

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Stevenson, Kirsten](#)
Subject: Proposed HPS Budget Increase
Date: Thursday, February 8, 2024 8:59:52 PM

To whom it may concern,

My name is Venus Underhill and I am emailing tonight in regards to the recent proposal to increase the HPS budget by \$16 million for 2024. As a Ward 3 community member I vehemently oppose any and all increase in police budget, given the increased cost of living and rise in houselessness in Hamilton, such resources would be much better spent on social services that work to improve living conditions for Hamiltonians. An increase the police budget would not only fail to address the needs of the Hamilton population but as we have continually witnessed, the police often escalate situations with marginalized community members and exasperate the trauma of people in mental health crisis and otherwise in need of support. Their already engorged budget has been used to cover years of paid leave for several officers who have utilized their positions of power to [engage in perjury](#) (2016), [sexually assault women](#) (2018) including a [fellow officer](#) (2023). In the case of former police Sergeant Dhinsa, not only was he given paid leave when charged with 20+ counts of sexual assault and misconduct against fellow officers in [2006](#) he then returned back to work in 2008 without the case ever being heard, eventually [settling with the 12+ victims](#) in court in 2011, was even promoted and [received an annual salary of \\$125, 598.00 in 2018](#).

Over the last year the HPS has been expanding their surveillance using expensive tech like police drones, likely something they hope to allocate some of their new budget on, despite remaining [vague about potential privacy violations](#) and refusing to engage with the community through public consultation, nor with the Ontario Privacy Commissioner's office. The CCLA has even called on HPS to cease and desist their drone surveillance program citing both the reasons above and notably concerns over the fact that HPS's own privacy assessment is so vague it does not ["prevent the arming of drones with weapons or facial recognition software"](#) which poses great risk for misuse, especially given what we know of HPS's ongoing history of avoiding public scrutiny through non-disclosure as well as repeated incidents involving misuse of equipment, including [incidents involving surveillance of and violence against women](#) (2018); like in the case of Inspector David Dole who retired in the midst of an internal investigation involving [sexual misconduct and misuse of equipment](#), had received over \$500,000 in the 4 years he was not working because of the ongoing investigation and at the time of his retirement in 2013 had an annual salary of [\\$134, 530.24](#). This pattern of dodging accountability by withholding potential breaches of privacy is persistent and not unique to officers committing sexual assault; for example in 2020 HPS routinely accessed medical data [without patients knowledge or consent](#) in lieu of enforcing mandatory masking for officers, despite this being the standard at the time, for every other "essential worker".

This information is all publicly accessible and took me only an hour to find, I think it is really worth considering why the HPS is given ample increases to budget when they repeatedly dodge accountability both from the public they supposedly serve, as well as internal reviews involving sexual violence against members of their own staff. There is a pattern emerging here of who Hamilton Police Services protect and while that may not seem immediately relevant to some people, when you consider how much money is spent paying salaries and pensions of officers who are active threats to the health and safety of people within our community I think it is important to consider especially when so many other faucets of our community operate underfunded to provide necessary services to people in Hamilton without posing a safety risk to residents of our city. It is seem past due that HPS learns how to 'cut the fat' within their own expenditures instead of asking the city for another increase to their budget, which is why I oppose any an all increase to their budget going forward and urge members of city council to do the same.

Thank you,

Venus Underhill
Ward 3, Hamilton