



MUNICIPAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020

THE McMASTER STUDENTS UNION

TRANSIT

Recommendation:

The MSU believes that the City of Hamilton should phase out area rating and balance tax rates amongst the urban and suburban wards.

In 2001, City Council passed a motion to implement an area rating system for Transit, Fire, Culture and Recreation.¹ Since then, City Council has eliminated area rating for all services except transit.² Public transit should be an integrated system to help residents travel around their city. But with area rating, the HSR is fragmented and has created a barrier for residents using public transit. Abolishing area rating would allow for a well connected bus service across Hamilton.

When determining how to phase out area rating, there are a few different options that council can take. Ryan McGreal, author for Raise The Hammer, created one such four-year schedule outlining the details on how to phase out area rating for transit.³ The chart below outlines the tax rates each urban ward would pay over the next 4 years to ensure all residents are equally contributing towards the transit budget. This option proposes maintaining the current urban levy rates while slowly increasing suburban rates until they match suburban levels. This would result in increased financial investment in transit during the phase-out period and afterward, allowing for transit service to be continually improved both in busy urban corridors and under-served suburban regions.

¹ Craggs, S. (2018). Suburban councillors prepared to fight area rating motion. *CBC News*. [online] Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/headlines/suburban-councillors-prepared-to-fight-area-rating-motion-1.2967960> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2018].

² "Area Rating". 2018. *Environment Hamilton*. <https://www.environmenthamilton.org/arearating>.

³ McGreal, Ryan. 2018. "Phase Out Area Rating And Boost Transit Revenue". *Raise The Hammer*. https://raisethehammer.org/article/3549/phase_out_area_rating_and_boost_transit_revenue.

Area Rating Phase-Out Schedule, Annual Budget Increase

Area	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Final
Ancaster	0.028%	0.045%	0.062%	0.078%	0.095%
Dundas	0.026%	0.043%	0.060%	0.076%	0.095%
Flamborough	0.030%	0.047%	0.064%	0.080%	0.095%
Glanbrook	0.040%	0.057%	0.074%	0.090%	0.095%
Hamilton	0.095%	0.095%	0.095%	0.095%	0.095%
Stoney Creek	0.027%	0.044%	0.061%	0.077%	0.095%

The McMaster Students Union strongly believes that an evenly distributed tax rate will provide the HSR with the ability to reconfigure bus routes and make transit easier to access. In addition, the LRT is scheduled to be operational by 2024 and the BLAST network is scheduled to begin operation in different phases starting from 2017 up until 2041.⁴ A concern raised when discussing the elimination of area rating is that the service level of transit in the wards that need it the most would decrease during the transition period, increasing the amount of barriers for residents who rely on public transit.⁵ Under the phase-out schedule proposed above, where the city increases the levy rate for suburban taxpayers and keeps the urban levy rate the same as area rating is being phased out, the city will be able to maintain and improve current service while filling in gaps which exist under the current system.

⁴ "Hamilton Transportation". 2018. City Of Hamilto <https://www.hamilton.ca/government-information/trust-and-confidence-report/hamilton-transportation>.

⁵ McGreal, Ryan. 2018. "Phase Out Area Rating And Boost Transit Revenue". Raise The Hammer.

Transit is an important factor for young people when determining where to live. Recently, the MSU conduct a survey in which McMaster students were asked to rate how they value certain aspects of a city on a scale of 1 to 7 (7 being the most valuable part of their ideal city). Approximately 60% of student respondents rated a community that is easy to get around and does not have long commute times as a 6 or a 7 on said scale. Younger generations are driving less and relying more on public transit.⁶ We believe eliminating area rating and improving bus routes will be incentives for students to stay in Hamilton after graduation, aiding in the City of Hamilton's efforts to retain talent.⁷ We, along with all Hamiltonians, deserve to have access to consistent and reliable transit, regardless of the ward in which we live. The MSU believes that the City of Hamilton prioritize the elimination of area rating.

Recommendation:

The City of Hamilton should allocate funding towards year-round service of the 51-University bus route.

Last year, undergraduate students contributed \$4.13 million to Hamilton's transit budget; McMaster students form the largest demographic contributing to the HSR on an annual basis.⁸ Given our significant contributions, we believe that funding should be allocated towards year-round service of the 51-University bus route. Currently, the 51-University line runs from September to April and does not operate during the summer months.⁹ Second semester classes end in April, yet many students continue to live in Hamilton as they have found paid employment, are attending summer school, or cannot go home as they are an international students. To discontinue the 51-University line during the summer ignores the needs of many students living in Hamilton and dis-incentivizes other students from choosing to stay in Hamilton during the summer or after they graduate.

