

**From:** heather South  
**Sent:** February 9, 2021 2:05 PM  
**To:** [clerk@hamilton.ca](mailto:clerk@hamilton.ca)  
**Subject:** Defund HPS

My name is Heather and I live in Hamilton, Ontario in Ward 2. 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. This is well beyond the allocated funding for any other social service in the city. Money desperately needs to be invested into the community, especially given pandemic conditions and the affordable housing crisis as people are being turned away from shelters and sleeping on the streets.

I am calling upon you to vote *against* the proposed of 2.98% increase to the Hamilton Police Services budget vote *for* the proposed return of the HPS budget surplus to the City, and its re-allocation into housing and community-led, harm reduction supports for facing housing, mental health, addiction crises. As your constituent, you represent me. Failure 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, 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 these varied oppressions to function.

When police officers do not have the most basic understandings of queer and gender-diverse communities, why is that the 2021 operating budget analysis says that the sexual assault detective constable will make \$108,657, but womens shelters are at capacity and organization like SACHA, who do real work to support survivors are 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/should not have police called on them and funds should be reallocated towards proper mental health support. Most people killed by police in Canada since 2000 had mental health or substance abuse related issues.

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 criminalization of certain identities and need-based acts. Reform is a failed tactic. Reform tactics such as body cameras have had little to no tangible effect on 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 ammunition expenditures if this budget is approved. The City continues to overfund violence while underfunding sectors and organizations crucial to building healthy and supported communities.

Investing in our communities better 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/prevention programs. We need to: reallocate the budget to existing community-led organizations that are offering services to vulnerable communities, and create effective alternative services such as crisis intervention, mental health centres, and housing.

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,

Heather South

Ward 2 Citizen