

**From:** [Cecilia D](#)  
**To:** [provost@mcmaster.ca](mailto:provost@mcmaster.ca); [provost1@mcmaster.ca](mailto:provost1@mcmaster.ca); [City Information](#); [Office of the Mayor](#); [info@hamiltonpolice.on.ca](mailto:info@hamiltonpolice.on.ca); [Stevenson, Kirsten](#); [Wilson, Maureen](#)  
**Subject:** Re: PREPARE FOR MCMASTER FALL READING WEEK AHEAD  
**Date:** Monday, October 4, 2021 9:05:09 PM

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Update to: **McMaster University, City of Hamilton officials and Hamilton Police Services officials**

I wanted to follow up today on what I wrote to you all yesterday evening. I thank Ms. Stevenson for her timely response to let me know this was being forwarded to the Police Board. And I have added the email address of Ms. Wilson, our local city councillor who I met for the first time just this afternoon as she was walking through our neighbourhood. I thank you Ms. Wilson, as well, for taking the time to stop and talk to me and hearing my perspective.

To the University: I read your email messaging today and I have to say that whoever wrote those emails I don't think quite understands what the root problems are and who were the main perpetrators. You are taking the heavy hand approach that I am trying to say is going to come back and bite you (and the community around you) because you are trying to demonize the everyday McMaster student by saying that because of this off-campus event you are going to really make your Covid-Passport restrictions even stricter to really crack down on-campus activities. Trust me, the people who were largely to blame for what happened on Saturday likely have no intentions of ever stepping foot on your campus and maybe not even in the city again, until they get the next one organized without your knowledge. Trust me, you are swinging your bat into thin air.

I am linking a news clip below from our local CHCH News and I think it is a very good representation on what actually went down here this weekend and they mention that many of the "trouble makers" were mostly not from around here.

As a Hamiltonian, born and raised, I concur and I support that hunch, as it was my hunch as well. This is what I explained to Ms. Wilson today (and to Global News who was also on the scene and asked me for an interview). This is a trend and it is not limited to our university students. Many weren't home here and their homes were vandalized, like the ones seen in this video. Anyone can buy McMaster Marauder swag online and wear it wherever they want. It's not a form of identification. Who knows who was actually from McMaster and who were not. There were thousands upon thousands of people. I have attended classes at McMaster now for over 4 years. I did not run into 1 familiar face of the thousands of the "uninvited" who crossed my path as I was trying to barricade our property here. Not 1 who I knew from McMaster.

And to the City and the Hamilton Police: Part of what I was trying to express in yesterday's email is that we are seeing a manifestation of a larger issue that we are dealing with. There is

a reason why past homecomings, when they were held legitimately on-campus, did not come with the spirit of destruction and escalation that it came with on Saturday. You need to know that there were authentic McMaster students in houses around here who were trying to host private homecoming parties, that quickly became over-run by these crowds and they expressed to others afterwards that they were afraid to call police for help. Why? Because they didn't want all the Covid tickets that they kept hearing about for mass gatherings. That is very concerning to me. That these students, as afraid and overwhelmed as they were in their homes, were more afraid of calling police for help for fear of fines or arrest for breaking Covid measures.

That is the reality.

Back to everyone:

I don't know if anyone here is truly going to hear me to the point where you are going to understand that this is a larger issue than "McMaster homecoming". People are frightened. And yes, this new virus and its variants are also frightening, but when you keep adding fear on top of fear in your messaging and you keep laying down the heavy hand of the law, you are creating a snowball effect that will never end and it's not making us safer.

We need to start having conversations about all of these laws in place to try and keep us "safe". They are doing quite the opposite. Please stop going to extremes with your laws and policies and their enforcement. You are creating the unrest and then you are blaming the wrong people for that unrest. I am now becoming less afraid of the virus and more afraid of the unrest that is to come.

I do not know how to explain this any clearer right now.

We need to get back to open dialogue and debates and I am sorry to say this, but the bureaucratic machine that we have created is killing our once thriving democratic and diplomatic ways of finding solutions. Everyone seems to have an agenda. The makers of the drugs and vaccines have an agenda. The Health Officials have an agenda. The Province has an agenda. The Federal Government has an agenda. The City and the local educational institutions (including the university) ends up just following all the agendas because we want everyone's funding from the top down in order to survive, right? Well, maybe that's part of the problem. We've allowed power to become so centralized that at the ground level in our own municipalities we have lost all control.