⁶ Jaffe, Eric. 2015. "The Clearest Explanation Yet for Why Millennials Are Driving Less." *CityLab*. <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2015/07/the-clearest-explanation-yet-for-why-millennials-are-driving-less/398366/>

⁷ Nestico-Semianiw, Spencer, Saad Syed, and Alexia Olaizola. 2016. "Your City Survey". Hamilton: The McMaster Students' Union.

⁸ 2018 Fare breakdown, City of Hamilton

⁹ "51 UNIVERSITY". 2018. Transit. <http://www.hamiltontransit.ca/routes/51-university/>

Other buses that run along a similar route to the 51-University line, such as the 1A or 5C, do not operate on weekends, evenings and holidays. These buses cannot be suggested as a replacement for the 51 line during the summer months as they operate on restrictive hours that do not align with student mobility needs.¹⁰

During the summer, we recommend that the HSR operate the 51-University similar to the current Saturday schedule. On Saturdays, the 51-University operates from 11am-2am with a frequency of 30 minutes between each bus.¹¹ This would require roughly 1,680 service hours for the HSR and would provide students across Ainslie Wood and Westdale a source of reliable transportation during the summer.¹²

Over the years, McMaster students have been increasingly involved in advocacy efforts to City Council for better transit. In 2017, students ran a #YesLRT campaign highlighting the need for the Light Rail Transit and the benefits it will provide all Hamiltonians.¹³ Councillors were inundated with emails from students which highlighted experiences with transit and the need for the LRT.¹⁴ Given our dedication to civic engagement and our significant contributions to the HSR every year, we believe that year-round service of the 51-University bus line should be prioritized immediately.

The City's transit ridership increased for the first time in years in 2018. It is abundantly clear that the HSR has become a vital source of transportation for Hamiltonians. As such, it is in the MSU's belief that students deserve access to efficient and accessible bus routes that connect them to the rest of the city.¹⁵

¹⁰ City of Hamilton. "PDF Bus Schedules" City of Hamilton. Accessed July 9, 2019. <https://www.hamilton.ca/hsr-bus-schedules-fares/schedule-routes-maps/pdf-bus-schedules>

¹¹ http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/9C5126DA-8233-4A6A-9CBB-51E98F296E0C/0/SEPT14_University.pdf

¹² 15 hours per day x 120 days in summer = 1,680

¹³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/msu-lrt-campaign-1.4070516>.

¹⁴ CBC News. 2017. "10 Major Hamilton Institutions Write Letter Supporting LRT", 2017. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/lrt-letter-anchor-institutions-1.4036586>.

¹⁵ CBC News. 2019. "HSR ridership rose last year, but still fell short of projected goal" <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/transit-hsr-ridership-1.4993518>

EMPLOYMENT

URBAN FELLOWS PROGRAM

Recommendation:

Hamilton should invest an Urban Fellows Program, similar to other municipalities.

Based on results from the Hamilton Community Foundation's Hamilton Millennials and Community Belonging report, a significant proportion of millennial workers have a negative impression of Hamilton, in regards to employment prospects.¹⁶ Specifically, 76% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements that Hamilton provides good work opportunities and good networking opportunities. Furthermore, a significant majority of respondents believe that the opportunities they do have are becoming more elusive.¹⁷

In general, many post-secondary graduates, most notably humanities students, settle for entry-level work that does not require a post-secondary degree, due to the limited supply of jobs in their field.¹⁸ Notwithstanding the significant contributions of Hamilton's post-secondary institutions to the wellbeing of the Hamilton community, post-secondary graduates continue to have limited access to work opportunities. Continuing under these conditions and considering the ever-demanding skill-set required in today's evolving workforce, inadequate employment opportunities in the city of Hamilton for students with post-secondary degrees may hinder Hamilton's growth and prosperity in the years to come.

¹⁶ "Hamilton Millennials and Community belonging." Hamilton Community Foundation. Accessed January 12, 2019. <http://www.hamiltoncommunityfoundation.ca/millennialsbelonging/>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Barabara Fenesi and Faria Sana, "What Is Your Degree Worth? The Relationship Between Post-Secondary Programs and Employment Outcomes," Canadian Journal of Higher Education 45, no. 4(2015);, accessed July 12, 2019.

