

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Policing in Hamilton

From: Jessica Hymers

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 9:59 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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Hello,

My name is Jessica Hymers.

I am sending this letter to show my support for and endorsement of the demands made last week by black and racialized activists regarding the policing of black and racialized communities in Hamilton. I've attached a document outlining their demands and some links to articles and studies supporting why you should seriously consider doing your part to have them met.

It is important to listen to the voices and experiences of those you claim to serve. This can be a big step for that and can be an opportunity for Hamilton to set a positive example in this time of a global pandemic, and growing inquiries and understanding of Canada's racist roots.

Thank you for your time, your labour, and considerations.

Jessica Hymers

To those invested in taking tangible action to eliminate white supremacy in the institutions they work in and benefit from,

Earlier this month, black and racialized organizers across the city made a list of specific demands addressing local institutions in the municipality of Hamilton, Ontario, the colonially occupied lands of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Mississaugas, Haudensaunee and Anishnaabeg. Here are those demands:

City Hall:

1. We call on the City of Hamilton to defund Hamilton Police Services (HPS) (1-3, 11, 12).
2. We call on the City of Hamilton to invest the tax dollars that would have otherwise gone to the policing sector to be delegated towards initiatives fighting food insecurity, racism and affordable housing & social services (4, 9-10, 15, 19, 36, 43, 44).
3. We call on the City of Hamilton to ensure that HPS are not ticketing homeless people for existing in public (5-6, 48).

Hamilton Police Services (HPS):

1. Release accounting on taxes used to surveil & police Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities (7-8, 45).
2. Halt purchases of weapons and high tech surveillance equipment, and cease surveillance (46-47).
3. Cease ticketing homeless and disabled people and forgive current charges (5-6, 48).
4. Stop targeting activists & communities building community responses to active white supremacist groups (6, 26-27).

Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB):

1. We demand that the HWDSB remove police SRO's from schools & fund public review of police violence that occurred in Schools.
2. We demand that the school board refrain from calling ops on kids (28)
3. We demand that the HWDSB collect & release data on documents the disciplinary action against students by race and gender. (64)
4. We demand that HWDSB implement a community run alternative to disciplinary action based on principles of restorative justice (37-39).

McMaster University

1. We call on McMaster University (President & Board of Hiring) to immediately terminate Glenn DeCaire's contract (13-14, 16).
2. We demand that DeCaire, alongside special constables on campus cease policing students. Black students across Ontario have experienced violence at the hands of campus police. (20, 23).
3. Join with other Universities (such as University of Minnesota) in cutting ties with police

departments (18, 24-25).

Ontario:

1. We demand that the Police Services Act (Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019, S.O. 2019, c. 1 - Bill 68) be rewritten to give municipalities full control over police boards
2. We demand that the province of Ontario work with grassroots groups to divest from policing & invest in community initiatives with the goal of moving completely toward transformative justice (61).
3. The SIU needs to be composed completely of Black, Racialized and Indigenous Peoples with no current or former ties to the policing sector (29-35, 40-42).
4. SIU must begin collecting and publicly releasing race-based statistics on all fatalistic encounters between police and civilians. No more inquiries – direct action needs to be taken.
5. In light of COVID-19, we demand that all prisoners being held & awaiting trial at the Barton Jail Facility be released immediately, and that outrageous costs of ankle monitors & other means of surveilling those who are released be waived (21-22).

The City of Hamilton (49), Hamilton Police Services (51), the HWDSB (50), McMaster University (54), and the Province of Ontario (53) have all made statements regarding their stance on racism. Unfortunately their statements are based on a definition of racism as "bigotry and slander". This definition is limited in that it does not address the structural violence experienced by racialized people. Instead, we ask that these institutions adopt a definition of racism that incorporates an understanding that power is the primary feature of racism (63). In simple terms, Racism = Racial Prejudice + Power (where power is defined as, "authority granted through social structures and conventions—possibly supported by force or the threat of force—and access to means of communications and resources, to reinforce racial prejudice, regardless of the falsity of the underlying prejudiced assumption"; 63).

We petition these institutions (The City of Hamilton, Hamilton Police Services, the HWDSB, McMaster University, and the Province of Ontario) to seriously consider their deep racist roots, and begin to phase out their illegitimate access to power inherited from Canada's history of Slavery (58-59), Indigenous Genocide (55-57), and it's contribution to Apartheid Models (60) implemented by other Colonial States and Institutions. The institutions named above can set an example for the world by implementing these specific and practical demands.

We ask that as you prepare to meet these demands you educate yourselves on the importance of the actions being demanded of you. Meeting these demands is a necessary step in being accountable to your commitment to anti-racism and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (52). Though educating ourselves in the matters of anti-racism, systemic racism, and structural violence is a lifelong process, we have kindly gathered resources which support these organizers demands.

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