

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Anti-Racist Hamilton - Defund the Police

From: **Sarah Van Berkel**

Date: Mon, 8 Jun 2020 at 20:37

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To: <mayor@hamilton.ca>

Cc: <ward3@hamilton.ca>

Dear Mayor Eisenberger,

I have recently moved back to Hamilton after 13 years living in Quebec and BC and want to be proud to call Hamilton my home for the foreseeable future. A lot of the conversations this past week have been around the police, but I am also interested in hearing your office's plan to become anti-racist in all areas and be a leader for other Canadian cities.

Regarding the Hamilton Police, I am concerned our chief Mr. Girt does not understand race issues enough for his post. His dismissal of the need for race based data in January stating 'race is an artificial social construct' without acknowledging the implications this social construct has on peoples lived experiences is disconcerting. He recently commented on the murder of George Floyd saying the Hamilton Police will continue the conversation to eliminate racism, what concrete actions has he taken to continue this conversation? Several concerned parties have stated this conversation has not taken place.

Finally, the 2020 budget. I was shocked to learn that over \$170 million, or what equates to 27.7% of the projected operational 2020 budget, has been marked for Police Services. In light of the nation-wide Black Lives Matter protests, including the June 1st protest in Gore Park, and knowing that the Hamilton police force has been linked to systemic racist practices, I am urging you to reconsider the allocation of the 2020 operational budget and tax supported final capital budget.

In reconsidering the allocation of the city of Hamilton's budget, I urge you to consider the statement made by Black Lives Matter activists in Hamilton, who urged the city to defund Hamilton Police Service and to stop ticketing and surveilling people who are homeless. Rather, these funds should be diverted into initiatives such as food security, affordable housing, and anti-racism initiatives, including an independent Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre (HARRC).

Funding to the Hamilton Police Services can be reduced in the following ways:

1. Cancel the scheduled 3.8% increase, and all future increases, to the Hamilton Police Service's budget.
2. Propose and implement a minimum of a 10% budget cut to the 2020 operational budget.
3. Withhold pensions from and don't rehire police officers involved in excessive force cases.
4. Require police officers to be liable for misconduct settlements.
5. Reduce the size of the police force.

With a poverty rate of 15% for all residents and 20.5% for children, Hamilton needs to reassess its priorities. We do not need more policing, more surveillance, and more police brutality. We need affordable housing in a city where 20% of renters spend more than half their income on rent. We need access to affordable and healthy food in a city where more than 13,000 people, of which 40% were children, used the food bank last year. We need funded anti-racist education and advocacy in a city that was ranked number one for police-reported hate crimes.

I know that you and the city's councilors have met to discuss the city's economic recovery on June 4th. As a concerned citizen, I am calling on you to prioritize the financial wellbeing and recovery of Hamilton residents by investing in services that Hamilton residents need rather than further disenfranchise many residents by funding the Hamilton Police Services.

Sincerely,

Sarah Van Berkel