Based on preliminary discussions with the City of Hamilton’s Human Resources Department, the McMaster Students Union proposes a program that would retain skilled students and recent graduates to work in “critical jobs”, improving the economic outlook of the city. The areas of focus for the fellowship program could be based on the Ontario Internship Program, which places interns in fields such as business and financial planning, communications, information and information technology, labour relations, and program and service delivery.¹⁹

Considering the successes of related programs, such as the Toronto Urban Fellows program and the New York Urban Fellows program, there is also reason to believe that this structure would help Hamilton’s growth by attracting and retaining talent, and providing feasible full-time employment prospects for recent graduates. Basing the likely outcomes of such an initiative on the results of several others like it, the City of Hamilton should expect to see more long-term settlement of highly-skilled professionals seeking jobs within the City of Hamilton. The MSU recommends basing the structure of the program on the Ontario Internship Program, where graduates are selected for a paid internship with annual salaries ranging from \$44,000 to \$64,000.²⁰ These figures would serve as a plausible benchmark for the allocation of funds to set up the program, where salaries could range up or down depending on the specific responsibilities.

¹⁹ “Ontario Internship Program.” Home. December 29, 2018. Accessed July 13, 2019. <https://www.internship.gov.on.ca/mbs/sdb/intern.nsf/LkpWebContent/ePublishedHOME>.

²⁰ General Issues Committee. *Information Report: Hamilton Urban Fellowship Program (HUR18015(a))*. By Jodi Koch. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, 2018.

SUSTAINABILITY

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Recommendation:

The MSU believes that the City of Hamilton should adopt bi-weekly waste collection.

On March 18th, 2019, Hamilton City Council passed a motion that declared a “climate emergency that threatens our city, region, province, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world”.²¹ In keeping with this declaration, the MSU believes that the City of Hamilton should implement bi-weekly waste collection as a way to respond to devastating changes in our climate. Adopting an efficient waste program can be the first step in mitigating the profound impact that solid waste in landfills can have on the environment. The City of Hamilton should thus focus on implementing feasible preventative measures that divert waste from the Glanbrook landfill.

Hamilton’s Solid Waste Management Master Plan outlines the City’s goal to have a 65% waste diversion rate by 2021.²² According to a recent report, the diversion rate for 2018 was around 36%, which is significantly less than the projected goal.²³ In efforts to close this gap, the City should adopt a strategy already provided by City staff in a 2012 report.²⁴ According to this report, bi-weekly waste collection supplemented with both a trash tagging system and container limit, can lead to an increase in the City’s diversion rate by up to 5.7%.²⁵

²¹ Hamilton City Hall. *Board of Health Report 19-003*. Hamilton, ON: 2019. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=1871752> “Area Rating”. 2018. Environment Hamilton. <https://www.environmenthamilton.org/arearating>.

²² City of Hamilton. *City of Hamilton Solid Waste Management Master Plan Review: 2012 Solid Waste Management Master Plan*. Hamilton, ON: 2019. https://thecif.ca/projects/documents/310-Hamilton_WMMP.pdf

²³ Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority. “2018 Diversion Rates (Residential).” 2019. Accessed July 9, 2019. <https://rpra.ca/programs/about-the-datacall/>

²⁴ Hamilton Public Works. *Waste collection procurement process for 2013-2020*. Hamilton, ON: 201. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=102181>

²⁵ Ibid, 24

As it stands, the Glanbrook Landfill is expected to close in 2040.²⁶ However, Hamilton can extend its lifespan by 4 years through implementing the recommended waste collection schedule.²⁷ With bi-weekly waste collection, the City could have saved \$60 million for the waste collection contract for 2013-2020, and taxpayers can save up to \$63 million as the Glanbrook Landfill closing date is pushed farther due to increased diversion rates.²⁸

While negotiations will be underway in anticipation of the waste management contract expiry date, the MSU believes that it is in the City's best interest to begin the shift towards a bi-weekly waste collection schedule. The City of Hamilton should follow the lead of several surrounding municipalities, such as Halton Region, which have adopted bi-weekly waste management plans, creating higher waste diversion rates compared to Hamilton.²⁹ It is our belief that Hamilton carries a responsibility to ensure it does all that it can in the face of our climate emergency.

²⁶ McGreal, Ryan. 2012. "Bi-Weekly Collection More Effective Than One-Container Limit". *Raise The Hammer*. https://raisethehammer.org/article/1521/bi-weekly_collection_more_effective_than_one-container_limit

²⁷ Ibid, 26.

