

From: Tess Maclsaac <>
Sent: February 10, 2021 10:13 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Urgent Request for February 11th Meeting

Hello Office of the City Clerk,

My name is Tess and I live in Hamilton, Ontario (Ward 3) - my partner and I own a house beside the beautiful Gage Park, we plan on raising our future children here.

I am writing to you because I want to express my disapproval regarding the extraordinarily high budget for Hamilton Police Services of a whopping \$171.5 million, with a surplus of \$567,000. This is well beyond the allocated funding for any other social service in the city. I can attest to this as a psychotherapist and registered social worker who works closely with the Hamilton community - people are struggling right now in really devastating ways. Many folks are struggling to access immediate needs such as housing/ safe shelter, food, etc. - this is of course intensified by the housing crisis as well as the financial strain that's resulted from the pandemic.

The Hamilton community urgently needs money right now - and the good thing is that this is something that *can* happen since the HPS budget surplus exists! Money that would otherwise be going toward HPS (which does not house or feed people) can be re-directed toward the community! Please, vote in favour of us - your community! A vote in favour of us is an act of communal love. **I am urging you to please vote against the proposed 2.98% increase to the Hamilton Police Services budget. I am urging that you please vote in support of the proposed return of the HPS budget surplus to the City, and its re-allocation into housing and community-led, harm reduction supports for those facing the housing crisis, the opioid crisis, as well as the overall mental health crisis.** As your constituent, you represent me. Therefore, it is my expectation and hope that you will act upon these proposed demands - otherwise, you will not be representing the concern of your constituents (I know that I do not stand alone in these concerns). I cannot in good faith continue to fund HPS at the expense of the community that I work with every day - my clients need essential services like housing, community health centres, and they also need Councillors such as yourself who they can trust will demonstrate care and love for the community.

Black and Indigenous communities are not safe or protected by HPS. In fact, HPS overtly discriminates against Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour through tactics such as racial profiling, implicit bias, algorithmic bias, and so forth.

In addition to its exhibited anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, policing is also an ableist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and a classist institution that necessitates these varied oppressions to function. As a queer woman living in Hamilton, I believe that more resources ought to be allocated to support gender and sexually diverse communities as well. Why is it that the 2021 operating budget analysis states that the sexual assault detective constable will be paid \$108,657, and yet Hamilton women's shelters are at capacity, and organizations such as SACHA who do the on-the-ground work to support survivors are so shamefully underfunded? This is particularly concerning given that many studies (*I'm happy to follow-up on this if you'd like a link to these studies*) indicate that intimate partner and family violence has actually *increased* during the pandemic. I can attest to this stark reality as I bear witness to it in my work.

The HPS has reported a 14.5% increase in 911 calls involving a person in crisis. People in crisis should have more resources at their disposal for support and should not have police called on them, HPS funds should be reallocated towards safe/non-lethal mental health support in the Hamilton community. This is important because studies have indicated that the majority of people killed by police in Canada since 2000 had mental health or substance use 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 more broadly, in 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.

Angela Davis says that we ought to address what's at the root of what afflicts our 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 is a wide-range of robust services that can effectively respond to mental health crises (e.g. mental health outreach workers), community and housing centres, and accessible educational/prevention programs. We need to: reallocate the HPS budget to support existing (but underfunded) community-led organizations that are offering services to vulnerable communities, and create effective alternative services such as crisis intervention, mental health centres, and housing for all.

It is my sincere hope that you are able to offer meaningful action in response to the demands outlined above.

Sincerely,
Tess Maclsaac
Ward 3