

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Written Delegation for Next Council Meeting & Police Services Board Meeting -- Fwd: Addressing Systemic Racism & Re-evaluating Police Funding

From: Andrew Pettit

Date: Sun., Jul. 26, 2020, 9:12 p.m.

Subject: Addressing Systemic Racism & Re-evaluating Police Funding

To: <mayor@hamilton.ca>, <maureen.wilson@hamilton.ca>, <jason.farr@hamilton.ca>, <nrinder.nann@hamilton.ca>, <sam.merulla@hamilton.ca>, <chad.collins@hamilton.ca>, <tom.jackson@hamilton.ca>, <esther.pauls@hamilton.ca>, <ward8@hamilton.ca>, <brad.clark@hamilton.ca>, <maria.pearson@hamilton.ca>, <brenda.johnson@hamilton.ca>, <lloyd.ferguson@hamilton.ca>, <arlene.vanderbeek@hamilton.ca>, <judi.partridge@hamilton.ca>

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing to share my voice to the calls to address systemic racism and re-evaluate police funding in Hamilton.

As our elected representatives you are in a unique position to lead on these issues - by listening, believing and engaging meaningfully with our brave neighbours of colour raising their voices to let us know how racist actions, attitudes and systems harm them.

As a white person, I know first hand how easy it is to deny and dismiss such claims - we haven't had the same experiences and our education on these issues is lacking, to say the least. I have been disappointed to date by the comments on the part of some council members, and silence/lack of meaningful engagement from others. Again, I implore you to engage, listen and learn.

More concretely, we need better representation of the diversity in our community on our police services board and leadership structures generally. There were many highly qualified people of colour who volunteered their time and expertise this past selection process, only to be turned away. This is an obvious and most fundamental problem. Our elected representatives and police board lack the cultural competence, the awareness of how differently situated citizens experience our city, to do the job alone. Please - whether you are on the board or not - explore and exhaust all ways we can correct this now, mid-stride, not waiting for next cycle. Step down or get others to to make room.

I am also greatly saddened and angered to hear our Hamilton police are pursuing criminal charges with respect to the demonstration on Main Street wherein "defund the police" was painted on the road. While I would have preferred the banner been left in place, I can concede and accept the notion of safety concerns as motivation for its removal. But the public announcement of a criminal investigation and pursuit of charges? It's nothing short of insensitive and ignorant bully tactics.

Leadership would see the call - cry - of its community and commit to repainting that message with the appropriate paint. Leadership would be in the paper, on the radio, social media and TV, denouncing the investigation, calling for change, or in the very least, humbly acknowledging there's a problem, a lack of personal understanding, and making a real commitment to do better.

This is a time to lead. Please do. And be bold with the platform you are afforded. If you don't know where to start - and I offer this with the utmost sincerity - please look to Councillors Nann and Wilson who consistently lead well on these issues.

Sincerely,
Andrew

Andrew Pettit Ward 2, Hamilton