

From: Razan Samara
Sent: August 7, 2020 12:41 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Cc:
Subject: GIC August 10th meeting

Good morning Hamilton City Council members and attendees of the General Issues Committee meeting,

Please accept this written reflection and call to action in lieu of a video.

My name is Razan, I'm a McMaster alumni and an independent journalist who has spent the past four years working in Hamilton. As a storyteller, I've had the pleasure of developing deep connections with community members, listening to their stories and experiences, and having the privilege of sharing them through writing and multimedia.

While I'm not currently living in Hamilton and perhaps no councillor represents me, my role as a storyteller has put me in a unique position to speak up against the injustices happening in the city. Hamilton and its people hold a special place in my heart, and when I see my community fighting for positive change, I must stand by them and their values.

It was in tutorial rooms and random corners of McMaster that I've had heart wrenching conversations with peers who faced racism and discrimination growing up in Hamilton. It was at Hamilton City Hall, in the same rooms you're all sitting in right now, that I attended workshops and listened to the stories of community organizers and members and learned that the police are not keeping oppressed communities safe, not our Black youth nor the LGBTQ community, nor Indigenous folks and Muslim women like me. During the Women's March, just outside City Hall and next to the "Hamilton" sign, I listened to women share their stories of abuse, the lack of mental health support and shelters. It was on Main Street West, a road you must've all taken today, that I marched alongside women for Take Back the Night, once again, sharing stories and experiences of how we don't feel safe and how not much has changed, seeking comfort only in one another and the warmth of community care. Today, you will hear facts on why defunding police is necessary and how it's a possible reality to direct funds to the community, but beyond numbers and figures, remember that there are people behind every digit.

I've spent all this time listening and learning, and I call on you to also listen to the community and the concerns and demands they share with you today. As a storyteller, I have the responsibility of sharing Hamilton's narratives. As Hamilton City Council members, you all have the responsibility to act in the interests of your constituents, and they have very clearly spelled out what action looks like:

Demands:

- Immediate 20% reduction
- Full transparency of the line by line police budget
- We want 30 million cut from HPS salaries, specifically from division 1,2, and 3. We want money cut from the mounted unit (horses), ACTION team, and victim services.

Thank you,

Razan Samara