## YEAR PLAN

### MSU Associate Vice President: Municipal Affairs

### Maanvi Dhillon

### 2020-2021

(submitted November 9 2020)

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### **MSU logo 2001**

**OFFICE OF THE**

***ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT: MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS***

**INTRODUCTION**

Dear Assembly and MSU members,

While the effects of the pandemic do not seem close to an end and the future of school is brimming with uncertainties, there are things we know. We know that students, in this year and future years, continue to reside in Hamilton and rely on the city and community for many services and supports, from mobility through the transportation network to advocacy of local organizations for causes they care about. As long-term decisions are made by the municipal government, the University and other stakeholders regarding our future, it is essential that student priorities have influence and their concerns are communicated in all discussions. MSU Advocacy’s work this year is as important as ever as and I am excited to be leading advocacy at the municipal level for our team.

During this year, I hope to build on the MSU’s ongoing efforts and past advocacy priorities while also addressing new local concerns that demand our attention and commitment. Values that orient our approach include active student participation, equity and anti-racism, sustainability, and collaboration. In practice, a city shaped by these values would offer a convenient and multi-modal transit network, safe and accessible housing, community-oriented safety practices, and multiple channels for the public to provide feedback and participate in municipal politics. It would be welcoming, safe, supportive, accessible, engaging, and enjoyable for students both in their time at McMaster and in the future if they choose to stay in Hamilton. These goals guide the initiatives I have developed for this year, which can be found in my year plan.

A strength of previous MSU advocacy has been the emphasis on collaboration. Hamilton has a rich network of community organizers, passionate city councillors and staff members, hard-working advocacy organizations, and exceptional local journalists. I hope to continue building relationships between local stakeholders and MSU students in order to strengthen our advocacy networks and push for transformative, long-term change.

I am excited to get to work on these objectives and to collaborate with the MSU community in order to improve students’ experiences of Hamilton.

