


From: 
To: [Stevenson, Kirsten](#)
Subject: HPS Board Meeting Motion to Discuss 20% Budget Cut
Date: Thursday, June 11, 2020 10:35:20 AM

Hello,

I have sent this email to the city councillors on the HPS board whose emails I am able to access, including the mayor, and I was advised to forward it to you as well so that it could be brought to the attention of the rest of the board. Thank you in advance for forwarding my concerns to the board if you are able to do so.

My name is Ailie Ramage. I am a resident of Hamilton and have lived here for many years, and I am writing to you concerning the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting tomorrow at which the topic of cutting the HPS budget will be discussed.

On Thursday, when you discuss the implications of a 20% budget cut, I urge you, as a citizen of Hamilton deeply invested in the safety and health of our community, to give serious consideration to the defunding of police services and the reallocation of those funds towards social services that function to prevent crime and enrich the health and safety of the community, and away from, among other things, the purchases of additional weaponry and surveillance that function to criminalize, rather than to assist and uplift, the of citizens of Hamilton, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour.

When social problems that are caused by poverty such as homelessness and substance abuse are the jurisdiction of the police—when they are criminalized, and the funding for social services that are meant to remedy and prevent these problems is slashed—the city gets sicker. Reducing crime and increasing the safety of the people of Hamilton starts with preventative measures in the form of services such as affordable housing, addiction treatment, and education, not with increased police presence and power. Ontario budget cuts in 2019 however caused the City of Hamilton's budget to be restructured such that millions of dollars were cut from social services. Over \$17 million was cut from affordable housing programs, \$2.1 million was cut from the Hamilton public school board, and the pilot project offering addiction treatment to welfare recipients to help them reenter the workforce was ended, among other devastating cuts. By contrast, in January, the police board approved a police budget increase of 4.02%, or close to 7 million dollars, bringing the total budget up to \$172 million.

I do not believe that the increased presence of police makes our communities safer. In many instances, armed police officers are called in to deal with situations which do not require violence and could better be addressed by respondents like mental health professionals. Please consider the recent death of Chantel Moore, an Indigenous woman and the mother of a five year old girl, living in Nova Scotia, who was shot by the policeman who had been called to perform a wellness check on her. Chantel had been paranoid and distressed and thought that she was being followed—worried for her, her ex-boyfriend called the police expecting that they would help her. Instead, the officer responding to the call shot Chantel almost immediately upon arriving at her home in the middle of the night. Several weeks ago, on May 27, an Afro-Indigenous woman named Regis Korchinski-Paquet died in Toronto after falling from her balcony under suspicious circumstances when police were called by her mother to help Regis during a mental health crisis. Whether she was pushed, or whether she was just allowed to fall, it is clear that the police failed in this situation and must bear responsibility for her tragic death. It is also clear that they are not the respondents that should have been called. These women are only the most recent victims in a long list of Black and Indigenous people killed by Canadian police. How many more mothers and daughters, and fathers, and sons, husbands and wives, have to be killed before we commit to changing the nature of police presence in our communities?

The City of Hamilton does not need to allocate more funding to the police. I hope that as a member of the Police Services Board you see the dangers of over-policing and the boiling point that has been reached by people across North America as a result of police violence; and I hope that you are willing to use your political power to improve our communities by reducing the police budget so that those funds can be reallocated to assist, uplift, and enrich the lives of the people of Hamilton.

Sincerely,

Ailie Ramage