

From: Montana M

Sent: January 12, 2024 3:30 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Jan 16 General Issues Committee - Budget deliberations

Dear Clerk,

I would like my written response to be included in the Jan 16th General Issues Committee meeting on Budget deliberations.

My name is Montana Mellett and I live in Hamilton, Ontario in Landsdale. As a concerned constituent, I am writing to express objections to the proposed increase in the Hamilton Police Services (HPS) budget. The suggested addition of \$13.3 million to an already substantial budget, raises significant concerns regarding the appropriate allocation of resources. I implore you to reconsider this proposal during the upcoming budget deliberations and advocate for a more responsible distribution of funds.

In light of recent information from a report by The Hamilton Spectator, which highlights a staggering 2,000-applicant housing backlog waiting to get affordable housing, it becomes even more critical to reassess our budgetary priorities. This backlog underscores the serious need for increased investment in essential community services, rather than expanding the police budget.

City council should re-allocate the existing HPS surplus and the \$13.3 mil they are asking for towards community-led initiatives. These initiatives should prioritize existing organizations that cater to vulnerable communities, which have been disproportionately affected by the lack of action from governing bodies. Essential steps include the allocation of resources to community-led organizations offering vital services and the creation of alternative services, such as crisis intervention, mental health centers, safe consumption sites, and housing programs.

Also, I call for a demilitarization of the HPS and a redirection of tax dollars toward initiatives combating issues like food insecurity. It is disheartening to witness public funds being directed towards the acquisition of highly militarized equipment and sophisticated surveillance tools rather than addressing the urgent housing needs of our community.

The current emphasis on policing disproportionately affects communities consisting of poor, disabled, Black, Indigenous, racialized, queer, and trans individuals. Increased police presence does not ensure safety, if anything they have constantly been proven to escalate situations, and make matters worse. Policing, as it stands, perpetuates systemic issues of racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism. City council needs to recognize the inherent flaws in this system and take decisive action against the unwarranted spending of public funds.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing the budget re-allocated to more important community initiatives.

Sincerely,
Montana Mellett