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| TO: | Members of the Student Representative Assembly |
| FROM: | Maanvi Dhillon, AVP Municipal Affairs |
| SUBJECT: | SRA 20N Report |
| DATE: | February 1st, 2021 |

Dear Members of the SRA,

I hope the winter semester is treating everyone well. It’s been moving quickly for Municipal Affairs projects, which is exciting! I am glad that we found ways to do meaningful work and make contributions to our long-term municipal priorities even when many of us are far from campus. Budget deliberations have begun in Hamilton and it’s interesting to witness that process and see how much about the city is determined by decisions made at this time. I am proud of our work in influencing these choices and expressing the values of McMaster students to local stakeholders. It really has been a team effort behind our municipal advocacy, and I am feeling extra grateful for the support of the MA committee and the Education Team. Below is an overview of my activities and recent projects––feel free to reach out to me with questions or feedback on anything.

**PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN**

* **Objective 8 Municipal Budget Submission (also Objective 2 Promote active and sustainable transportation)**
  + Since my last report, we met with several city councillors and the mayor regarding the MSU’s 2021 Budget submission. We were not able to meet with as many councillors as last year, but the conversations we had were productive and others have been sent a copy of the submission to review. I will also delegate to the council on our recommendations on Monday February 8th. Overall, this process has been rewarding and I am thankful for the effort both Ryan (VP Ed) and Kiran (MA Research Assistant) have put into it.
* **Objective 9 2021 Your City Survey**
  + The survey was launched in early January, with great help from the hard-working members of our Municipal Affairs Committee and the MSU Communications team. We have had an encouraging response rate, so thank you to the SRA members who promoted this on your social media channels! Once completed, our committee will begin analyzing the data and writing a report on our findings.
* **Objective 7 Affordable housing supply**
  + We conducted several consultation meetings for our housing research, including with University staff, Councillor Wilson, and a private developer. The committee is now working on a report with research on issues related to student housing supply and development, as well as some preliminary recommendations to be further explored by the MSU. We have also met with Kevin Beatty (Housing and Conference Services Director) to discuss changes that have the potential to be implemented in the near future, like improved data collection on the off-campus housing market. Beyond this, we are hoping to ensure continuity with the housing advocacy progress for next year, both through the report and potentially through a future MSU committee or task force.
* **Objective 6 Landlord rating system on Mac Off-Campus Housing website**
  + We had meetings with McMaster’s Housing and Conference Services Department to discuss the online landlord rating tool, as well as other improvements for the housing website to further protect student interests. We will continue that work this semester and will advocate for changes to be implemented by the end of the term.
* **Objective 5 Off-campus lighting improvements**
  + We met with Hamilton city staff in December to discuss lighting concerns based on the results of last year’s off-campus lighting survey. Their team will be conducting scans of the streets highlighted in our report and they expect that most can be improved with simple enhancements. Some streets (such as Sanders Blvd. in Ainslie Wood North) require complicated infrastructure changes, so city staff will study those possibilities in order to prepare for future changes. I will follow up on this process later in the semester, and I look forward to seeing tangible changes result from the work of last year’s MA committee.
* **Objective 4 Reduced funding for the Hamilton Police Services**
  + We have advocated for reduced HPS funding in our Municipal Budget Submission and in our meetings with city councillors. Also, our request to delegate to the Hamilton Police Services Board was approved, so we will appear at their meeting near the end of February to express our recommendations and concerns.
* **Objective 10 MSU representation on local associations**
  + I have continued representing McMaster students both on the Hamilton Transit Alliance and the Hamilton Youth Steering Committee. Both groups are doing excellent work in advocating to city council on areas like transit funding, which has been jeopardized by the pandemic, as well as youth mental health services.
* **Objective 3 Build partner relationships with other post-secondary institutions in Hamilton**
  + Ryan organized this initiative and we met with student leaders from both Mohawk College and Redeemer University. We are planning to conduct a campaign this semester to express our shared municipal interests, as well as continuing our collaboration next year.

**PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

* **Municipal Budget Submission**
  + This was published and can be found here: <https://issuu.com/msu_mcmaster/docs/municipal_pre-budget_submission_2021>
* **Your City Survey**
  + It’s still open! This was launched last month: <https://bit.ly/38KFTR0>

**UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

* **Objective 11 Municipal Engagement Week**
  + We will run this campaign in the first and second weeks of March. The MA committee has been preparing infographics to raise awareness about aspects of local politics and tips for getting involved in the Hamilton community. We will also host a live, online Q&A with Councillor Maureen Wilson to answer student questions about municipal politics––fun stuff! Keep an eye out for a Google form to submit questions for the Councillor.

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

* It’s a busy semester and I have several projects going on at once, which is proving to be tricky. I’ve made some adjustments in my expectations for what we can achieve and have tried to plan out sufficient committee time for completing tasks like writing reports, so that the work does not become too onerous for members. I will try to continue being responsive and gauging the pace of our progress as the semester goes on in order to adjust accordingly.

**VOLUNTEERS**

* The MA committee volunteers have been wonderful! Members were especially engaged and keen on joining meetings for our housing research, and their support made a huge difference. Half the group is writing the housing report now, which involves looking through some research on comparable university cities and the purpose-built student housing market, while the other group who previously worked on the Your City survey has transitioned to planning the Municipal Engagement Week, led by Kiran. They have also done a great job helping promote the Your City survey in classes and online. We have weekly meetings with good attendance, and I am really proud and grateful for their contributions.

**SUCCESSES**

* The research on affordable housing supply has been truly interesting and generative, even just at an introductory level. We have set up relationships with stakeholders related to this issue and the MSU now has good preparation for future action.
* The Your City survey has run smoothly and we managed to meet our planned timeline for the campaign.
* We’ve continued monthly meetings with the Ward 1 team (Councillor Wilson and Stephanie). Having regular conversations with them and keeping them updated on our municipal campaigns and research has proven to be very beneficial in strengthening our relationship.

Thanks for reading everyone! Have a great week.

Best,

Maanvi Dhillon

Associate Vice-President Municipal Affairs

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