

My name is Zoë Hayes and I live in Hamilton, Ontario in Ward 3. I am reaching out to express my outrage regarding the already astronomically high Hamilton Police Services budget of \$193.60 million dollars, and the requested increase of 9.5% (to \$213 million) for 2024. This is well beyond the allocated funding for any other social service in the city which is outrageous given the housing crisis we are currently in and the tremendous need that the residents of my community and this city face in regards to housing, shelter, mental health, harm reduction and other services not to mention infrastructure. Money desperately needs to be invested into the community, not into policing.

Living and working on Barton st E. I see first hand the impacts of our city's housing and healthcare crisis every day. Access to affordable housing in my neighbourhood has become almost impossible, the number of people resorting to living in tents because of lack of appropriate shelter and housing is increasing and I am regularly reminded of the need of health and mental health services especially those with a trauma informed and harm reduction approach. These should not be services that are delivered by and/or with police.

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.

It is important to remember that the police do not prevent crime. Nor are police equipped or meant to be delivering mental health, social work, housing or healthcare services. There are others whose training and experience is actually suited to these purposes and instead of providing them with adequate resources we continue to fund the police and unnecessarily criminalize the most vulnerable in our communities. Investments into policing 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.

We need investment in robust services that can effectively respond, such as mental health outreach workers, community and housing centres, and accessible educational/prevention programs. I am urging you 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, community health and mental health centres. And I am calling for you to vote *against* the proposed 9.5% increase to the Hamilton Police Services budget.

**Sincerely,
Zoe Hayes
Ward 3**