

From: Abedar Kamgari <abedarkamgari@gmail.com>
Sent: February 5, 2021 11:04 AM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Cc: Wilson, Maureen <Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca>; info@defundhps.com
Subject: GIC February 8 Meeting

Hello,

Please accept this written delegation for the upcoming February 8 General Issues Committee Meeting, in regards to the 2021 Hamilton Police Budget.

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Dear Hamilton City Councillors,

My name is **Abedar** and I live in Hamilton, Ontario in **ward 1**. I am reaching out to express my outrage regarding the astronomically high Hamilton Police Services budget of \$171.5 million dollars, with an existing surplus of \$567,000-- well beyond the allocated funding for any other social service in the city. This money needs to be invested into the community to address the deepening affordable housing crisis as residents are turned away from shelters and forced to sleep on the streets.

I am calling on you to vote against the proposed 2.98% increase to the Hamilton Police Services budget and vote in favour of the return of the HPS budget surplus to the City, and its re-allocation into housing and community-led, harm reduction supports for the housing, mental health, addiction crises. For months, thousands of Hamiltonians have tirelessly advocated for defunding the HPS in order to deliberately invest in other vital yet underfunded social services. Residents have consistently called, written, delegated, protested, rallied, and marched. As public representatives, your unwillingness to act upon these proposed demands is a failure to represent a concerned community of your constituents -- a community evidenced through these calls. I am not comfortable continuing to fund policing in my community at the expense of essential services like housing, community health centres, mental health etc.

Increased police presence does not keep us safe. It threatens the lives of our most vulnerable communities: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, the LGBTQ2S+ community, unhoused people, street-based sex workers, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, etc. Police continue to discriminately target Black and Indigenous communities through tactics of racial profiling, implicit bias, algorithmic bias, etc. In addition to being extremely racist, policing is an ableist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and a classist institution that necessitates perpetuating these varied oppressions to function.

Police officers do not have the most basic understandings of queer and gender-diverse communities, as evidenced by their interactions with Pride Hamilton organizers. The 2021 HPS operating budget analysis notes that the sexual assault detective constable will make \$108,657, while women's shelters are at capacity and organizations like SACHA, who are doing the real work to support survivors, are severely underfunded.

The HPS reports a 14.5% increase in 911 calls involving a person in crisis. People in crisis should not have to resort to police nor have police called on them. Most people killed by police in Canada since 2000 had mental health or substance abuse related issues. Funds should be reallocated towards a dedicated mental health crisis response support that does not involve police.

Police reform will not protect community members experiencing mental health distress, address a culture of dismissing sexual assault and missing person inquiries, nor prevent the systemic criminalization of marginalized communities. Reform tactics such as body cameras have proven to be ineffective in reducing police brutality.

Crime rates in Hamilton, Ontario, and Canada have been declining for the last two decades, with *all* categories of crime rates in Hamilton dropping during COVID-19. Yet, police budgets continue to inflate. In the operating budget analysis, the Hamilton Police Services will see a 78.3% increase to its ammunition expenses if this budget is approved. The City continues to overfund violence while underfunding crucial services for building healthy and well-supported communities.

Investing in the health and wellbeing of our communities addresses the root cause of most criminalized acts, which are often need-based and consequences of poverty. What we really need are robust services that can effectively respond, such as mental health outreach workers, community and housing centres, and accessible educational/preventative programs. We need to reallocate the HPS budget to existing community-led organizations offering services to vulnerable communities, and create effective alternative services such as crisis intervention, mental health centres, and housing.

I am calling on you to vote against the proposed 2.98% increase to the Hamilton Police Services budget and vote in favour of the return of the HPS budget surplus to the City to be re-allocated into housing and community-led, harm reduction supports for the housing, mental health, addiction crises. If you are unable to offer immediate, meaningful action in response to the demands outlined above, then I ask that you resign and make way for leadership that is able to do so.

**Sincerely,
Abedar Kamgari
Ward 1 Resident**