

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Hamilton Police Services

From: Melissa Dowdall

Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2020 3:33 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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To the Chair and Members of the General Issues Committee; the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee; and the Emergency and Community Services Committee:

I am a home-owner and tax-paying citizen of Ward 4 in Hamilton. I would like to add my correspondence to the upcoming Council/Committee Agenda. I just received my tax bill for 2020. I was shocked to see that the greatest percentage of my taxes, after municipal levy, is going to police. The police get 10% more than education in Hamilton! As a tax-payer, this is not okay for me.

I understand that the police services board is looking at the implications of reducing funding. As a tax-payer, voter, and Hamilton resident, I am urging you to please advocate for the defunding of the Hamilton Police.

Instead, invest tax dollars that would have otherwise gone to police towards initiatives fighting against food insecurity, racism, and towards more affordable housing and other social services.

As a tax-payer, I am asking Hamilton Police Services to release accounting on taxes used to surveil and police Black, Indigenous and racialized communities in our city.

I urge Hamilton Police Services to:

- cease purchases of weapons, high-tech surveillance equipment, and cease surveilling communities
- stop targeting activists and communities pushing back against white supremacists
- stop ticketing and surveilling homeless and disabled people for existing in public

I do not want my tax dollars supporting any of these initiatives.

If you are unable to defund the Hamilton Police budget, then at the very least, please use a portion of that massive budget to invest in body-cams for every officer. Body-cams, when used properly (i.e., not turned off, removed, or tampered with), help to both protect citizens and to keep police officers who are doing their job appropriately free from accusations.

Please also use a portion of that massive budget to establish non-police alternative to 911 calls involving people with mental illness. These calls can be diverted to a team of mental health first responders instead of police.

Another portion of the budget should also be used to implement policies governing use of force by police in Hamilton. Specifically:

- require officers to de-escalate situations by communicating with subjects, maintaining distance, and otherwise eliminating the need to use force
- prohibit officers from being allowed to choke or strangle civilians
- require officers to intervene and stop excessive force used by other officers and report these incidents immediately to a supervisor
- restrict officers from shooting at moving vehicles
- develop a Force Continuum that limits the types of force and/or weapons that can be used to respond to specific types of resistance
- require officers to exhaust all other reasonable means before resorting to deadly force
- require officers to give a verbal warning before shooting at a civilian
- require officers to report each time they use force or threaten to use force against civilians

The safest neighbourhoods are not those with the greatest police presence, but those with the most resources (food security, social services, mental health supports, infrastructure, education). Every 10 additional organizations in a city reduces property crime by 4%.

If you truly care about the citizens of Hamilton, then I am urging you to please defund the police and reinvest in education, mental health care, affordable housing, community support organizations, and other social services. Invest police budget into body-cameras, mental health first responders, and use of force policy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Melissa Dowdall
Ward 4 Resident
Hamilton, ON