We have to take back control of our own cities and make local decisions. Because it affects us locally.

More punishment and more laws and stricter policies (be it in our cities or on our university

campuses) is not working. It's making things worse. I don't claim to have all the answers, but I am trying to point you to the root problems.

I really hope we can get to some more enlightened solutions rather than - 'we're really going to crack down now'. 'Passports for everyone or else'. 'If you don't fall in line, you're out'. These messages are starting to lose all meaning.

People are losing their jobs. Their businesses. Their livelihoods. They can't feed their children. They're becoming desperate. They're more suicidal now than ever. The younger generations who may not have these other levels of responsibility yet, are becoming despondent and destructive because they see no hope for the future. Why would they? Listen to yourselves. Read your own messaging. I sure as heck wouldn't have any hope for the future either. And I certainly wouldn't care about stepping foot on McMaster property right now.

If you don't want this chaos to continue you have to open up society (and our places of learning) again without so many extreme demands. You just have to. Yes, be safe. Keep distance. Wash hands. All of that, but as for the rest, it's way too over-the-top and so the reactions are likewise, going to be just as over-the-top.

I have every confidence that every single individual who is reading this right now, has the know-how and the critical thinking skills and the on-the-job experience to figure this out. We need you to be trailblazers right now. We need you to be an example *to follow*. We don't need *you* to follow all the others. All the others are spiraling into chaos too. Hamilton needs to do what Hamilton needs to do. Hamilton has never done well with too much heavy-handedness. We're the little town in the big city. We're not the big city. Frankly, I don't want to be the big city.

Please watch this short clip below. Please take a breath and try to remember one of the main points I left in my last email - the messaging: it needs to stop being so doom and gloom. It needs to stop being - 'well, this group did this so now we HAVE to really lay down the law.' That is not the right approach, especially with younger generations.

Please take a step back and take a different approach to this.

CHCH NEWS clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPNI0dBzgpQ>

Crowd gets out of control at  
McMaster University's  
homecoming, flipping cars, and



## damaging property

McMaster students are left picking up the pieces after thousands of people attended an unsanctioned block party near the university -- causing severe damage including a car being flipped over. Jason Gaidola caught up with the owner of the vehicle and other students who are

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,  
Cecilia Di Benedetto

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**From:** Cecilia D

**Sent:** October 3, 2021 7:08 PM

**To:** provost@mcmaster.ca <provost@mcmaster.ca>; provost1@mcmaster.ca <provost1@mcmaster.ca>; askCITY@hamilton.ca <askCITY@hamilton.ca>; mayor@hamilton.ca <mayor@hamilton.ca>; info@hamiltonpolice.on.ca <info@hamiltonpolice.on.ca>; Kirsten.stevenson@hamilton.ca <Kirsten.stevenson@hamilton.ca>

**Subject:** PREPARE FOR MCMASTER FALL READING WEEK AHEAD

Sunday, October 03, 2021

**ATTENTION:** McMaster University, City of Hamilton, Hamilton Police Services

**RE: Disturbing Trend of Destructive University Gatherings**

To all whom this concerns,

I hope this letter finds you all well.

First of all, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the *Hamilton Police Services* for their diligent work from yesterday morning into this morning here in our neighbourhood. I was deeply disturbed to hear that at least one officer was injured in yesterday's chaos and police horses were being abused by these crowds. I hope that officer is going to be okay. I'm sure that I don't need to drill the point home that this is absolutely unacceptable and it needs to be stopped right now.

I am a resident of Gary Avenue in Hamilton, Ontario (adjacent to yesterday's 'ground zero'). I also happen to be finishing a mature degree here at McMaster University. I am a full time single mother to a child with quite moderate special needs and yesterday and throughout the night we felt terrorized in our own home. As you know, I am not the only one who went through the madness that descended upon our neighbourhood. Although I am born and raised in Hamilton, we are fairly new residents to this particular neighbourhood. It hasn't been a year yet and I had no idea that this was coming yesterday, but apparently you all did.

It is my understanding that this happens every single year here at least once a year (if not more), for approximately the last five years (with the exception of 2020 due to the lockdowns). This is only going to get worse each time. People are clearly coming from out of town for this, just to do damage and destruction to property.