²⁸ Danko, John-Paul. 2019. "Landfill Garbage Diversion- A Cost Saving Opportunity For Ward 8 Taxpayers" *Ward 8 Hamilton*. <https://ward8hamilton.ca/landfill-garbage-diversion-a-cost-saving-opportunity-for-ward-8-taxpayers/>

²⁹ Halton Region. "Recycling and Waste Sorting Guide" Accessed August 7, 2019. <https://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Recycling-Waste/Waste-Recycling-Sorting-Guide>

ACCESSIBILITY

SNOW REMOVAL

Recommendation:

The City of Hamilton should fund a city-wide sidewalk snow removal service.

This past winter, the City received close to 2,500 complaints about snow-covered sidewalks and issued more than 900 cleanup orders by the end of February.³⁰ A “Snow and Tell” social media campaign, led by the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, also brought attention to the dangerous conditions in the city caused by uncleared sidewalks.³¹ In a recent survey of McMaster students, almost 20 percent of respondents said inaccessible sidewalks was one of their biggest safety concerns.³² To add to this problem, the City’s Snow Angels program, which connects volunteers to residents unable to clear snow, has regularly failed to meet demand.³³ Despite growth in volunteer recruitment since the initiation of the program, 21% of clients were unable to be matched with volunteers during the 2016-17 winter season.³⁴ The program was unable to accept new clients in the 2018-2019 winter season due to “overwhelming demand” and insufficient capacity.³⁵ It is clear that the current system for ensuring cleared sidewalks in Hamilton is not sufficient. Sidewalk removal is a matter of safety and equity for all citizens, and as such, the City should take over snow removal to ensure all sidewalks are cleared.

³⁰ Dongen, Matthew Van. “Hamilton to Study Sidewalk Snow-clearing amid Avalanche of Complaints.” *The Hamilton Spectator*. February 28, 2019. Accessed July 12, 2019. <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/9199953-hamilton-to-study-sidewalk-snow-clearing-amid-avalanche-of-complaints/>.

³¹ Dongen, Matthew Van. “Should the city of Hamilton clear your snowy sidewalk?” *The Hamilton Spectator*. January 23, 2019. Accessed July 12, 2019. <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/9135587-should-the-city-of-hamilton-clear-your-snowy-sidewalk-/>.

³² Your City Survey 2019, McMaster Student Union. (Unpublished).

³³ Craggs, S. “Snow Angels program isn’t working, some councillors say,” *CBC News*, Dec 10, 2013 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/headlines/snow-angel-program-isn-t-working-some-councillors-say-1.2457501>

³⁴ Emergency & Community Services Committee. *Information Report: 2016/2017 Snow Angels Program (CES14041(c))*. By Deb Clinton et al. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, 2017., <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=126651>.

³⁵ City of Hamilton. “Snow Angels” City of Hamilton, Feb 5, 2019 Accessed July 12, 2019. <https://www.hamilton.ca/social-services/support-programs/snow-angels>

The City currently maintains only 397 km of 2,445 km of sidewalk in Hamilton.³⁶ Under City bylaws, every resident is expected to clear any sidewalks adjacent to their property within 24 hours of the cessation of a snowfall. If they fail to do so and a complaint is filed, the City may issue a warning, followed by an inspection fee and a contracting fee.³⁷

A recent staff report presented to the General Issues Committee stated that the cost to provide city-wide snow-clearing service for a typical winter season would be \$5.053 million.³⁸ The McMaster Students Union believes a program at this cost would be a worthwhile investment moving forward, with regard to the City's obligations to resident safety and equity, as well as financial considerations. The same report recognized that a number of other major Ontario municipalities already provide snow-clearing service on all sidewalks and roads, including Toronto, London, Oakville, Burlington, St. Catharines and Mississauga.³⁹ Internationally, Sweden has adjusted their budgets to include snow clearing through a gender equity lens.⁴⁰ In doing so, they have prioritized certain day care entrances and bike lanes for snow clearing as women were more likely to use these pathways. Hamilton should follow their lead in assuming responsibility for the safety of its citizens and do so using an equity lens, allowing all Hamilton residents to navigate the city with ease.

³⁶ General Issues Committee. *Information Report: Winter Sidewalk Maintenance (PW 19022)*. By Bob Paul. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, Feb 28 2019. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=181817>

³⁷ City of Hamilton, By-law No. 03-296, Being a By-law to provide for the removal of snow and ice from roofs and sidewalks

³⁸ General Issues Committee. *Information Report: Winter Sidewalk Maintenance (PW 19022)*. By Bob Paul. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, Feb 28 2019. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=181817>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Tunney, C. Lunn, S. 2018 "How Bill Morneau may use Sweden's gender balanced snow-clearing to adjust Canadian budgets". CBC News: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/gender-analysis-budget-snow-sweden-1.4494640>

BY-LAWS

ENFORCEMENT BY-LAW OFFICERS

Recommendation:

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

The addition of four permanent Environmental By-Law Enforcement Officers from the Mohawk College Co-op Program to areas near the McMaster University campus starting in 2018 constitutes a small financial benefit for the City of Hamilton but compromises the sense of community felt by students living in these areas. Moreover, the additional officers have strained McMaster students' relationships with landlords, student officers, and the greater Hamilton community, which could affect Hamilton's ability to retain and attract highly-skilled graduates.

