

Pilon, Janet

Subject: 2020 Call to Action/Divestment in Police

From: Anna Morgan

Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 12:42 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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Good Afternoon,

I am writing to forward my correspondence sent to the Mayor and local council person to request that it be included in an upcoming Council/Committee agenda for all Members of Council to see. I am writing today to express my outrage over law enforcement's disregard for human rights and human life as a part of a long legacy of colonial and racialized violence at the hands of police across Turtle Island (North America). White Supremacy and Anti-Black racism claimed another victim on May 25, 2020, when George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis in cold blood while begging for air. I stand united with all those who are battling racism and resisting police oppression in all its forms across Turtle Island and around the Globe.

Racism does not stop at the border and Hamilton needs to take seriously to address its own involvement in colonial and racialized violence. Hamilton is ranked the # 1 city for police reported hate crimes and that 34 of the 38 reported hate crimes were directed at Black Hamiltonians. In addition, Hamilton has had far-right protests and violence at the City Hall forecourt and white supremacists at Hamilton Pride.

I call upon our elected to start divesting from the systematically violent Hamilton Police Service immediately and actively address colonial and racialized violence in Hamilton.

I am asking that you, as an elected official, pledge to do the following:

1. To never again vote to increase the Hamilton Police Service budget, (Hamilton's current police budget is \$166 million, which was an increase of 3.2 percent in 2019).
2. To propose and implement a HPS budget cut and use the money towards initiatives such as food security, poverty reduction, affordable housing and anti-racism initiatives.
3. To prioritize the expansion of community-led health and safety initiatives over future financial investment into Hamilton Police Service.
4. Stop ticketing and surveilling of people who are homeless.
5. Remove police from schools.
6. Work actively with BIPOC-led organizations and center initiatives around the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour in Hamilton.

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. In order to do this, I call on you and the 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 the police force, and stop sending armed/uniformed cops on mental health-related calls.

An increased police presence, which includes fare inspectors and enforcement officers, does not keep us safe, rather it directly threatens the lives of our most vulnerable communities (BIPOC, the LGBTQ2S+ community, unhoused people, street-based sex workers, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, etc). Instead of investing in policing, 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 center the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour in Hamilton. We should look to and learn from organizations like Black Lives Matter, Afro Canadian Caribbean Association Hamilton, Hamilton Center for Civic Inclusion, Coalition of Black and Racialized Artists, the SPACE Youth Center, Refugee Hamilton Center for Newcomer Health and many other BIPOC and 2SLGBT+ led organizations.

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. I am asking you to create a better future for all residents of Hamilton by divesting from harmful policing and investing in life-affirming services.

Sincerely,

Anna Morgan

Further resources:

Sandy Hudson: Defunding The Police Will Save Black And Indigenous Lives In Canada

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/defund-police-canada-black-indigenous-lives_ca_5ed65eb2c5b6ccd7c56bdf7d

Critical Resistance Chart: Reformist Reforms vs abolitionist steps in policing https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ead8f9692ebee25b72f17f/t/5b65cd58758d46d34254f22c/1533398363539/CR_NoCops_reform_vs_abolition_CRside.pdf

Report: Freedom to Thrive: Reimagining Safety & Security in Our Communities <https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/freedom-thrive-reimagining-safety-security-our-communities>

The Pandemic Is the Right Time to Defund the Police <https://newrepublic.com/article/157875/pandemic-right-time-defund-police>

Toronto's billion-dollar problem: our cops <https://torontolife.com/city/crime/toronto-police-service-vs-everybody/>

No More Cop Unions <https://newrepublic.com/article/157918/no-cop-unions>

Police Unions and the Problem of Police Misconduct ²<https://reason.com/2020/05/30/police-unions-and-the-problem-of-police-misconduct/>