From: [redacted]
To: VanderBeek, Arlene; Paparella, Stephanie; Office of the Mayor; Stevenson, Kirsten; Ariyo, John
Subject: Police Violence and Anti-Black Racism
Date: Monday, June 1, 2020 7:07:40 PM

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Councillor Arlene Vanderbeek, General Issues Committee, and Committee Against Racism,

I am writing to you today to express my concerns about anti-Black racism and violence, especially at the hands of police. I am a Hamilton resident living in ward 13.

We need greater transparency and communication after the loss of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a Black woman in emotional distress who died instead of receiving medical help. Regis is only the most recent instance of a Black person dying in an encounter with police, something that has been happening in the GTHA for decades. The police in Canada have a long history of race-based violence. For example, data reveals that Toronto's Black residents are 20 times more likely to be killed by police officers than white residents, despite having a much smaller population in the city overall. In addition, 70% of individuals who die in encounters with police struggle with mental health or substance use issues, or both. In Hamilton, we regularly have members of violent and explicitly racist white supremacist groups congregating outside of city hall. Racism in ALL Canadian cities is prevalent and real and I am concerned and disheartened that my tax dollars are being used to fund a service that continues to criminalize members of the Black community.

I believe the police force of Hamilton is overfunded and contrary to their mission, causing more fear, violence and harm to our communities. We need to see reforms implemented now to lead to better outcomes in the future before any more Black people are harmed in a police encounter.

I would like to see the Police Services held accountable in tangible ways:

* First, I would like to see the Hamilton police budget reduced by at least 20% over the next 2 years, with those tax dollars reallocated into social services, health care, mental health programs, supervised injection sites, jobs and affordable housing. These are the vital services we will need more of to bounce back from the pandemic. Strengthening municipal social supports will reduce crime by addressing the issues that lead to it at their source.
* Second, I would like to see the all Police Services immediately implement a harm reduction strategy, with a transparent and ongoing training plan for all police officers and personnel made public.
* Third, I would urgently like to see the mandatory use of body cameras for all officers at all times. Despite advocacy efforts, the Hamilton Police Force has voted against implementing body cameras 4 times.
* Lastly, I would like to see the Police's adoption of the 84 recommendations in the 2014 report by Frank Iacobucci, aimed at reducing fatal encounters with people in emotional distress.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Elliot Classen