

The McMaster Students Union

# PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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Over the past few weeks, the McMaster Students Union has been meeting with City Councillors, staff and other municipal stakeholders, to present our second annual Municipal Pre-Budget Submission. The submission highlights the MSU's recommendations for the upcoming City budget, along with other priorities. On February 11, the Associate Vice-President (Municipal Affairs) presented the submission to City Council, focussing on five key areas: transit, student housing, employment opportunities, by-law and enforcement, and street lighting. To read the complete pre-budget submission, please visit [msumcmaster.ca/Hamilton](http://msumcmaster.ca/Hamilton).

All MSU members pay \$198 for a twelve month, unlimited ride bus pass. As a collective, students contribute over \$4 million to the HSR transit system. While students have repeatedly voted to include May through August service, we remain concerned with the reduced service levels offered during these months. The 51-University is regularly used by students, however, this

line does not run from May to August, increasing wait times on other lines. The MSU is advocating for this bus route to run all year to address these concerns. As well, we are advocating for the City to eliminate area-rating. Areas that were more recently amalgamated into the City of Hamilton, including Stoney Creek, Ancaster, and Dundas, pay less in property taxes towards transit than the rest of Hamilton. This significantly reduces the service the HSR can provide to these areas. By eliminating area rating and increasing the transit taxes in these locations, the HSR will be able to increase service levels, which will greatly benefit students who currently have long commute times or are unable to use the bus system at all.

In terms of student housing, the MSU continues to ask for the City of Hamilton to move forward with the Rental Housing Licensing Pilot Project in Wards 1 (McMaster) and 8 (Mohawk). The licensing program will hold landlords accountable to certify the houses - most often rented to students - are safe places to live.

The MSU has also proposed that the City of Hamilton create an Urban Fellows Program, similar to Toronto and New York. We have asked the City to hire recent graduates to help the municipality move forward with major projects and/or policy work. These jobs will allow students to apply the skills that they learned in their undergraduate degree while improving the civic and cultural infrastructure.

Three years ago, the City of Hamilton added additional Environmental By-law Officers in "McMaster neighbourhoods" to enforce property standards including snow removal, long grass and weeds, as well as waste storage and disposal. This program has cost students in the neighbour-

**2019 MUNICIPAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION HIGHLIGHTS**

**BETTER TRANSIT**

The City of Hamilton should allocate funding towards year-round service of the 51-University bus route, eliminate area rating, and balance out tax rates amongst the urban and suburban wards.

**SAFER STUDENT HOUSING**

The City of Hamilton should move forward with the two-year Rental Licensing pilot project in Wards 1 & 8.

**GREATER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Hamilton should move forth with the Hamilton Urban Fellows Program.

**BY-LAWS & ENFORCEMENT**

The City of Hamilton should discontinue the use of additional Environmental By-Law Officers in McMaster neighbourhoods and divert some of the funding from this action program to support by-law education initiatives.

**BETTER LIGHTING**

The City of Hamilton should approve all capital budget requests related to enhancing street lighting, as well as commission a street light audit in Ward 1 in order to improve safety in predominantly student neighbourhoods.

hoods thousands of dollars, because often these students were unaware of the by-laws. We have recommended that the City discontinue this program and instead invest more in educating citizens in these areas about the City of Hamilton's by-laws.

Another major concern we have heard from students is the lack of street lighting in Westdale / Ainsle Wood. As a result, many students feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods at night and worry about increased break-ins into their houses. We have asked for a lighting audit to assess the deficiency and subsequently increase lighting to improve safety.

Thus far, the City has shown a willingness to engage with students on these issues. Councillor Maureen Wilson, who represents the communities surrounding and including McMaster, continues to demonstrate

herself as an advocate for student issues. New streetlights are already being installed in areas where students previously expressed safety concerns. As well, a traffic study will soon occur in Westdale / Ainsle Wood, with plans to consult students as how to make safer streets for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. The My HSR campaign is collecting feedback about bus service and the HSR is expected to enhance bus service along many major routes used by students including the B-Line.

Through the MSU's advocacy meetings, we remind the City of the tremendous value students add to the community, not only in terms of economic impact, but also through volunteerism and fundraising initiatives for local organizations. Having a strong relationship with the City of Hamilton will allow us to work together for the betterment of student life in Hamilton.

The President's Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board's projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.



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