

Pilon, Janet

Subject: 2020 Hamilton Police Budget Call For Action

From: Natalie Raso

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 11:01 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: 2020 Hamilton Police Budget Call For Action

Dear City Clerk,

We are writing today to express our outrage regarding the Hamilton Police Services budget of \$178.4 million from the total \$397.7 million 2020 operational budget for the City of Hamilton (an increase of 3.23% since 2019). This astronomical police budget costs the taxpayer more than firefighters, paramedics, libraries and public housing combined. Following the recent horrific death of young Black and Indigenous woman Regis Korchinski-Paquet, we call upon our elected officials to support and ensure a transparent investigation into her death in Toronto, and start divesting from the Hamilton Police Services immediately.

We are asking that you share the following requests with City Council. We ask City Council the following,

1. To never again vote to increase the Hamilton Police Services budget.
2. To propose and implement a HPS budget cut of at least 10 per cent as we struggle to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To prioritize the expansion of community-led health and safety initiatives over future financial investment into the Hamilton Police Services.

In the face of cyclical police violence happening throughout North America right now, there is no better time to commit ourselves to change. We have seen that investing in body cameras, civilian reviews or de-escalation and implicit bias training doesn't work. What we need in Hamilton is leadership that can initiate a reduction in the immense police violence that targets our most marginalized people, toward the eventual abolition of police and prisons.

In order to do this, we call on our City Council to reduce funding in these ways:

1. Withhold pensions and don't rehire cops involved in excessive force cases
2. Require cops to be liable for misconduct settlements
3. Reduce the size of police force

An increased police presence *does not* keep us safe, and all of the evidence consistently bears this out. Rather, an increased police presence directly threatens the lives of our most vulnerable communities (Black, Indigenous and People of Color, the LGBTQ2S+ community, unhoused people, street-based sex workers, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, etc).

Instead of investing in the police, our city must prioritize alternatives like education, increased mental health services, housing initiatives, income security, harm reduction services, accessible rehabilitation, mutual aid, social workers, conflict resolution services, transformative justice, and other vital community-based support systems. These initiatives must support our most vulnerable communities and centre the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour in Hamilton.

We should look to and learn from organizations like Black Lives Matter Toronto, Black Legal Action Centre, PASAN, Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project, Maggie's, Showing Up for Racial Justice, and so many more.

Our city can lead the way in defining public safety through community not cops, where Black, Indigenous and people of colour are free from police oppression. We are asking you to create a better future for all residents of Hamilton by divesting from harmful policing and investing in life-affirming services.

Sincerely,

Dr. Natalie Raso and Mr. Stephen Zuccolo

PS - I have attached some excellent, relevant resources pertaining to this topic below:

[Critical Resistance Chart: Reformist Reforms vs abolitionist steps in policing](#)

[Report: Freedom to Thrive: Reimagining Safety & Security in Our Communities](#)

[The New Republic: The Pandemic Is the Right Time to Defund the Police](#)

[Toronto's billion-dollar problem: our cops - Toronto Life](#)