

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Letter from a concerned Hamiltonian

From: Tori Marko

Sent: November 30, 2020 1:17 PM

To: Office of the Mayor <mayor@hamilton.ca>; clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Matthew.Green@parl.gc.ca; Farr, Jason <Jason.Farr@hamilton.ca>; Nann, Nrinder <Nrinder.Nann@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Letter from a concerned Hamiltonian

Mayor and Members of Council,

I am a Ward 2 resident writing today to express my outrage at the actions of HPS and City Council towards the Defund HPS protestors outside City Hall. I have been following the events of this past week with hope – I was inspired watching the video of Councillor Nrinder Nann speaking with the protestors, and excited to see the statement of support released by Hamilton Centre MP Matthew Green. I applaud these elected representatives for taking a stand. I had hoped that you, Mayor Eisenberger, would have the courage to speak with the protestors publicly, given that it is the public that elected you to office, and it is the public (people like myself) who want to hold you accountable for your words and actions. I wanted my Councillor Jason Farr to do the right thing, but given his campaign against unhoused folks at First Ontario Center this summer, I didn't have a lot of hope.

What I have watched unfold today is nothing short of shameful. Plainclothes officers without visible badges, tearing down and discarding people's property in a garbage truck! You are stealing the shelter and clothes from marginalized people, leaving them out in the freezing rain. It's no wonder you don't want to defund the police, you need them to take care of your problems when you don't like what the community is asking for.

HPS already receives 20% of the annual budget. They have a half million-dollar surplus this year, and somehow are still asking for more. How can you justify paying HPS to terrorize houseless people when you could just put that money directly towards helping them? You are making a choice – a choice to punish people for circumstances beyond their control. It is clearly not "Hamilton for all". To reiterate the demands of the protestors, as a Hamilton community member, I demand:

1. An immediate 50% defunding of the Hamilton police budget.
2. That Hamilton City Council deny the requested increase of 4-million dollars to the HPS budget and to take back the surplus to begin investing in free housing.
3. That all levels of government defund the police across the country and invest in free housing.

There seems to be a perception at City Hall that the people asking you to defund HPS are not "real" Hamiltonians. I'd like to say for the record that I have lived in Hamilton for 9 years. I am not an "activist", nor do I belong to any political party. I simply live and work here – I spent my spring and summer researching SARS-CoV-2 in a McMaster laboratory because I care about Hamiltonians and I want to protect them (unhoused people are at increased risk of COVID-19). I try my best to follow local news and events, but it is difficult when so much of what you do is deliberately hidden behind closed doors. Since I have lived here, I voted in both municipal elections. I voted for you, Mayor Eisenberger, because I thought you would bring positive change to the city. I am beyond disappointed in you.

Sincerely,
Victoria

Victoria Marko, M.Sc.
Ward 2 resident, Hamilton