



Advocating for inclusive
communities where
everyone fully belongs

All IN

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July 3, 2020

Dear Members of the Toronto Police Services Board:

The killings of [Chantel Moore](#) (June, 2020) [Eishia Hudson](#), [Stewart Andrews](#), [D'Andre Campbell](#), [Jason Collins](#) (all in April of 2020), [Ejaz Choudry](#) and others at the hands of police across Canada this year alone are tragically not new. But with these senseless killings you have heard renewed calls to dramatically reform, to completely transform, and even to dismantle policing, and to end the insidious, systemic, racism that permeates our policing and prison systems. Black and Indigenous advocates and other Torontonians have long been at the forefront of this fight for justice, fairness, and an end to brutal abuse of power. Their voices and calls to action must be heeded.

Members of the Board, leadership is not measured by declaring the obvious, "There is systemic racism." It is measured by the pro-active steps that are taken to address and end the wrongs that have existed for so long.

This is YOUR moment to be the leaders that we need you to be—to affect the kind of change that is morally and ethically required of you.

It is the time for you to lead, demand, and insist that we transform policing away from an institution grounded in the use of violence and force to one where empathy in dealing with all residents is the default for every officer.

This is not about reform. It's about transformation.

For decades, members of the public have demanded police reform. While reform has been studied and recommended repeatedly, it has rarely been effectively implemented, because the institution and the board have resisted it.

The right thing to do now is to transform the institution. All IN joins the many Black and Indigenous-led groups, and the thousands of other individuals and groups who are telling the Board: it is time to fundamentally change our notion of policing, it is time to remove the police from the many interactions and areas in which armed agents of the state are not needed, where their deployment is a waste of resources, and where their mere presence repeatedly causes harm.

As the Board, you can direct and lead that transformation. You are charged with oversight of Toronto's Police Service. You are responsible for those who are killed and injured, and those who carry psychological scars because of the insidious racism, the callousness, and the toxic consequences of too much power without accountability in our police force.

You must act.



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- First, insist on the long-term goal that the police perform a more limited task. **Limit the role of police officers** to where they are absolutely needed: investigations and responding to those rare situations where the public's safety is at such risk that it requires the involvement of the police, for example, in an active shooting.

The following are some of the areas where police have generally been deployed but where the service of armed officers is unnecessary, harmful, and costly:

- Ticketing or “regulating” homeless persons, often for petty by-law or provincial offences (such as tents and encampments in parks during the pandemic.) This police conduct can only be characterized as harassment of the most vulnerable members of society and a waste of money and resources.
- Answering/ acting as responders to routine mental health calls;
- Over-policing and harassment of Indigenous people;
- Over-policing black and brown neighbourhoods and communities;
- Stopping and questioning of young black men and racialized people without articulable cause or reasonable and probable grounds for arrest;
- Many traffic stops and other *Highway Traffic Act* matters, where police officers are not required.

Insist that the police stop these regulatory or discriminatory practices, completely, and disengage from these communities.

- Direct that the police are not the ones responding to **mental health calls**. They have no business being there, when there are others who are far more qualified to handle these situations safely and peacefully.
- Demand immediate changes to the **education & training of officers**, so that **de-escalation methods** and training in peacefully and helpfully dealing with persons in crisis are not relegated to just a few hours or “by-the-way” training, but are integrated into the very basic notion of policing.
- Direct that **front-line officers not carry guns**.
- Draft and enforce comprehensive **directives on use of force**, and prohibit any force that may lead to serious bodily or psychological harm or death.
- Make accountability count! Dramatically improve **accountability**: police officers are given a tremendous amount of power—abuse of that power must carry significant consequences--- our lives--- in particular, the lives of Black, Indigenous, brown people, and other vulnerable people with mental health issues, depend on it.



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- Make sure that **officers who have engaged in misconduct**, particularly where there has been unreasonable use of force, are **no longer interacting with the public. Better yet, get them off the public payroll.**
- Advocate for **personal financial liability** where an officer has been found to have committed serious misconduct. Enough with the public paying for officers who steal, who maim, and who abuse their power.

Do not take cover under the guise of governance only; or under the excuse of provincial jurisdiction. You can guide and mandate those changes, and you can urge the government to make the legislative changes that will transform the training and education of who becomes an officer, and the very culture of policing itself.

Eliminating racism and the abuse of power in policing starts at the very gates to police education. Demand changes to the **entrance qualifications, to the education and training.** Eliminate the hierarchical, sexist, racist, power-focused aspects of training that exacerbate an “us against the rest of the world” attitude.

Failure to take strong, decisive, and immediate steps to address the insidious depth of systemic racism and abuse of power within the police force is a failure of our leadership.

We urge you to lead at this moment, before more people suffer. Do not falter.

Yours truly,

Dyanoosh Youssefi
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Founder, Executive Director, All IN

All IN advocates for inclusive communities. We are a collaborative, city-wide group with a vision for communities where everyone belongs and no one is left behind.