

**From:** Laurel Carter

**Sent:** February 22, 2021 7:58 AM

**To:** Paparella, Stephanie <Stephanie.Paparella@hamilton.ca>

**Subject:** Re: Written Comments for the General Issues Committee - 2021 Operating Budget

Hamilton Council,

My name is Laurel and I'm a new resident of Hamilton, in Ward 3. My spouse and I purchased our home and are thrilled about creating our new life here in Hamilton. But I have been devastatingly disappointed thus far in our city's leadership in the case of advocating for the community here in Ward 3 and beyond.

I'm calling on you to vote against the proposed increase of 2.98% to Hamilton Police Services. This ask makes me genuinely sick to my stomach when people are in need of support for basic survival. You represent the people of Hamilton and your neighbours here. Those funds need to be funnelled into community support, harm reduction, housing and addiction support. Crime rates are declining in Hamilton and yet we keep being asked to support more and more funding to those who allegedly fight crime.

The Hamilton Police Services budget, which there is a call to expand, is ludicrously high at \$171.5M dollars. At a time when homelessness, food insecurity and instability are rampant in Hamilton and beyond - this is beyond exorbitant and offensive. The safest neighbourhoods are not those with the highest police presence, but those with the most resources. Money desperately needs to be invested into the community and into housing and support for our neighbours in need. Our neighbours are being turned away from shelters and then their outdoor housing is being torn up. The solution that we need to work towards is not increasing the policing of our citizens, but increasing the supports available to our community.

Increased police do not keep us safe. They do not make me feel safe, as someone whose spouse is Black and is therefore at a higher risk of being harmed for those called on to 'serve and protect' our citizens. I feel afraid when I see increased police presence. I feel afraid when my partner goes out on errands at night. Our neighbours and citizens should not feel afraid of police brutality or crack-downs, and they should be able to access the supports that keep their humanity, dignity and safety top of mind. We need investments in community support and not failed efforts at police reform like body cameras and more and more advanced militarized equipment for a police force that is not fighting any new threats against it. We do not need more tanks or more sophisticated weapons. We need to invest in forms of community response that put the interests and needs of our community first. We need trained groups who are empowered to respond to mental health crisis calls, to calls about houseless citizens, for those in sex work. For many in our community, most prominently our Black and community members of colour, the presence of police in itself is an escalation of a situation, and one that represents fear, mistrust and threat. In order to de-escalate situations humanely and respectfully, we need to train and empower non-police community response units that do not threaten our community.

Finally, I want to express my personal disappointment in our mayor and our city's decision to not meet with those who were calling for an open discussion around police brutality and racism in Hamilton, alongside activist Desmond Cole. This decision was deeply harmful and it will not be forgotten. Not only were they not met with, after **days** of peaceful demonstration and community building outside city hall, but they were finally actively arrested while practicing their right to peaceful protest. One officer was heard asking another "what're the odds that I kill someone tonight?" How am I supposed to feel safe when this was the response of HPS to a peaceful protest calling for humanity and dignity? And how can our council stand by it?

Laurel  
Ward 3