

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Refusing to Defund the police is a racist act

**From:** Rita Bailey

**Sent:** Friday, June 26, 2020 11:45 AM

**To:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)

**Subject:** Refusing to Defund the police is a racist act

Please include this letter in the public record but without my email address. Thank you.

Dear Councillors Wilson and members of the Hamilton Police Services Board,

I am writing to support the call to defund the police (i.e. divert a portion of funding to mental health and community supports). As a resident of Ward 1 I want to support my councillor in this and I hope the members of the police board will take this seriously, not just something to be mocked and treated lightly. I say this as a person raised to respect and admire the police because my father was a policeman in Toronto. But the actions of local police in recent years towards POC, the homeless, the mentally ill, and towards members of the LGBTQ+ community are not worthy of respect. The comments of the chief of police on the radio last year are particularly reprehensible and should have led to his immediate firing.

It is equally reprehensible that there are no members of the marginalized communities mentioned above on the Police Services Board. This needs to change and change quickly. And if provincial legislation prevents you from fixing this quickly, you need to aggressively go after the province on that. Giving all the power to white, middle class people (most of whom live in the leafy suburbs) is RACISM, plain and simple.

I can suggest many ways to reduce police funding:

1. Stop the purchase of militarized weapons,
2. Remove the police from the HWCDSSB. Kudos to the public board for taking this step. Replace them with coaches and mental health workers.
3. Get rid of the mounted police. We don't need police on horseback in a city the size of Hamilton. It's a very expensive photo-op.

4. Replace traffic cops with trained civilians or better yet radar cameras. Increase red light cameras.

5. Stop having the police responsible for dealing with mentally ill people and the homeless. Street outreach workers can do a better job of this. When a doctor puts a person on a Form 1, it shouldn't be the job of the police to enforce this. Dragging a mentally ill person into the psychiatric emergency department takes hours of valuable police time. (The last time I visited emergency there were 6-8 police officers with mentally ill people in handcuffs over an eight hour period. Some were there for an entire shift. That a lot of \$\$\$) Let the medical community come up with a better method. Police should stay away unless the person has a gun or is holding a knife to someone's throat.

6. Forget about buying body cameras. They are too expensive and open to abuse. Every citizen has a camera these days and many cars come with cameras now. We are the ones policing the police.

7. Go after the big drug importers and distributors and leave the low level guys alone. Addicts need treatment not incarceration.

Other ideas that should be implemented now:

**Start keeping track of race statistics including Indigenous people who make up the largest segment of our incarcerated population.**

To reduce the murder of mentally ill people armed with paring knives and baseball bats, incorporate better training. Weapons should not be drawn every time there is a threat. Teach self-defence, including the art of de-escalation and simply waiting it out.

Is it not the job of police to support corporate enterprises. That's not what I'm paying my taxes for. Yes, if homeless people are blocking a doorway or a bus stop ask them to move on, but stores that want

to stop panhandling near their premises should hire private security firms, not expect the police to do this.

Please take the call to defund seriously. I'm sure a competent audit will show many ways budgets could be reduced without loss of jobs. Reduce the use of overtime, for instance. And since all provincial employees are limited to a 1% wage hike so should police forces.

Racism includes not just overt action but also lack of action. Silence is violence. Make changes now!

Rita Bailey, Ward 1