Best,

Maanvi Dhillon

**GOALS**

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| Objective 1 | ***Advocate for a sustainable and equitable economic and health City of Hamilton COVID-19 recovery plan*** |
| Description | As the City of Hamilton continues to respond to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and develop strategies for the future, it is crucial that the MSU has an impact on the city’s recovery plans. Our input should help guide long-term decisions towards a more sustainable and equitable vision for the Hamilton community and ensure that student consultation is an essential aspect of decision processes. We should lobby for the city to address systemic problems and overarching challenges like inequity and climate change – ongoing crises overlapping with the global pandemic that will exacerbate its consequences if neglected – in their response so we can collectively aim for Hamilton to emerge from the pandemic as a more resilient city. |
| Benefits | * Promote a long-term, progressive view of what Hamilton could/should be
* Ensure that McMaster students will be represented in significant city decisions
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| Difficulties | * Unsure how much access there is to public engagement in COVID-recovery deliberations
* Councillors seems especially concerned about the economic implications and maintaining a balanced budget rather than investing in areas of need
 |
| How? | * Stay up-to-date on City Council plans by watching meetings, reading documents, consulting stakholders, attending association meetings, and reading the news
* Delegate when necessary over the next several months to represent students on various issues
* Meet with Councillor Wilson where possible to discuss student priorities in city recovery plan
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| Partners | * MSU MA Committee
* MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
* MSU President Giancarlo Da-Ré
* Hamilton City Councillors
* Hamilton Transit Alliance
* Hamilton Youth Steering Committee
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| Objective 2 | ***Promote active and sustainable transportation (incl. LRT, bike sharing, bike lanes, public transit)*** |
| Description | * LRT: The MSU is strongly supportive of efforts to build an LRT system in Hamilton given the numerous benefits it would provide to the Hamilton community and McMaster students. In response to the Hamilton Transportation Task Force’s recommendation to direct provincial funds towards building the LRT, the Ontario government has indicated interest in completing the project and is doing a technical review of options. The Laborers’ international Union of North America (LiUNA) pitched a proposal to build the project using a mixture of private and public sector funds, and the federal government has communicated with provincial officials about contributing funding. Whether the federal government will actually commit to providing funds, or whether the province will opt for LRT as opposed to other options like bus rapid transit, is unclear at the moment, so the MSU should continue paying close attention to announcements and lobbying as needed
* Bike lanes: Given student transportation needs, during the pandemic and generally speaking, we should continue lobbying for expanded bike infrastructure in Ward 1 and across Hamilton. This includes supporting long-term capital investment in projects like bike lanes and working with Ward 1’s Councillor Wilson on ward-specific improvements.
* Bike share: After Uber terminated their contract to run Hamilton’s SoBi bike share system in May, the City found a temporary funding model to sustain the bike share until February 2021. The MSU should lobby to ensure that the City finds a permanent funding solution to maintain the SoBi system, including the possibility of investing city funds into the system’s operation.
* Public transit: Given cuts to the HSR made in response to this year’s pandemic, as well as the potential cuts to be made in the 2021 budget in accordance with revenue losses from 2020, the MSU should continue lobbying for comprehensive, convenient and accessible transit for students. This means ensuring the maintenance of key routes for students in the 2021 year, consistent summer service, and continued commitment to long-term plans and improvements.
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| Benefits | * An integrated, multi-model transportation network will make Hamilton more accessible, convenient and appealing to students and residents. Improved connectivity in the city will strengthen economic, cultural and other kinds of engagement
* The LRT will enable students to travel into the city and to campus with ease, encouraging more engagement and exploration of Hamilton
* The safety and accessibility of proper cycling infrastructure and bike share will encourage more students to ride bikes
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| Difficulties | * LRT: The status of the LRT project remains unconfirmed by the province. Further, planned bike lane expansions in Ward 1 were historically based on the planned LRT project, so plans may have to be altered to reflect the current Ward 1 transportation network.
* Bike lanes: Attitudes towards expanding bike infrastructure vary across city council, and among councillors of rural wards
* Bike share: Many councillors are against using public money for bike share.
* Public transit: The impact of COVID-19 on the HSR ridership and and finances may prevent increased or even maintained service
