

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Defund the Police and Reallocation of Taxes

From: Elizabeth Seidl

Sent: June 22, 2020 7:21 AM

To: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; Merulla, Sam <Sam.Merulla@hamilton.ca>; Paparella, Stephanie <Stephanie.Paparella@hamilton.ca>; Ariyo, John <john.ariyo@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Defund the Police and Reallocation of Taxes

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Councillor Sam Merulla, General Issues Committee, and Committee Against Racism,

I am a Hamilton resident living in Ward 4 and I'm very concerned about anti-Black racism and violence, especially at the hands of police. No doubt, you will thank me for sharing my thoughts and place this letter in the pile with the others. To my continued disappointment, it has become increasingly clear that several with a leadership role in this city are not taking calls for a reduction in the police budget seriously.

Greater transparency and communication is necessary after the losses of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto and D'Andre Campbell in Brampton, who were both experiencing severe emotional distress and died instead of receiving medical help. These are only the most recent examples of Black people dying in encounters with police, something that has been happening in the GTHA for decades. The police have a long history of race-based violence. For example, data reveals that Toronto's Black residents are 20x times more likely to be killed by police officers than white residents, and that 70% of individuals who die in encounters with police struggle with mental health issues, substance abuse or both.

In Hamilton, we regularly have members of violent and explicitly racist white supremacist groups congregating outside of city hall. Racism in ALL Canadian cities is prevalent and real and I am concerned and disheartened that my tax dollars are being used to fund a service that continues to victimize members of Black and other marginalized communities. It is upsetting to see that the police budget continues to be rubber-stamped, without examination and debate, year after year, unlike for example, libraries and housing. I'm frustrated that leadership fails to see how hypocritical this is to citizens and taxpayers.

I believe the police force of Hamilton is overfunded and contrary to their mission, causing more fear, violence and harm to our communities. We urgently need to implement strategies that lead to better outcomes before any more Black, Indigenous, and people of colour are harmed in a police encounter. I would like to see the Hamilton Police Services legitimately held accountable in tangible ways, with the police budget significantly reduced and those tax dollars **reallocated** into social services, health care, mental health programs, jobs and affordable housing. Strengthening municipal social supports will reduce crime by addressing issues that lead to it at their source. Also, there may be lessons to be found by looking at Camden, New Jersey who in 2013 dissolved their local police department and pivoted to a model of community policing which has been followed by a steep drop in crime.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-04/how-camden-new-jersey-reformed-its-police-department>. For further education on this topic that includes both historical analysis of the harms of policing on marginalized and oppressed communities and an exploration of harm-reduction strategies used elsewhere in the world, please read *The End of Policing*, by Alex S. Vitale.

I would like to see the all Police Services immediately implement a harm reduction strategy, with a transparent and public training plan for all police officers and personnel. Though I am not convinced that body cameras are the solution to the systemic problems in policing, I do support their use in the interim to improve accountability, until greater change is made. Specifically, I would like to see HPS's adoption of the 84 recommendations in the 2014 report by Frank Iacobucci, aimed at reducing fatal encounters with people in emotional distress.

Thank you for your consideration, Elizabeth Seidl