



Dawn Danko
Chair of the Board of Trustees
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
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June 27, 2023

Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4Y5

Re: Update on Sir John A. MacDonald Site

Dear City of Hamilton,

In June 2023, the City of Hamilton began community consultation on a proposed encampment protocol. These guidelines would identify three to five sanctioned encampment sites across Hamilton where services and supports would be centrally located for unhoused individuals.

During this period of community consultation, the Board has received questions about the status of the Sir John A. MacDonald (SJAM) site. The building, which has been an inactive site since the secondary school closed in June 2019, has been previously suggested as a potential community hub.

In 2017, [HWDSB Trustees approved a partnership](#) with six organizations in an effort to explore a community hub hosted on the SJAM property. The City of Hamilton, Hamilton Community Foundation, Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Home Inc., HWDSB, Hamilton Health Sciences, and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford signed memorandums of understanding to explore the space in downtown Hamilton.

After being denied Ministry of Education funding on four separate occasions, with the most recent rejection coming in May 2022, developing the SJAM site has proven to be difficult. The various proposals have included plans for a new elementary school with childcare spaces, in addition to a possible temporary homeless shelter.

In 2021, based on discussions between Board staff and community organizations, [guidelines were developed](#) for the use of SJAM by the Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS).

The Board will continue to work with the City of Hamilton to explore options to assist unhoused residents. SJAM is not available as a temporary shelter site as HWDSB staff continue to work with the Ministry of Education to explore options for demolition. HWDSB remains a willing and open partner when working towards a solution to homelessness in Hamilton.



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HWDSB thanks various community groups, including HATS, that continue to explore ways to elevate the issue of homelessness in Hamilton. The partnership with HATS has been on full display at Westdale Secondary School, where [students built a tiny cabin](#) in the woodworking shop as part of a community push to assist unhoused residents.

Due to the number and variety of organizations and representatives that continue to come forward, the Board continues to request that advocates work through City of Hamilton to ensure there is collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Danko".

Dawn Danko
Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board