



August 10, 2020

Dear Mayor Eisenberger and Members of Council,

We are writing to you with respect to the 2026 Commonwealth Games bid. For reasons that we outline in the paragraphs that follow, Environment Hamilton is not in support of the City of Hamilton endorsing or helping to finance this bid.

The Commonwealth Games, as the name makes clear, are a colonial project. In light of ongoing efforts by Canadians to work towards true reconciliation and recognising the centuries of oppression that Indigenous people continue to face from colonial and Commonwealth governments around the world, organizations that stand in solidarity with Indigenous people ought to oppose the Commonwealth Games by virtue of the brutal colonial brand they represent.

Further, the City of Hamilton simply cannot afford to host the games. Bid organizers assert that there will be no impact on the municipal levy by repeatedly suggesting that provincial and federal tax dollars will support the games. But at the end of the day there is only one taxpayer. We are deeply concerned about the potential cost to Hamilton taxpayers.

Adding to the financial concerns, there is significant risk of cost overruns for communities that pursue international games as evidenced by the experiences of past Olympic, Pan Am and Commonwealth Games host cities; the increasing costs currently facing the City of Birmingham as the host of the 2022 Commonwealth Games serve as a cautionary tale¹.

Instead of supporting a Commonwealth Games bid, Environment Hamilton urges the City of Hamilton to focus on addressing priority concerns in our community, including:

- The desperate need for more social housing²
- The estimated \$60million municipal budget shortfall due to the pandemic
- The municipality's \$3.3billion infrastructure deficit.
- The need for improved public transit - including higher order transit like LRT.
- The immediate need to address the climate emergency through investment in stormwater infrastructure upgrades, green infrastructure, enhanced active transportation infrastructure, local agricultural land preservation to ensure food security, and local renewable

¹ See '*Huge Athlete's Village is risk to finances of city council*' in the July 30, 2020 Birmingham Post. <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/birmingham-post/20200730/281809991227531>

² The city's affordable housing wait list includes [15,400 people](#) and it continues to grow. Nearly half [half \(45%\)](#) of Hamilton's 60,000 renter households pay unaffordable rents. Evictions in Hamilton have [more than doubled in the last 10 years](#). The most recent point-in-time homelessness survey conducted in 2018 by the City of Hamilton counted [338 homeless individuals and 48 homeless families](#), though staff acknowledge this is an underestimate that fails to capture Hamilton's hidden homeless population.

energy systems, to name a few.

As challenging as the list is, these priority issues present an opportunity for our city to pursue the path of a 'just recovery for all'. There are conversations happening across the globe right now about the idea of just recovery. Environment Hamilton, along with hundreds of organizations from across Canada, has endorsed six core principles for just recovery and we urge the City of Hamilton to embrace these principles too. The six principles are as follows:

- 1. Put people's health and wellbeing first, no exceptions**
- 2. Strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people**
- 3. Prioritize the needs of workers and communities**
- 4. Build resilience to prevent future crises**
- 5. Build solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders**
- 6. Uphold Indigenous rights and work in partnership with Indigenous peoples.**

See justrecoveryforall.ca

We urge the city to adopt and implement these principles within the context of the climate emergency declaration. It has already been a year and a half since Hamilton City Council unanimously declared the climate emergency yet action on the ground has been extremely limited and, in some instances, counterproductive. Over recent months, all but one member of Public Health's 'Climate & Air Quality' staff team have been redeployed to support the pandemic response. Staff in other departments who focus on climate work have also been redeployed. This has meant that most municipal climate work has ground to a halt and precious months have been lost. Given the looming planetary disaster that is already unfolding, continuing to direct limited municipal staff and financial resources to the Commonwealth Games bid seems wildly misdirected especially when redeployment of staff focused on crucial climate work has occurred at the same time. Instead, Environment Hamilton sees huge potential for the municipality to embrace a just recovery approach to not only address the impacts of the pandemic, but to set our community on a course that is just, inclusive and that begins to address the climate emergency in meaningful ways.

We urge the City of Hamilton to say NO to the Commonwealth Games bid and focus instead on building a Hamilton that is sustainable, inclusive and climate resilient. A pandemic recovery plan with this mandate is what we need to invest our time, energy and resources into right now to help Hamilton survive and thrive into the future. We need a just recovery for all!

Yours truly,



Cindy Gangaram
Chair, Board of Directors
Environment Hamilton