



Student
Senate

Dear Hamilton City Council,

This letter is written from a newly formed advocacy alliance between the Mohawk Students' Association, McMaster Students Union, and Redeemer Student Senate, known henceforth as the Mohawk-McMaster-Redeemer Student Advisory Group (MMRSAG). Together, the three student unions represent more than 50,000 undergraduate students attending Mohawk College, McMaster University, and Redeemer University.

As a leader in research, health care, and skill development, and as a home to host to three major post-secondary institutions, Hamilton is evidently a welcoming place for university and college students. Students attending university and college in Hamilton routinely put down roots, involve themselves in the community, support local businesses, and care deeply about the future and progress of the city. As representatives of schools spanning three different wards, the MMRSAG knows the diverse ways young people experience and enjoy Hamilton.

However, there is room for improvement in how municipal spending addresses concerns shared by the tens of thousands of Hamilton residents we represent. Thus, the MMRSAG is committed to advocating for student interests and see their needs better reflected in city policy, including the annual budgets. We understand that such an important goal is difficult to achieve in a single delegation or letter—rather, it requires opportunities for continual and substantive engagement. Upon reflection on the 2021 budget deliberation process, we believe that improvement can be made in this area. Therefore, we ask that the City of Hamilton and all Councillors improve the accountability and transparency of the municipal budget process by explaining the timeline and budget breakdown more clearly, and actively consulting students in all Wards early in the budget planning and deliberation process. In addition to the need for improved consultation and transparency, we would like to present three recommendations for Hamilton's municipal budget and policy decisions in future years.

Our recommendations are premised on the values of accessibility, mobility, and sustainability. Centering these values in Hamilton's city policy and future budgets will not only accommodate the interests of post-secondary students in the city—it will create more just equitable, and inclusive communities that benefit all Hamiltonians.



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Snow-clearing

The MMR SAG supports the expansion of Hamilton's snow-clearing services. Sidewalk safety is critical to students, who rely on walking to get to school, work and other services. The current level of snow-clearance in the city has proven to be inadequate. Students have expressed long-standing concerns with dangerous, icy sidewalk conditions that inhibit them whether they are heading to campus, to pick up groceries, or to reach an HSR bus stop to travel across the city. The MMR SAG also recognizes the disproportionate impact that unsafe winter sidewalks have for people with disabilities, seniors, and marginalized communities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when people are increasingly walking for exercise or mobility.

Recommendation: We recommend that City Council votes to adopt an increased level of city-run snow-removal services.

Public Transit

High-quality public bus service is also essential to students' mobility in Hamilton. Insufficient funding and the uneven distribution of funds in Hamilton's HSR system has limited the frequency and reliability of service. Students travel to Mohawk, McMaster, and Redeemer campuses from all over Hamilton, but a lack of integrated transit infrastructure makes it difficult for them to access postsecondary education. Students also need to be able to access other areas of Hamilton for work, play, and other everyday tasks. Currently, students are not able to access convenient HSR transit service to school and to work year-round. This may be due to a number of factors, including the elimination or infrequency of routes like the 51 University, inefficient down-town access through indirect routes such as 44 Rymal, and insufficient consultation with students to find out how to support their modes of travel. A modern, reliable, well-funded transit system is crucial to retaining student talent and building a strong economy. We hope Council implements policy solutions that support students and ensure a modern and integrated public transportation network across Hamilton.

Recommendation: We recommend that City Council guarantees investment in public transportation and transit infrastructure across the city to ensure that students from all Hamilton wards can use the HSR to access the Mohawk, McMaster and Redeemer campuses.

Recommendation: We recommend that City Council implements investments and a long-term plan that ensures that all post-secondary students are able to access convenient HSR service from their respective campuses to the Hamilton downtown area.



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Cycling

Cycling is a great way for students and young people to travel around the city, especially given the affordability and physical activity associated with cycling. All residents of Hamilton benefit when people choose to bike because it helps to offload busy transit routes, reduce carbon emissions, and stimulate economic activity and support of local businesses. However, we know that students at McMaster, Redeemer and Mohawk do not feel safe riding their bikes without appropriate infrastructure to ensure their protection, such as bike lanes that are guarded by barriers and curbs. Furthermore, without a broad, connected grid of continuous lanes across the city, students cannot rely on biking for transportation, especially for tasks that require travelling far distances. For example, it is not easy or safe for many students to bike from the Westdale neighbourhood to the downtown area. Increased investment in cycling infrastructure across the city is urgently needed in order to provide a truly multi-modal transportation system in Hamilton.

Further, students greatly benefit from the public bikeshare system that makes cycling more convenient and widely accessible. The members of MMRSAG believe that bikeshare should be supported long-term as a vital transportation network and that bikeshare infrastructure should be expanded into more Wards in Hamilton, including but not limited to the Wards on which the three MMRSAG campuses are located. Thus, we ask Council to increase investment in cycling infrastructure and support bikeshare availability in Hamilton.

Recommendation: We recommend that City Council increases investment into cycling infrastructure, such as continuous and connected bike lanes and protection for lanes such as barriers and curbs

Recommendation: We recommend that the City of Hamilton more clearly communicate progress on improving cycling infrastructure and both short-term and long-term plans for promoting cycling in Hamilton.

Recommendation: We recommend that City Council ensures the continued operation of the bikeshare system and explores that expansion of bikeshare into more Wards.



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We hope that City Council considers these recommendations in future governance and policy decisions. Our group represents a diverse cross-section of Hamiltonians and we are confident that action in the outlined areas would make a great difference in improving students' perceptions and experiences of the city.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Garrett Blair
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Mohawk Students' Association

Ryan Tse
Vice-President (Education)
McMaster Students Union

Samuel Vandeputte
President
Redeemer Student Senate