To All Members of Council:

The Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc. supports the city staff recommendation to remove King Street West from Paradise Road to Forsyth Avenue as a truck route.

During the Public Works Committee meeting of Sept. 17, the discussion focused on the use of the McMaster University’s Sterling Street entrance for heavy trucks, rather than the staff recommendation that was before the committee. The Sterling Street entrance has never been identified as a truck route, either by the McMaster Campus Plan or the Ainslie Wood Westdale Secondary plan.

To assist you in your decision making, we have highlighted some historical background on the Sterling Street entrance:

1. Two studies by independent traffic consultants hired by the university in 1999 and 2001 recognized that: “The Sterling Street access is problematic in that it is located in a residential community, and does not provide effective access to the Hamilton arterial road network” (New Entrance executive summary, McMaster.ca/ua/opr/newentrance/execsumm.html).

2. Based on the above, the city and the university began the process of developing a Main Street entrance to the university. The rationales for this entrance were numerous, but one perceived benefit was the reduction in traffic to the Sterling Street entrance. “McMaster president Dr. Peter George gave encouraging comments about the impact the entrance would have on the community: ‘From the plans that I have seen to date, I think the recommendations to make Main Street our principal entrance are quite sound. The Sterling Street entrance will remain open, but congestion through the Westdale residential district will be greatly relieved’” (McMaster Alumni Connection Luncheon, Mar. 28, 2000).
3. The university never considered the Sterling Street entrance a truck route in their planning. The university Campus Plan identifies the Sterling Street entrance as "a primary entrance for pedestrians. It will also serve a restricted number of regular university car trips and transit" (McMaster University Campus Plan). Once the new main entrance was built, the truck route for servicing the university was to be through campus. “Vehicles that are not GO Transit buses, campus shuttle buses, emergency vehicles, service vehicles, or construction vehicles are not permitted on University Walk or on Scholars Road. Primary vehicular focus remains on the Main Street and Cootes Drive entrance points, with the Sterling entrance serving a limited number of campus users arriving by car” (5.1.1,5.1.2 McMaster Campus Plan).

4. The Ainslie Wood Westdale Master Transportation plan completed in 2005 supported the McMaster Campus Plan goal of reducing the number of vehicles using the Sterling Street entrance. The two streets leading to the Sterling entrance were specifically identified in the city plan: Sterling Street was narrowed by the addition of bike lanes. Forsyth Avenue North had traffic calming added to reflect its local-road designation and the increase in pedestrian traffic generated by the creation of the King’s Walk pedestrian entrance to the university.

The Main Street entrance was constructed based on both of the above-mentioned official planning documents. We believe it is inconsistent for McMaster to now say that the university wants the Sterling Street entrance to receive heavy truck traffic. Such a request undermines the formal city and university processes, which included countless volunteer hours spent by the community to ensure proper planning.

We urge council to separate issues such as Hamilton Street Railway buses and the Sterling Street entrance from the discussion and to focus on the recommendation before them, which is to correct a clerical error that wrongly identified King Street West between Paradise Road and Forsyth Avenue as a truck route. We have enclosed a map from the Ainslie Wood Westdale Transportation plan for your review. Failure to endorse the city staff recommendation will result in the need to immediately modify our neighbourhood secondary plan and add the truck route outlined in blue. This blue truck route passes a pedestrian crossing on a sharp curve in front of George R. Allan school, as well as Westdale Village and the King’s Walk pedestrian entrance to the university. It also would encourage trucks to take shortcuts along Haddon Avenue and Dalewood Avenue, past Dalewood School. We encourage councillors to accept the city staff recommendation and align the current heavy-truck bylaw with the Ainslie Wood Westdale Secondary plan.

Yours sincerely,

John Wigle, President
Ainslie Wood/Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc.