



REPORT

From the office of the...

Vice-President (Education) / AVP: Municipal Affairs

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Ryan Tse, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT: SRA 20H Report
DATE: Oct 18th 2020

*NOTE: With the vacancy of the AVP: Municipal Affairs position as of Sep 2020, I have been chairing the Municipal Affairs committee on an interim basis.

Progress on Yearplan

Municipal Pre-Budget Submission

I have been working with the Research Assistant (Kiran Bassi) to finalize the recommendations we are planning to submit to the City of Hamilton in advance of the 2021 annual city budget. Recommendation areas include sidewalk snow clearing, long-term investment in a Hamilton public bike-share system, and the elimination of transit area rating. I have mentioned this project to the committee in our first two meetings and the chance for them to give input into the recommendations and attend lobby meetings with councillors (though it is unclear how this will happen virtually).

Continue MSU representation on local associations/committees

The AVP: Municipal Affairs maintained MSU representation on local committees throughout the summer, including the Hamilton Transit Alliance and the Hamilton Youth Steering Committee (though this committee is now on pause due to COVID). The MSU has also joined the newly formed Committee on Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities (see below). Board meetings for the Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association (AWWCA) and Ainslie Wood Community Association (AWCA) have been paused until further notice. However, the new AVP:MA should participate when meetings resume.

Past Events, Projects, & Activities

Hamilton Sobi Bikeshare

In May, Uber cancelled their contract to operate the Sobi Hamilton bikeshare system ahead of the planned expiry date of Feb 2021. The MSU sent a delegation at that time to City Council calling on them to continue funding and worked with the Committee on Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities to support the continuation of the system. The bikeshare system was taken over by Hamilton Bike Share Inc. (HBSI), a local non-profit. HBSI will operate the system until next February. Currently, there is no contract in place beyond February. I will continue to work with the new AVP:MA, the Municipal Affairs Committee and the Committee on Multi-Modal Transportation for

Healthy Communities to call on the city to ensure that the bikeshare system continues beyond February.

Anti-racism and reduced Hamilton Police Services budget

In July 2020, the AVP: Municipal Affairs worked with the President and Vice-President (Education) to send a delegation to City Council detailing the marginalization of Black and Indigenous populations across Canada, questioning the large Hamilton Police Services Budget (\$171 million) and calling for the city to divest money from the police and re-allocate funds towards a re-imagined safety plan, including social services and other community supports. The city has not committed to any reductions at this point. This advocacy point will require continued efforts from the AVP:MA and potentially the Municipal Affairs Committee.

Committee on Multi-Modal Transportation for Healthy Communities

Over the summer, this committee was formed with members representing the university, the general student population, local transportation advocacy groups, and the MSU. The goal of the committee is to promote multi-modal transportation mainly on and around campus. The AVP: Municipal Affairs regularly represented the MSU on this committee throughout the summer and will hopefully continue to do so. The committee recently drafted a Terms of Reference document, and one main goal for the year is looking at how to expand and improve cycling infrastructure in the McMaster area. I believe this committee is a great way to build partnerships and coordinate efforts on projects that will make student transportation on and around campus more safe, enjoyable, and sustainable.

Upcoming Events, Projects, & Activities

Municipal Pre-Budget Submission

I am working with the Research Assistant to finalize the recommendations. It should be released publicly by the end of October. I am planning on setting up lobby meetings with City Councillors throughout October and November to discuss our recommendations. This is a great opportunity for Committee members to get involved with lobbying by participating in the lobbying meetings.

Lighting survey and implementing enhancements

Once the new AVP:MA is hired (by next week), I will work with them to contact the Councillor Maureen Wilson and the Ward 1 Office to send the results of the lighting survey we conducted last year and request targeted improvements in off-campus student neighbourhoods. This could be a Committee project for the year, depending on the response of the Ward 1 Office

Sobi bikeshare and continued promotion of active and sustainable transportation

There is potential for the MA Committee to work with the Sustainability Education Committee to continue to do research, lobby local stakeholders and run campaigns to promote the use of sustainable transportation like Hamilton Bikeshare. The status of the Hamilton LRT project is currently unclear and there is opportunity to make this a Committee focus for the year if the new AVP decides to do so. There are also issues around public transit safety and investment which could be a Committee focus this year.

Landlord rating system on Mac Off-Campus Housing Website

We are working with McMaster Housing and Conference Services to integrate a landlord/property rating feature into the Mac Off-Campus Housing Website. This project was delayed due to COVID but will hopefully resume in first semester. It may be helpful to have the Committee be an active part of this project.

Current Challenges

With no AVP: Municipal Affairs over the past month, I have overseen the MA Committee and the AVP portfolio. It has been challenging at times, but I am grateful for the support of the Research Assistant and the Board on moving forward with our municipal advocacy priorities. The committee has not started on any projects yet. We have discussed the most recent yearplan from the former AVP:MA and what projects they may want to work on, but because of the upcoming transition to a newly hired AVP, I believe it would be best for that person to form their own yearplan and organize Committee projects for the year since they will be taking over as chair of the Committee.

It has also been a tumultuous time for the City, as Hamilton continues to work through the COVID pandemic. Many projects and investments have been put on hold, and there is no clear path forward. It will be a challenge for us as student representatives to monitor the City's plan for long-term recovery and to strategically organize our advocacy to push for long-term goals such as transit investment and sustainability initiatives.

Volunteers

It has been great so far to work with the Municipal Affairs Committee so far! I have been very impressed with their enthusiasm and I am confident that they will work well with the new AVP to fight for a better Hamilton for McMaster students.

Best,
Ryan Tse
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