

My name is Jacqueline Cantar and I live in Ward 2 in Hamilton. I've lived in Hamilton my whole life, as has my family generations before me. I'm a queer, disabled, precarious child care provider, gardener, and dedicated community organizer. I'm a renter, pedestrian, and a user of public transit.

I'm thankful I'm a creature of habit, that's privileged to have always felt at home here in Hamilton, because while friends were moving to Toronto in our young adult lives, I've been in the same apartment here since 2011. I'm thankful that I've stayed all this time, because it's only for that reason that I can even afford to live. (For a new tenant in my building, rent is double what I pay.)

Since 2020, I've spent a substantial amount of time and energy organizing with other community members to do what we can to connect folks in need to food and vital supplies. We know that so many people in Hamilton do not have their basic needs met. Our all-volunteer group, called *Community Fridges HamOnt*, opened the first community fridge in Hamilton and has continued to organize and inspire others to do the same for 3 years.

It's beautiful to see residents show up for each other and offer what they have (even if it's just their time), small businesses donating their unsold food at the end of the day (which also reduces food waste) - it gets a *lot* of people fed - but this isn't the solution to food insecurity and it doesn't come close to meeting everyone's needs. These fridges and pantries get harder to sustain as time goes on, and more social services shut down in this city, and more and more people need substantial support.

Food is a human right and housing is a human right. As much as we try to support each other, Hamiltonians need solutions from those that hold the power to make significant, systemic change happen. We need to disrupt this system that criminalizes people for struggling. Investing in our communities, **not police**, better addresses the root cause of most criminalized acts, which are often need-based and consequences of poverty.

I'm asking that you reexamine the proposed 16 million dollar increase to the police budget, and reject all increases to the Hamilton Police Service budget. We need to create effective alternative services such as crisis intervention, mental health centres, safe consumption sites, and housing.

Thank you for your time,
Jacqueline Cantar