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| How? | * LRT: We will wait for updates on the federal government’s interest in the LRT project, as well as the provincial government’s announcement following their technical review. We will continue to voice our support of LRT and lobby to the appropriate groups if the province changes its $1 billion commitment towards the LRT. I will look for LRT updates from the Hamilton Transit Alliance, where I represent the MSU.
* Bike lanes: In October we met with Councillor Wilson and discussed the priority of bike infrastructure improvements, which she is supportive of. We will continue discussions with Councillor Wilson and work on identifying specific routes that would be most optimal for students. I will continue work from the previous AVP MA in communicating with Cycle Hamilton and Environment Hamilton on this issue, as well as representing the MSU on McMaster’s Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities Committee. Building these relationships will help in developing more informed and coordinated long-term advocacy efforts.
* Bike share: We will lobby on this priority to City Council throughout the budget process and keep watching for staff updates on the process of searching for a new bike share operator.
* Public transit: We will lobby against permanent reductions in HSR service and for increased service in our interactions with City Council.
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| Partners | * MA Committee
* VP Education Ryan Tse
* Councillor Wilson
* City Councillors
* HTA, Cycle Hamilton and Environment Hamilton
* McMaster’s Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities Committee, includes university staff, city staff, and other local transportation experts
* HBSI: Chelsea Cox, Executive Director
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| Objective 3 | ***Build partner relationships with other post-secondary institutions in Hamilton to improve municipal advocacy*** |
| Description | While McMaster is a significant stakeholder in Hamilton, sometimes MSU influence can seem limited to certain wards and councillors despite our students’ engagement and presence across the city. Our advocacy interests often encompass city-wide priorities like developing a minimum cycling grid to improve bike lane connectivity, ending area rating for transit, or implementing a landlord licensing program. Partnering with student associations from other post-secondary institutions in Hamilton like Mohawk College and Redeemer University would help us develop coordinated advocacy and ultimately strengthen the reach and influence of our demands. Our interests are likely to align with other associations advancing undergraduate student interests. As such, I want to reach out and hold a meeting with other representatives of schools in Hamilton to begin building a long-term relationship. |
| Benefits | * Stronger influence on more City Councillors would greatly increase the chances of our shared municipal priorities
 |
| Difficulties | * Smaller schools may not have representatives specifically advocating municipal affairs, so I’m not sure how much focus they put on things like the Hamilton budget
 |
| How? | * Research the appropriate contacts in respective student organizations
* Organize a Zoom meeting to discuss municipal priorities
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| Partners | * Mohawk Students’ Association
* Redeemer Student Senate
* VP Education Ryan Tse
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| Objective 4 | ***Advocate for active measures to investigate and combat anti-racism across Hamilton, including reduced City of Hamilton funding for the Hamilton Police Service*** |
| Description | In response to this year’s public discussions on systemic anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in the police and other public institutions, and given the Hamilton Police Service’s record of conflict and hostility towards marginalized groups, the MSU should lobby for measures by the university and the City to combat systemic racism and reduce the power of policing in the city. This will include demands for cutting the budget of the HPS and breaking ties between McMaster University and the HPS. Additionally, the city’s planned Anti-Racism Resource Centre continues to undergo development and change since it was paused in February 2019. Last year, Council voted to allow the city set up the revised HARRC rather than allow for community involvement, which disappointed community members. The MSU should continue watching as the HARRC is set up and where possible, advocate for community management and leadership. The MSU should also support plans to build a separate multi-purpose hub for members of marginalized communities in Hamilton, which City staff will present a business plan to Council for in June 2021 (delays due to COVID-19). |
| Benefits | * Improve community safety and trust by addressing and working to dismantle policing and transition to community-based safety models
* Increased investment in services that address issues like poverty, mental health, and lack of opportunity, especially for BIPOC populations
 |
| Difficulties | * City Council and the Police Services Board are both opposed to reducing police funding. We have less data to support our advocacy efforts than municipalities like Toronto; a recent report by the HPS Chief Eric Girt in response to the calls to defund the police did not provide detailed information on the type of calls the police receives (violent crime, mental health/person in crisis, etc) and the HPS does not collect race-based data on public encounters.
 |
| How? | * Call on the university to cut ties with the HPS
* Delegate to the city and Police Services Board on reducing funding and collecting race-based data
* Advocate for community-run HARRC
* Consult with local community members and engage students in calling for a re-imagining of policing on campus and in Hamilton
