

Item 4.1 - Correspondence
Committee Against Racism, September 22, 2020

From: Abedar Kamgari <info@abedarkamgari.com>

Sent: June 1, 2020 9:30 AM

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

Subject: Police Violence and Anti-Black Racism

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Councillor Maureen Wilson, General Issues Committee, and Committee Against Racism,

I am writing to you today to express my concerns about anti-Black racism and violence, especially at the hands of police. I am a Hamilton resident living in ward 1.

We need greater transparency and communication after the loss of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a Black woman in emotional distress. This is only the most recent example of a Black person dying in an encounter 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 the Black community.

I believe the police force of Hamilton is overfunded and not taking the necessary precautions to provide safety to Black and Indigenous people in our community. Despite advocacy efforts, the Hamilton Police Force is not equipped with body cameras -- a request that has been voted against 4 times. We need to see measures implemented now that will lead to better outcomes in the future before any more Black lives are harmed in a police encounter.

I would like to see the Police Services held accountable in tangible ways:

- First, I would like to see the Hamilton police budget reduced, with 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 it at their source.
- Second, 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.
- Third, I would urgently like to see the mandatory use of body cameras for all officers at all times.
- Lastly, I would like to see the Police'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 time and attention.

Best wishes,
Abedar Kamgari