

Hamilton Police Services Board,

I own and operate a small business along King street East within the Core Patrol beat. Two months ago, my storefront was broken into. I have security cameras that notify me when there is movement in the space, but it was a day-off and I missed the alerts. When I did look at my phone, I saw that two people broke into my shop. We haven't had as much as graffiti on the window in the entire 4 years we've been here.

The people who broke in just sat down right in the entry way. They never once moved beyond it. They didn't break anything to get in, and didn't even look at the iPad sitting on the table 3 feet from them.

As I raced to my shop, I got on the 2-way audio and said to them "hey guys, you gotta go". They got up and left without hesitation. When I arrived I saw that everything was in order. No police were called, no damage was done.

They were two people trying to get warm or have a moment of peace, not causing damage or harm. I believe that our tax money would be better spent providing them with effective social services and a safe place to live. Policing doesn't prevent crime

I realize this is anecdotal, and I feel lucky my property was not damaged. As a business owner in that neighbourhood, and a homeowner two short blocks from the Barton-Tiffany encampment, I would like to see HPS spend their money more efficiently than to ask for more.

I have witnessed first-hand how police presence does not improve public safety. For an expert exploration of this, please refer to the study published December 2023 in the peer-reviewed academic journal Canadian Public Policy. The study that found a heightened police presence does not correlate to less crime.

I have watched as policing pushes those most vulnerable to the fringes rather than help them. Around my shop, people are forced to use substances quickly and dangerously in alleyways behind the building. I've met and spoke to many of these folk. They are presented with few alternatives. So much of the policing that I have witnessed in this city is surveilling and harassing poor and vulnerable Hamiltonians.

In the best case scenario for most of these police interactions, an officer acts as a bridge to services in the city. Unfortunately we know there are not enough services, and the ones we do have are underfunded and inaccessible. The money HPS is asking for would be better spent funding those services.

So much of the “crime” that occurs around my home and business are “crimes” of survival. People trying to make it work after they have been abandoned by the city they live in. The people who broke into my shop two months ago have been abandoned. I would understand if they chose to steal from me.

We have all watched as rent for a one-bedroom apartment in this city has risen to an average of \$1846 a month while ODSP sits at \$1308. We’ve all felt the shock as we get the total for our weekly groceries. This city saw an 80% rise in homelessness in three years. Many of the people in our city are struggling, and more money toward policing is not the answer.

Hamilton Police Services’ role is to respond to community concerns. The community is being failed and I am concerned. The only humane response from HPS is to recognize their budget is better allocated to the social assistance the city desperately needs.

Move forward with the best interest of the city mind.

-Kat Gomboc