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| Partners | * MSU Board of Directors
* MA Committee
* City Council
* MSU general members
* Local advocacy groups, e.g. Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, Black Lives Matter
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| Objective 5 | ***Implement lighting enhancements in off-campus student neighbourhoods near McMaster based on 2019-20 off-campus lighting survey*** |
| Description | The Municipal Affairs committee conducted an off-campus lighting consultation during the 2019-20 year to gather student feedback on where lighting is poor in off-campus student neighbourhoods. Those results were compiled in a report and sent to Councillor Wilson. The MSU should continue to work with Councillor Wilson and the Ward 1 team to implement lighting improvements in the identified areas of concern, such as Sanders Blvd. |
| Benefits | * Improved safety in off-campus student neighbourhoods
* Demonstrate responsiveness of municipal advocacy for students
 |
| Difficulties | * Councillor Wilson informed the previous AVP MA that they have limited ward-specific funds to address poor lighting so we will have to prioritize certain areas and consult with her team
 |
| How? | * Meet with Councillor Wilson and the Ward 1 Team to determine next steps (accessing funding, working with city staff)
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| Partners | * VP (Education) Ryan Tse
* Councillor Wilson and Ward 1 Office
* MA Committee
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| Objective 6 | ***Implement landlord rating system on Mac Off-Campus Housing website*** |
| Description | 2019-20 VP (Education) Shemar Hackett and AVP MA Ryan Tse began working with the university in January to implement a landlord rating system on the Mac Off-Campus Housing website. We should continue those discussions and work toward implementation of the project. |
| Benefits | * Guard against unsafe houses and predatory landlords
* Provide a centralized hub for finding houses
 |
| Difficulties | * There may potentially be resistance from landlords as to how the rating system will work
 |
| How? | * Work with university staff to finalize format of rating system on website
* Explore possibility of transferring rating data from Yomes (former MSU landlord rating system host/partner)
	+ Previous AVP MA worked with Oleg Lights (Yomes founder) to have that data sent to Pauline Taggart (MSU Network Administrator) last year
* Launch rating system/website and promote to students and landlords
	+ Post Instagram stories about how to use the system
	+ Raffle for students to rate landlords/properties
 |
| Partners | * MSU VP Education Fawizyah Isah
* MA Committee
* Holly Gibson, McMaster Housing and Conference Services
* Kevin Beatty, McMaster Housing and Conference Services
* Oleg Lights, Yomes founder
* Pauline Taggart, MSU Network Administrator
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| Objective 7 | ***Work with local and university stakeholders to increase affordable housing supply for McMaster students*** |
| Description | Given McMaster’s growing student population and the limited housing supply surrounding campus, there are concerns in the University and among students about a lack of affordable housing options, both on and off campus. While the University has taken steps to build off-campus residence buildings, their solution does not appear to sufficiently address the shortage beyond first-year students. Students should not be forced into vulnerable positions as renters having to deal with rising rents or unsafe housing conditions because of limited supply. Consequently, we should conduct research and consult with stakeholders to develop a better understanding of this issue and develop recommendations to advocate for in future years. |
| Benefits | * Students will be able to find affordable homes near campus
* Students will be less likely to be coerced by predatory landlords or live in unsafe properties
* This issue a long-term and urgent priority amongst the undergraduate population
 |
| Difficulties | * Local residents near McMaster have expressed concern about tall student residential buildings off-campus
* Landlords are a powerful stakeholder group in Hamilton, and recommendations disadvantaging them will be strongly opposed
* Some housing regulations can displace or negatively impact current renters, so careful research is required
 |
| How? | * Conduct research with MA committee on current state of housing supply on- and off- campus
* Meet with university stakeholders, Councillor Wilson, and local community associations to advocate for increased housing supply
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| Partners | * MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
* MA Committee
* Councillor Wilson
* Local community associations (Ainslie Wood Community Association, Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association, ACORN)
* University staff
	+ Gord Arbeau, McMaster Communications
	+ Sean van Koughnett, McMaster Associate Vice Presidents (Students and Learning)
	+ Kevin Beatty, McMaster Housing and Conference Services
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| Objective 8 | ***Submit Municipal Pre-Budget Submission and lobby city councillors*** |
| Description | Every year, the MSU releases the MSU Municipal Pre-Budget Submission with a series of recommendations for the City of Hamilton budget the following year. After releasing the budget, the MSU meets with city councillors to lobby for the recommendations. Our team has finalized recommendations and begun reaching out to councillors to schedule meetings. We should meet with as many councillors as possible, and hope to complete most meetings by the end of first semester, while some may occur in January. Our recommendations include accessibility (snow removal), transit (area rating and long-term funding), cycling, and police defunding.  |
