

To the Police-Services Board of Hamilton, Ontario:

I am a tax-paying, home-owning, resident in Ward 8.

As quoted in the C. B. C. Hamilton article, 'Hamilton police's proposed budget is \$1M more than initially reported. Here's why', vice-chair of the city's police-services Board and chair of the Board's budget committee, Fred Bennink, is absolutely correct: 'People want a secure community and public safety'. People want security and safety and they and all their relations need both. They will, however, receive neither security nor safety from the Hamilton Police Services, as members of the Police Services have violated neighbours' *Charter* rights on multiple publicly-documented occasions, stomped the head of Patrick Tomchuk, an Indigenous man, into unconsciousness, mis-handled firearms, and, as of this date, already have two cases under investigation by the province's Special Investigations Unit for injuries while in custody. Security and safety do not come from policing services, but from building up communities and neighbourhoods so that they are able to begin, or continue, to know and to trust one another.

Policing services account for the largest component of the city's budget, 16% of the average property tax bill. The city should not, however, be paying 16 cents of every tax dollar toward policing, as that is money directed away from the systemic issues which policing services are unable to address. Instead, the city is legislatively able (requiring the Ontario Civilian Police Commission's [*Police Services Act* (2015), s. 40] or the Inspector General of Policing's [*Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act* (2019), s. 53] approval) to abolish policing services completely and, with the Commission's approval, the city's "council may adopt a different method of providing police services" (*PSA*, s. 5[1]n6); council should both abolish policing and adopt a different method of providing such services. Much of the content of "adequate and effective police services" (as defined in the *PSA*, s. 4[3]) would be unnecessary, particularly "crime prevention" and "law enforcement," if 16% of the average tax bill were directed toward social-service and civil-society organizations in the city.

If the city is unwilling, however, to abolish policing services completely, then the Board should agree to raising the policing services' budget by only the amount downloaded upon the services by the provincial government, the \$6,500,000 required under the *PSA*'s s. 4(3). Although it is unconscionable that a municipality should be forced to provide policing services' infrastructure and administration, as those are nouns open to broad interpretation, it is, nevertheless, legally required. For that reason alone, until the *PSA* is amended, these costs, alone, should be borne by the municipality. The remaining \$207,500,000 requested for capital, other operating expenditures, wages, salaries, and benefits should not, however, be approved. Instead, that money could be directed to CityHousing Hamilton: In April

2023, the city's council approved spending \$5,700,000 to repair 476 vacant social-housing units, costing approximately \$12,000/unit; the diverted money would pay for those repairs and, further, the remaining money would allow the \$51,000,000 operating budget of CityHousing Hamilton to be covered for 3 1/2 years. This is only one place of many social services which would benefit from this funding and the direction of the funding should be determined by the entire community, akin to the advisory committee being constructed with hope by the community, and not policing services, on racialization and the use of force by Hamilton Police Services.

If capital costs and operating expenditures, wages and benefits are not approved, this may also lead to a reduction in employee retention. By reducing the number of people employed in policing services, the contact between policing services' representatives and neighbours is reduced. The literature on policing abolition is clear that a reduction in contact between policing services and neighbours leads to a reduction in the number of people caught in the criminal-punishment system. This reduction in the number of people caught in the system tends toward the flourishing of the human person who is in relation to self and others in communities.

Given the above, I ask that the Board begin to move in a good direction and in a good way by, at the very least, approving a budget that allows for only the *PSA 4(3)*'s legislated costs or, at the very most, approving a budget that allows for no increase whatsoever to the HPS' 2024 budget. Thank you for your time and attention in these regards. I look forward to the Board's actions in service of the safety and security of all neighbours, not just the wealthy, propertied ones.

Respectfully,

Joshua Weresch. M. Div.

8 February 2024