the urgency of the immediate need for adequate affordable housing and the future concern of how policies today fuel or ameliorate the future housing stock. We are alarmed about the fate of the Metrolinx owned properties. We call on the City to leverage this opportunity to guarantee that these properties be utilized for affordable housing.

Based on compiled evidence we share with you, the LRT land procurement process has increased the displacement of low income households, the members of which are unable to afford the market they find themselves in, deepening the City's current housing crisis. Respectfully we take the position that the City has a fiduciary duty to replace the housing that was lost and utilize the current economies of scale that weigh in favour of leveraging a provincial entity to provide this affordable land to the community rather than to the highest bidder. The City has routinely identified the difficulty in financing affordable land for housing development and this seems to be a perfect opportunity to address it.

The managers of the LRT landlord procurement process have removed 178 mostly rental dwellings along the then anticipated rail corridor which IBI Group consultants working with HDR Decision Economics determined to be an area with the highest social needs (“Economic Potential Study,” of the Hamilton Rapid Transit Initiative, March 2009). The chart below produced by the report speaks to this:

Indicator	Corridor	Hamilton	GTHA	Ontario	Canada
Government Transfers as a proportion of total income	20.60%	12.90%	9.30%	9.80%	11.10%
Population over 65	14.80%	14.20%	12.20%	13.60%	13.70%
Lone parents	23.60%	14.70%	14.20%	15.80%	15.90%
No high school certificate or diploma	38.50%	28.70%	24.10%	22.20%	25.50%
Low income	35.60%	16.20%	12.40%	14.70%	15.30%
Unemployment rate	10.40%	5.80%	5.20%	6.40%	6.60%

Based on this study it is evident that the most in need have been asked to bear the brunt of this development without the necessary resources to survive in the current market.

As you are aware rents in Hamilton increased by 24% in 2020 (source: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6169777/hamilton-rent-spikes>). Based on the rental rates we can estimate that a tenant displaced by Metrolinx who had lived in their King Street home for 1 year faced a \$379.00 plus monthly rent increase (rent for a 2 bedroom apartment in Hamilton in 2019 was \$1,537/month, up from \$1,158/month in 2018). For a tenant displaced by Metrolinx who had lived their King Street home for 5 years prior to displacement, their increased rent is estimated at \$588.00/month, and for a tenant who had lived in their King Street home for 10 years, that increase is estimated at \$706.00/month. Given that income replacement benefits have not increased commensurate with these shelter costs and neither have wages, many of these displaced tenants are undoubtedly living in housing insecurity.

To make matters worse, the pandemic has exposed social inequities and compounded the housing crisis; it has been reported that 60,000 Hamilton household renters have lost their jobs or income. With CERB rates at \$2000.00 a month, average rents in Hamilton reported at \$1,489.00 a month and a vacancy rate of 1.5%, the pressure for purpose built housing is even greater.

Our staff receive an average of 85 calls a day with the majority of them concerning rental housing concerns. We have witnessed an increase in evictions based on arrears of rent attributed to the pandemic and are saddened by the mass evictions.

Housing is a human right and it is the linchpin social determinant of health. Our community cannot afford to lose any housing stock, let alone affordable housing options.

We urge the City to explore the following:

1. Demand the gifting of Metrolinx land to the City for affordable housing;
2. Demand an offer of first refusal;
3. Provide rent supplements immediately to the households displaced and facing housing insecurity;
4. Offer displaced households priority on the housing waitlist and/or an offer of first refusal to any newly constructed affordable housing units; and
5. Consider adopting inclusionary zoning and require that no less than 75% of development along this corridor be deemed "affordable."

It is our recommendation and hope that the stakeholders and the community at large be consulted on the fate of this project and that affordable housing is guaranteed by any outcome. Decisions related to this project are determinative of the social fabric of Hamilton and will inevitably impact the state of housing in Hamilton.

Thank you for your support of affordable housing in Hamilton.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hugh Tye".

Hugh Tye
Executive Director