| Benefits | * Advocate for city-wide changes that will have create both immediate and long-standing changes for students living in Hamilton
* Strengthen relations between student community and municipal politics; demonstrate student interest in Hamilton’s development to City Council while ensuring our priorities are influencing budget decisions
 |
| Difficulties | * The process has been somewhat delayed due to the transition period between myself and the previous AVP MA
* Councillors are often dismissive or skeptical of student concerns, especially more progressive priorities. Persuading these councillors, and especially those in non-urban wards with different priorities, will be challenging.
* The City may be hesitant to invest in our priorities, including long-term aspects of transit, given the impact of the pandemic on finances and losses from revenue in areas like transit
 |
| How? | * Recommendations have been finalized and the submission is almost completed (beginning of November)
* Schedule lobby meetings with councillors (end of November – beginning of January)
* Delegate to City Council on budget submission in January 2021
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| Partners | * MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
* MSU Advocacy and Policy Research Assistant
* MA Committee
* City Councillors
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| Objective 9 | ***Complete 2021 Your City survey*** |
| Description | The MSU conducted an MSU Your City survey in 2016 and 2018 to gather general student feedback on their experience in Hamilton. It is a useful way to gauge student perspectives and priorities in terms of municipal issues like housing, transit, safety, sustainability and other policy areas. These results can inform future municipal advocacy, which is useful given that this AVP portfolio is still a relatively new one. It would be helpful to know whether changes have occurred in student opinions and experience since the last surveys, as well as to inquire about new topics that were not covered in the previous years the survey was run. |
| Benefits | * Develop a thorough understanding of student perspectives on municipal issues
* Improve the responsiveness of the MSU’s municipal advocacy
 |
| Difficulties | * Promoting the survey to a large number of students: getting sufficient responses for surveys is already difficult, and given the online schooling this year, we expect less students are living in Hamilton than in ordinary years
 |
| How? | * Work with MA Committee over first semester to design survey and promotion strategy (finalize questions by end of term, and develop promotions strategy by at least mid-January)
* Run survey sometime in late January or early February
* Compile results and write report by end of March 2021
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| Partners | * MA Committee
* MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
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| Objective 10 | ***Continue MSU representation on local associations/committees*** |
| Description | I will continue the previous AVP’s representation of the MSU on a number of local community associations, including the Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association (AWWCA), the Ainslie Wood Community Association (AWCA), the Hamilton Transit Alliance (HTA), and the City of Hamilton Youth Steering Committee (YSC). It is important for the MSU to represent students on these associations so that student voices will be heard in key community and municipal decisions. |
| Benefits | * Represent student perspectives to various groups around the city to inform important decisions
* Ensure the MSU has a strong understanding of the concerns of other community residents besides students to come up with innovative, collaborative solutions to problems
* Strengthen relationships with community leaders
 |
| Difficulties | * Community associations are often not very receptive to student priorities
 |
| How? | * Attend regular meetings for each group
* Ask MA Committee members to attend meetings I cannot attend
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| Partners | * AWCA
* AWWCA
* YSC
* HTA
* McMaster’s Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities Committee
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| Objective 11 | ***Host campaign to increase student engagement with municipal affairs by spreading awareness of methods for engagement, supporting community organizations and advocates, and providing opportunities for students to directly communicate with political representatives and City Staff*** |
| Description | The MSU should strive to make municipal engagement appealing and accessible to students. I want to plan a campaign lasting approximately 1-2 weeks focussing on municipal civic engagement. While exact topics will be decided upon with the MA committee, some ideas for topics include:* Spotlight on political and advocacy organizations such as HWDSB Kids Need Help, Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, Environment Hamilton, etc
* Explaining methods for engagement such as participating in Engage Hamilton’s online consultations, contacting Councillor Wilson, delegating to Council and committees, etc
* Interview and Q&A with Councillor Wilson and potentially other related people, such as staff working on community engagement for the City
 |
| Benefits | * More student involvement in municipal issues that directly affect them, e.g. transit, housing
* Clarifying the scope and role of the MA team within MSU Advocacy to the broader student population
 |
