

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Letter to the Emergency and Community Services Committee

From: Alice Smith

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2020 11:15 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Letter to the Emergency and Community Services Committee

To the Chair and Members of the Emergency and Community Services Committee,

I am writing to you today to call on you to take meaningful action in response to the senseless murders of Black and Indigenous people.

The police in our communities prove time and time again that they are unprepared and unwilling to protect or serve our communities.

I am not comfortable continuing to fund racist policing in my community at the expense of essential services like housing, firefighting, transit, libraries, and community health centres.

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

1. To never again vote to increase the police services budget;
2. To propose and implement a cut to the police services budget to support our community's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To prioritize the expansion of community-led health and safety initiatives over future financial investments into policing.

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 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:

- In excessive force cases withhold pensions and do not rehire cops involved
- Require cops to be liable for misconduct settlements
- Reduce the size of the police force and stop sending armed/uniformed cops on mental health and poverty-related calls,

An increased police presence, which includes transit inspectors and enforcement officers, 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, community 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 our city.

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 in our city by divesting from harmful policing and investing in life-affirming services.

Sincerely,

Alice Smith