

Pilon, Janet

Subject: 2020 Hamilton Police Budget - Call For Action/Defunding

From: **Kelly Ebers**

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To: <mayor@hamilton.ca>, <sam.merulla@hamilton.ca>

Dear Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Councillor Sam Merulla,

I am writing to you today to express my outrage regarding the Hamilton Police Service budget of **\$172 million from the total \$935 million 2020 Preliminary operating budget** for the City of Hamilton (an increase of 3.8% since 2019). This astronomical police budget costs the taxpayer more than firefighters, paramedics and public housing combined. Following the recent horrific death of young Black and Indigenous people in Canada, I call upon our elected officials to **start divesting from the systematically violent Hamilton Police Service immediately**.

I am asking that you, as an elected official, pledge to do the following:

1. To **never again** vote to increase the Hamilton Police Service budget.
2. To prioritize the expansion of **community-led health and safety initiatives** over future financial investment into the Hamilton Police Service.

In the face of cyclical police violence happening throughout North America right now, there is no better time to commit ourselves to change. We have seen that investing in body cameras, civilian reviews or de-escalation and implicit bias training doesn't work. What we need in Hamilton is leadership that can initiate a reduction in the immense police violence that targets our most marginalized people, toward the eventual abolition of police and prisons. In order to do this, I call on you and the City Council to **reduce funding in these ways**:

x Withhold pensions and don't rehire cops involved in excessive force cases

x Require cops to be liable for misconduct settlements

x Reduce the size of the police force, and stop sending armed/uniformed cops on mental health-related calls.

An increased police presence does not keep us safe, rather it directly threatens the lives of our most vulnerable communities (BIPOC, the LGBTQ2S+ community, unhoused people, street-based sex workers, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, etc). Instead of investing in policing, our city must prioritize alternatives like education, increased mental health services, housing initiatives, income security, harm reduction services, accessible rehabilitation, mutual aid, social workers, conflict resolution services, transformative justice, and other vital community-based support systems. **These initiatives must support our most vulnerable communities and centre the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour in Hamilton.**

Our city can lead the way in defining public safety through community, not cops, where Black, Indigenous and people of colour are free from police oppression. I am asking you to create a better future for all residents of Hamilton by divesting from harmful policing and investing in life-affirming services.

Sincerely,

Kelly Ebers

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