| Difficulties | * Municipal politics may not have much appeal among students; students are busy and may face barriers in staying up-to-date and involved in municipal issues
 |
| How? | * Reach out to prospective partners to request their participation as needed by beginning of January
* Finalize event and promotions plans by end of January alongside the MA committee
* Host event in late February – early March
 |
| Partners | * MA Committee
* Ward 1 Councillor Maureen Wilson
* MSU Communications Officer Tabitha Kerr
* MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
* MSU Director of Marketing and Communications Michael Wooder
* Engage Hamilton team: interested in contacting John Ariyo, Manager of Community Initatives
* Local journalists: Samantha Craggs, Joey Coleman
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| Objective 12 | ***Monitor the Implementation of the Landlord Licensing Pilot Project*** |
| Description | The City of Hamilton discussed a two-year landlord licensing pilot project in December 2018 for Wards 1 and 8, brought forth by the Rental Housing Sub-Committee. The project had previously been delayed, as staff needed to draft a bylaw in order to begin implementing it, and may be delayed further given disruptions related to COVID-19. Given the history of MSU advocacy in support of this project, and the great value of exploring a solution that would address significant concerns for McMaster student renters, we should watch for updates on this project and ensure it is formally approved by City Council. We should meet with Councillor Wilson and delegate to relevant committees to make sure that student priorities are encapsulated in the pilot’s framework. Once implemented, we should also monitor the impact of the project on student experiences in their houses and with landlords. |
| Benefits | * Implement standards for safe properties and keep landlords accountable
 |
| Difficulties | * Some landlords and councilors are in opposition to the project, saying it will make rent more expensive and fail to address problems
 |
| How? | 1. Monitor City Council discussions, and delegate to council if needed.
2. Once the project is implemented, reach out to students on the impact of the project:
	* Release a short video via social media explaining what details of the licensing project and what students should expect from a licensed landlord
	* Run a short online anonymous form where students can give feedback on the effects of landlord licensing
	* Hold 1-2 tenant rights education events on campus in second semester for students to know what they are responsible for, and how to deal with unsafe houses or non-compliant landlords.
3. Attend association meetings to hear the feedback of other Ward 1 residents on licensing.
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| Partners | * MA Committee
* Ward 1 Councillor Maureen Wilson
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| Objective 13 | ***Develop research resources to provide a foundation for future municipal advocacy work in the MSU***  |
| Description | Municipal issues can be difficult to understand for a host of reasons: inaccessible resources like the City website, institutional knowledge about processes (like committees, staff reports, budget process etc.) that takes time to develop, and large number of diverse stakeholders to keep track of. Like other MSU Advocacy portfolios, we should build research infrastructure by developing materials that can carry over and inform future advocacy initiatives. Collecting and sharing previous research, especially on long-term issues like area rating for transit and police defunding, would strengthen future advocacy efforts and overall improve the cohesion of the MSU’s work across administrations/years. I would like to start on this by developing Affordable Housing, Storm Water Fees, and Police Defunding info packs this year. |
| Benefits | * Prepare MSU representatives for meetings and other forms of advocacy on municipal affairs areas
 |
| Difficulties | * These issues may update rapidly over the years, and tracking details (like extended deadlines for projects, or the date of committee presentations) can be difficult
* Can be hard to do through committee work, as members may have less overall knowledge on municipal affairs in Hamilton
 |
| How? | * + - Work closely and supportively with the MA committee to create an Affordable Housing Info Pack (research and meet with stakeholders by December, writing report in January, and advocating for recommendations in later half of second term)
* Work with the MSU Advocacy and Policy Research Assistant to create a Defund the Police and Storm Water Fees Info Pack before the end of second term
 |
| Partners | * MA Committee
* MSU Advocacy and Policy Research Assistant
* MSU VP Education Ryan Tse
 |

**GOALS to strive for**

**List 5 things you would like to have completed during the fall term (1st)**

1. Publish municipal pre-budget submission and meet with as many city councillors as possible
2. Meet with stakeholders to discuss housing supply issue, including university stakeholders and Councillor Wilson
3. Finish design of Your City Survey
4. Reach out to student organizations of other post-secondary institutions in Hamilton
5. Meet with Councillor Wilson to discuss landlord licensing pilot project and lighting survey results

**List 5 things you would like to have completed during the winter term (2nd)\*\* Not 100% set yet, will reassess later in first term.**

1. Host awareness week on municipal civic engagement, including an event with Maureen Wilson
2. Conduct and summarize 2021 Your City Survey
3. Delegate to City Council for municipal pre-budget submission
4. Complete Affordable Housing Info Pack and meet with stakeholders to discuss identified problems
5. Transition new AVP Municipal affairs