Each Student Officer assigned to the McMaster neighbourhoods costs approximately \$25,000 annually.⁴¹ Fines levied by these individuals are expected to be the means by which the investment is offset.⁴² In 2017, the pilot program with two Student Officers ran at full cost recovery, with \$63,000 in revenue generated in inspection fees for non-compliant properties.⁴³ However, adding officers did not clearly reduce the number of orders issued through the year. Further, the voluntary compliance rate obtained did not show a positive trend over the year, suggesting that the officers were not able to make a continuous positive impact in the yard hygiene of the community.

⁴¹ Planning Committee. *Information Report: One Year Pilot Program for Yard Maintenance Related By-laws in the McMaster Neighbourhoods (PED16260(a)) (Ward 1)* By Kelly Barnett. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, Feb 20, 2018. <https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=143233> (accessed July 12, 2019)

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Further, while the property owner is ostensibly responsible for paying any inspection fees, the reality is that student renters are often taken advantage of by bad landlords who pass fines onto them, increase rents, decrease services, or modify leases to unjustly burden students with yard maintenance responsibilities. As such, increased enforcement in the McMaster areas leads to adversarial relationships between students and landlords, and between students and the City. The effect runs counter to Hamilton's long-term goal and vision of retaining students and making Hamilton a good place for young people to live. For these reasons, the City of Hamilton should explore other, more productive means of achieving the current project's goals.

The primary stated objective of implementing additional Environmental By-Law Enforcement Officers within near-McMaster neighbourhoods was to improve voluntary by-law compliance rates.⁴⁴ However, other promising pro-active, education-focused solutions already exist which have yet to be formally adopted by the City. As such, the MSU proposes that the funding for the additional By-Law Enforcement Officers in McMaster neighbourhoods be diverted to prioritize by-law education initiatives.

One example of such initiatives historically run by the MSU is the Peer-to-Peer Program.

Through the Peer-to-Peer program, student volunteers engage with other students who have violated a yard maintenance or waste management by-law. The mandate of this program is to connect students with resources and information to educate, not police, possible by-laws infractions.⁴⁵

The Peer-to-Peer program attempts to improve awareness of by-laws to prevent further violations by students. Once scaled up, the program could achieve increased compliance in a more constructive, effective, and financially sound manner than the current punitive-focused enforcement system.

⁴⁴ Planning Committee. *Information Report: By-law Enforcement Service Levels in the McMaster University Neighbourhoods (Ward 1) (PED16260)* By Kelly Barnett. Hamilton: City of Hamilton, Dec 6, 2016. <https://pub-hamilton.es-cibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=123135> (accessed July 12, 2019)

⁴⁵ "About." McMaster Students Union. Accessed July 12, 2019. <https://www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/17-student-community-support-network-scsn/peer-to-peer-program/about>

The City could also invest in better promotion of information regarding by-laws in McMaster neighbourhoods to encourage compliance of by-laws and to minimize infraction rates instead of using additional Enforcement Officers. For example, Brock University has created a “Good Neighbour Guide” in partnership with the City of St. Catharines to promote by-law education and foster positive community relationships.⁴⁶ Students, staff, and Brock police canvas neighbourhoods every fall to promote by-law education and foster positive community relationships.⁴⁷ Through similar initiatives, the City of Hamilton can expect to save the up-front investments of more than \$100,000 in enforcement officers, if not considerably more, when considering the relatively low cost of supporting the MSU’s ongoing efforts to improve by-law awareness and compliance amongst McMaster students.

⁴⁶ *Good Neighbour Guide*, September 2018. St. Catharines: Brock University, 2018. <https://brocku.ca/student-life/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/Good-Neighbour-Guide.pdf>

⁴⁷ Cheevers, Melinda. “Brock University, municipalities gear up for St. Patrick’s Day weekend parties.” *NiagaraThisWeek* - St. Catharines. March 11, 2019. Accessed July 12, 2019 <https://www.niagarathisweek.com/news-story/9217143-brock-university-municipalities-gear-up-for-st-patrick-s-day-weekend-parties/>

