

Pilon, Janet

Subject: A Call To Action For Body-Worn Cameras

From: Leigh Taylor

Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 1:30 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: A Call To Action For Body-Worn Cameras

Good Afternoon!

I have been advised to forward the below email to you by Mr. Paul Szachlewicz, Administrator for Mayor Eisenberger, so all members of council will be able to see and address this very important matter. Thank you.

Dear Mayor Eisenberger

My name is Leigh Taylor, and I am a resident in Ward 3. I am reaching out to you regarding a matter that has been heavy on my mind and heart. I am sure that you are aware of the tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of 4 Minneapolis Police Officers on May 25th. As a Black man in this community, it shook me to the core despite this happening stateside. I could not help but think, what if something like this happened to me here. Two days later on May 27th, 29-year-old Regis Korchinski-Paquet tragically fell from the 24th floor of an apartment building during a police encounter. What struck me about this tragic death is that there is no video of the incident. Not just from eyewitnesses, but also from Toronto Police. Because the Toronto Police Department does not use body-worn cameras.

What if what happened to George Floyd happened here in Hamilton? What if what happened to Regis Korchinski-Paquet happened here in Hamilton? Outside of eyewitness testimony and eyewitness video footage, we would only have the word of those involved. That makes the job of a unit like the Special Investigations Unit extremely difficult because the Hamilton Police Department does not use body-worn cameras. They have not even engaged in a trial run. This is unacceptable.

I understand the high costs associated with such an endeavor, but the fact that the use of body cameras comes with positives like protection for police and citizens alike, accountability for those charged to protect and serve, and improved public perception, it is time that the Hamilton Police Force take this on and find a way to fit this in their budget given that it would only consist of 1.6% to implement based on the Hamilton Police Budget for 2020. I do understand that the acceptance of this measure lies with the police board, but this measure has been turned down one time too many by Hamilton Police. Especially at a time when public distrust in the police and city is definitely high with situations like their interactions with the LGBTQ+ community revolving around Pride, the issues surrounding the Yellow Vests at City Hall, much less the strained relationship with Black, Brown and Indigenous Communities. This can no longer continue.

As Mayor of Hamilton, there is no greater voice than yours. No voice that would have a greater reach or impact. As Mayor and member of the Hamilton Police Board, your voice, along with those of your fellow city councillors would carry more influence with your fellow Hamilton Police Board members and Police Chief Eric Girt. While there are other measures that can and should be addressed, this is one that can be addressed and implemented sooner. Calls from our city leaders for body-worn cameras to be adopted by the Hamilton Police Department need to begin now.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Kind regards,
Leigh Taylor

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