

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Urgent

From: Valeria Kuri

Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 8:21 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca; Stevenson, Kirsten; Office of the Mayor

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Hello Mayor Eisenberger,

Following up on my last email, I wanted to draw special attention to the fact that on June 2, you had expressed concerns regarding the \$2.2 billion in infrastructure money from the Federal government to help cover the coronavirus-caused budget shortfalls. I want to ask whether you had considered the unconscionable amount of money and resources that are poured into the Hamilton Police Services, an institution that has historically proven to be systemically racist and which disproportionately monitors, attacks, and harms Black, Indigenous, Queer, and racialized folks in the Hamilton community? You have publicly

supported this institution without hesitation, yet claim to be out of ideas when it comes to locating funds to protect residents impacted by COVID--who by the way, are disproportionately racialized and live in poverty, and are probably the same residents being terrorized by police on a daily basis?

I look forward to continuing to persist as you make true on your promise to protect and represent your residents and listening to their concerns. I trust you also know that deliberation, consultation, reviews, and trainings have gone nowhere, and that you intend to create actual change.

I am calling today to express that I absolutely do not support the Hamilton Police Service's budget of \$171 million for 2020. **An increased police presence does not keep us safe.** It does not keep Hamilton's black and brown communities safe, instead it directly threatens the lives of our most vulnerable communities.

As public representatives, it is your duty to listen to the people you represent rather than prioritizing the demands of an institution that has been academically and legally studied to be absolutely, 100% systemically racist and disproportionality oppresses racialized members of your city (if you would like more evidence of systemic racism in the legal system, I would love to send legal papers and other academic papers regarding the issue of over-policing and police brutality against racialized communities, for example, pieces written by my Professor and recognized legal scholar, David Tanovich).

I am writing to you today to express my outrage regarding the allocation of **\$171 million to the Hamilton Police Service budget, in comparison to a mere \$158 million to social services** for the City of Hamilton. This astronomical police budget costs the taxpayer more than firefighters, paramedics, libraries and public housing combined. I stand with Hamilton's Black community in demands to **start divesting from the systematically violent Hamilton Police Service immediately.**

I support the full demands of Hamilton's Black community, which can you find [here](#).

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, **towards the abolition of police and prisons**. In order to do this, I call on you and the City Council to **reduce funding in these ways**:

- Withhold pensions and don't rehire cops involved in excessive force cases
- Require cops to be liable for misconduct settlements
- Reduce the size of the police force, and stop sending armed/uniformed cops on mental health-related calls.

An increased police presence 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, 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 Toronto**. We should look to and learn from organizations like [Black Lives Matter Toronto](#), [Black Legal Action Centre](#), [PASAN](#), [Showing Up for Racial Justice](#), [Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion](#), 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. 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.

The 2018 carding consultation in Hamilton highlighted that Black youth in Hamilton are being carded at their schools, in the streets, and being kicked out of Hamilton libraries without just cause by Hamilton police and security services. This is outrageous and unacceptable treatment of our valued Black youth. What we need in Hamilton is to prioritize the expansion of community-led health and safety initiatives rather than future financial investment into the Hamilton Police Services. I call on you, as an elected official, to recognize the demands of Hamilton's black community, and to never again vote to increase the Hamilton Police Services budget.

I trust that as a councillor in my city, you will hear what I and my communities are demanding and ensure our voices are represented.

I will be closely watching the actions of city and provincial officials in the future and continuing to advocate for police divestment.

Thank you.

Regards,
Valeria Kuri
Ward 5 Resident