

20 April 2024

Hamilton Police Service Board
c/o Kirsten Stevenson, Administrative Director
155 King William Street
Hamilton, ON
L8R 1A7

Joshua Weresch

Hamilton, ON

Re: Police officers suspended with pay

To the members of the Hamilton Police Services Board:

I write as a life-long Hamiltonian and a tax-paying resident in Ward 8. I write to ask that the Board affirm publicly in a statement that it supports both the suspension of policing services' officers without pay as well as the expansion of criteria to which unpaid suspensions apply. While I am grateful to see that the new *Community Safety and Policing Act* allows for unpaid suspensions in some cases, unpaid suspensions should include on- as well as off-duty actions and should not be adjudicated.

According to Bobby Hristova's article on this matter ("Suspended police officers cost Hamilton-area taxpayers \$14.8M since 2013", CBC Hamilton [accessed 20 Apr 2024]), the paid suspension of 26 policing services' officers in Hamilton, in the past decade, has cost \$8,890,000. That amount is approximately 4% of the \$214,800,000 increase – and still the most expensive item on municipal taxes – given this past year to policing services by the city, an increase given without any questions seriously asked about costs and savings, and this ~\$9,000,000 could have paid for the \$5,700,000 repair of 476 CityHousing affordable housing units – almost twice over. Taxpayers should not have to bear the costs of policing services' unwillingness to hire staff capable of the professionalism that policing services apparently requires, a professionalism that includes the clear and egregious violation of citizens' *Charter* rights. Moreover, it is concerning that the investigation by CBC Hamilton uncovered more suspensions than were reported by the Hamilton Police Services: Trust has been broken in the past and

it continues to be in grave disrepair, as the under-reporting of paid suspensions by the police services continues, and it is that trust that may never be built up again, particularly given the history of policing services and relations with sovereignty-deserving peoples.

Given that past history and that present eroded trust, with all due respect to the director of U. of T.'s Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, what is at issue is not at all the fairness of suspending officers without pay. While I agree that “a worker is a worker” and that workers “are all entitled to due process,” policing services’ employees are not at all workers, as policing has historically been and presently is the long-standing enemy of the working class and of all workers. Policing services should not be represented by any union or police association and it is with gratitude that I note both that police unions are not welcome to join the Ontario Federation of Labour and that the Federation has called, along with the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, for the de-funding of policing services. It is historically and presently the case that policing has been used to break up strikes, to injure picketers deeply, and has been marshaled to harass, surveil, and control the working class, peoples of global majority, and the poor; many of these issues have been much more clearly explored, than this letter allows, and excoriated by Robyn Maynard in *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*, Chelsea Nash’s article, “How police unions present barriers to change in Canada” (Rabble Magazine, 24 Jun 2024), and Sophie Birks’ article, “Law Enforcement Should Have No Place In Unions” (The Maple, 29 Apr 2021). Given these facts, those employed by policing services are welcome to quit their jobs and instead to build up communities, to join the working class and cease struggling against it.

I ask again that the Board publicly affirm that it supports the unpaid suspension of officers and that the cases to which unpaid suspensions apply be expanded within the *CSPA*. Thank you for your time and consideration in these regards.

Respectfully,

Joshua Weresch, M. Div.