

July 22, 2020

To: The Police Services Board

From: Don Oliphant, Doris Boettger

We reside in Hamilton Wentworth and have done so for our entire lives.

During our lifetime we have observed our communities as they have changed and evolved, attended school, including local university, worked professionally become parents and grandparents, raised children, volunteered, and committed ourselves to life- long learning. We are educators who have worked in the North, East, West and Mountain areas of the city. We are very aware of the unique characteristics strengths and needs of Hamilton Wentworth. We support the great successes that have been possible when citizens work together and respectfully express opinions and listen to others concerns.

We have both experienced interactions with Police Officers through 5 break ins to our home, an assault and many calls for assistance at our perspective schools and a car accident. We were very appreciative for the assistance received in each of these circumstances.

“To serve and Protect”, is a high calling, and in our experience, we feel both served and protected by police in our desire to live a peaceful life.

We have 6 young grandchildren attending public school, and as any grandparents we have concerns for their safety. These concerns are in regard to violence and abuse of any nature. We were disappointed to see the removal of the school liaison officers, and have spoken to our trustee, but, are hopeful that by working together with the School Board, students and communities a new start can put these relationships on a positive trajectory.

In regard to “defunding the police”, we certainly believe that in the presence of crime and violence police are necessary to support our community and help to create a safe life for our citizens of all ages. Our appreciation goes to officers who literally risk their lives for the safety of others, make split second decisions, and often face difficult situations, and keep the peace. Almost an impossible job. We believe that police officers do so much more and we appreciate the complexity of their jobs.

We do not want the police defunded in any way. There are examples in the US where the police were removed and crime escalated.

Can we do better, always. Perhaps, a respectful, productive and manageable process for citizens to put forth concerns and practical concepts to address those concerns would bring people together in a positive way.

Reaching back, Don ran a very successful community program in Hamilton’s North end for children and families at the former Robert Land school, This was not a high cost program, but, it gave voice to the community to address their needs and because he represented the Board built trust and continued respect between the school Board and the community.

Also, Cathy Weaver elementary school is named after a police officer who was significantly involved in the school community and made a positive impact in the lives of people in that community. There is much to be celebrated in the area of community involvement by the police.

These are just two examples of effective low- cost programming, which made a big difference.

While we acknowledge that change is a “constant” and in fact embrace measured change, we believe HWPB has a fair and effective foundation on which to build, and with respectful input from all citizens can create a safe and protective environment. Collectively, we want the best for our future.

Thank you for receiving and reviewing our thoughts.

We would be pleased to further dialogue if you desire.

Don Oliphant Doris Boettger