Now, rather than respond with a heavy hand and try to ban this (which I think is impossible) I think it is time that the University and the City perhaps hammer out a plan to provide the venue for these "celebrations" and that you inform the student body that these impromptu neighbourhood "events" will no longer be tolerated and will be shut down immediately as soon as they begin. Then you can perhaps offer them a hosted event. And yes, it will likely have to be held on campus when the buildings are all shut. Perhaps the back portion of campus near Cootes Drive, but it can't be held too far from the university. I think otherwise, if you just try to shut the celebrations down all together, we the residents here and any responding officers to these calls will end up bearing the brunt of the hostility that such a tactic is sure to create.

I fear that as early as this coming Friday (October 8<sup>th</sup>) and into the following week, we may see another wave of this madness here. As the University knows, it will be the Thanksgiving long weekend that leads into the University's Fall Reading Week and I already heard from a neighbour that she has heard another such event is coming here soon. So that is why I am thinking it's set for sometime within that Reading Week time-frame.

Please prepare for this.

This week, I would like to see an email blast from the University to all students condemning what took place. That is perhaps when I would suggest mentioning that you are going to work with the City in providing a proper venue with port-a-potties, etc. and with your own campus security to supplement the police presence.

We can't have the police force overwhelmed like that ever again. I was alarmed at what was happening, as I am sure the officers on scene were. I cannot tell you how terrifying it was every time patrol cars had to leave our street to go deal with another section and then we had to brace ourselves for the thousands of people to be descending onto our street again (and through our backyards). At this point, I knew the police were overwhelmed. Some of the stories I heard from some of the senior residents in the area make me so angry - that anyone could think of terrorizing anyone in their homes, but least of which senior citizens. Disgusting. That is why I don't believe we are dealing with just authentic McMaster students or even Hamiltonians, necessarily.

Now, seeing as I am literally in the "thick of it" logistically here at our house, I can certainly make the call if I start to see gatherings taking place around here and give the Hamilton PD a

heads-up that something might be brewing, but I wouldn't rely solely on that notice. I can't guarantee that I will be home at those exact dates and times that something might start up here.

So, again, please prepare. Please make plans. Please put out communications far and wide. Please do not ever let this escalate to these levels here ever again. Not just for our own safety here, but the safety of any responding officers. They do not deserve to be put in harm's way like that and it should never happen again.

Please do not think this is going away anytime soon. Apparently, this is a trend happening among this age group. They are organizing these things on social media and going city to city doing this. Please do everything in your means to get on top of this so that there is no next time.

As I write this, a fire truck just drove through Dalewood Avenue with its sirens on. I hope to God everyone is okay.

Again, thank you to the Hamilton Police Department for tackling this impossible situation yesterday and into today. You are true heroes. From the bottom of my heart and on behalf of my son who was deeply disturbed by what was going on, thank you for getting organized and finding a way where there wasn't a way.

One last thought to the City and to the University – perhaps it is time to take a good hard look at all these Covid measures and perhaps start rethinking the Province's and Ottawa's ideas of how to handle this. We are creating a situation of mass hysteria and of deep depression and despair (especially with these latest “Passport” measures that has completely polarized society and made many more people unemployed – even during this past week).

What happened here yesterday is not an isolated incident. I believe it is a manifestation of what happens when you try to control a situation en masse with measures that are far too extreme. People are going to get to the point where they feel they have nothing left to lose so they'll become destructive and suicidal, and they will no longer care about anyone or anything – and that is a situation no one wants. It will not end well for any of us – no matter where you sit on the big debate about these measures.

Please take the points I proposed in this letter into serious consideration and contemplation. We need to work together and we need to start putting out messages of hope and not despair. We need to start being proactive rather than reactive. Then you will see a different manifestation - a much better and productive one. At least try it. The way we are going about this now is disastrous, to say the least. And the disaster is literally arriving at our front doorsteps now.

Let's work together. This is not impossible with careful planning, coordination and cooperation and more positive messaging – from governments, health organizations, media, law enforcement and educational institutions.

I just recently found out about a Christian group that has been operating within the community known as Lift Church. Some of their members live in this community. It might not be a bad idea to get them involved in these conversations too. These young people need community

events for their own sanity and morale. We cannot ignore that. But, we can try to make those events positive and way more reasonably controlled than these impromptu neighbourhood disasters.

I look forward to seeing happier and more peaceful Hamilton and McMaster communities in the days and weeks to follow.

Thank you very much for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Di Benedetto

Hamilton, Ontario

Email: 