

Pilon, Janet

Subject: FW: Concerns about the Hamilton Police

From: Jackie Levitt

Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 4:28 PM

To: Stevenson, Kirsten; Office of the Mayor; Nann, Nrinder; Matthew.Green@parl.gc.ca; Community Inclusion; clerk@hamilton.ca; Farr, Jason; smehdi2796@hwdsb.on.ca; cprosic8502@hwdsb.on.ca; jcravero@hwdsb.on.ca; ahorwath-gp@ndp.on.ca

Subject: Concerns about the Hamilton Police

Hello,

My name is Jackie Levitt. I am an HWDSB Elementary Teacher, and I live and work in the Beasley neighbourhood of Downtown Hamilton.

My partner recently wrote an email to the Police Services Board expressing deep concerns about the way Black, racialized, and queer citizens are being treated by the HPS. In light of recent events, and in solidarity with black leaders across our city, I would like to also express my concerns.

We have personally witnessed many unacceptable actions by HPS. This past year alone, we have seen:

- A black man thrown on the pavement and pinned down for asking to retrieve his wallet from the back of a cruiser
- A distressed, elderly black woman being threatened by a barking police dog and then locked in the back of a police van on a hot day.
- A black neighbour being told by HPS not to file a report of racial assault because it would be too time consuming for everyone.
- Police taking photos of peaceful (LGBTQ) protesters with a zoom lens as a method of active intimidation.
- Neighbors being held at gun point with assault rifles

Last week, black organizers released the following demands in light of police brutality happening in Canada and in the United States, and I support these demands.

Demands:

- We call on the city of Hamilton to defund the Hamilton police.
- We call on the city of Hamilton to invest the tax dollars that would have otherwise gone to the police towards initiatives fighting against food insecurity, racism and towards more affordable housing.
- We call on the City of Hamilton to ensure that HPS are not ticketing houseless people for existing in public.

- We demand that the Hamilton Police Services halt all purchases with tax dollars of weapons (guns, rifles, etc).
- We demand that the Hamilton Police Services cease the ticketing and surveilling of homeless and disabled people in Hamilton, and that there be a moratorium on the hiring of police constables in Hamilton given the documented over-surveilling of homeless people during the pandemic.
- We demand that the Hamilton Police Services stop surveilling communities, and that they halt the expenditure of tax dollars on high tech surveillance equipment.
- We demand that the Hamilton Police Services stop targeting and criminalizing activists and communities pushing back against Yellow Vesters and other forms of white supremacy.
- We call on McMaster University (President & Board of Governors) to immediately terminate Glenn De Caire's contract. De Caire was forced to resign from Hamilton police after he was caught saying incredibly racist things to other police officers. De Caire also has a history of violent policing that targets houseless people as well as Black people.
- In line with the demands of the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Kids Need Help Coalition, we demand that the HWDSB immediately remove School Resource Officers (SROs) out of all schools and fully fund a public review of police violence that occurred in their schools.
- We demand that the school board refrain from calling the cops on kids.
- We demand that the school board collect and release data that documents the disciplinary action against students by race and gender.
- We demand that the school board implement a community run alternative to disciplinary action based on the principles of restorative justice.
- We demand that the provincial police act be rewritten to give municipalities full control over police boards. Currently, in Hamilton, the Hamilton Police Services operates as an autonomous body, giving municipalities little to no oversight in terms of what they invest in and the ways that they militarize themselves.
- We demand that the province of Ontario work with grassroots groups to divest taxpayer money across the Province (Hamilton - \$171M, Ottawa - \$319M, Waterloo - \$182M, Halton Region - \$162M, London \$123M, Niagara - \$154M, Sudbury - \$63M) from policing and invest it towards community initiatives with the goal of moving completely toward transformative justice practices.
- We demand that the Special Investigations Unit, which has a provincial mandate, needs to be 100% composed of people living in the city with which the investigation is being conducted.
- We demand that the Special Investigations Unit needs to be composed completely of Black, racialized and Indigenous peoples with no current or former ties to the policing sector.
- The SIU must begin collecting and publicly releasing race-based statistics on all fatalistic encounters between police officers and civilians. No more inquiries-- direct action needs to be taken as a result of the investigation into anti-Black racism that occurred in the 90's and again in 2014 with the establishment and subsequent defunding of the Anti-Racism Directorate.
- In light of COVID-19, We demand that all prisoners being held and who are awaiting trial at the Barton Jail facility be released immediately, and that the outrageous costs of ankle monitors and other means of surveilling those who are released be waived.

We were told that you would speak to these items at your next police services board meeting. This is not enough. Citizens across Hamilton are expecting you to show leadership and make some significant and meaningful changes.