

From: Una Di Gallo

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To: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; Paparella, Stephanie <Stephanie.Paparella@hamilton.ca>; Ariyo, John <john.ariyo@hamilton.ca>; Collins, Chad <Chad.Collins@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Police Violence and Anti-Black Racism

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Councillor Chad Collins, 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 #5.

We need greater transparency and communication after the loss of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a Black woman in emotional distress who was killed 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 Canada for decades. Just last month, D'Andre Campbell was shot by the Peel police. Before that, countless others. The police in Canada have a long history of race-based violence. This is because our police system was designed for the purpose of containing and criminalizing Black and Indigenous peoples. 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. 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.

It is time to learn from the cyclical police violence unfolding throughout North America and commit ourselves to change before any more Black people are harmed in a police encounter. We need to start divesting from the systematically violent police services, and establish a long-term plan for community-led health and safety initiatives. The police force of Hamilton is overfunded and contrary to their mission, causing more violence and harm in our communities.

To start, I would like to see the Hamilton police budget reduced by at least 20% over the next 2 years and their operating budget made public. I would like to see those tax dollars permanently reallocated into social services, education, mental health programs, supervised injection sites, jobs and affordable housing. These are the vital services we will need to bounce back from the pandemic and keep our communities safe. Strengthening municipal social supports will reduce crime by addressing the issues that lead to it at their source.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Una Di Gallo