



Toronto Youth Cabinet
100 Queen Street West
15th Floor, East Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Email: info@thetyc.ca
Website: thetyc.ca

Re: Police Accountability Virtual Town Hall Submission

Members of the Toronto Police Services Board,

As you may know it has been a tough month and a half for everyone, particularly for Black and Indigenous communities who continue to suffer at the hands of racial injustice and police brutality. This has resulted in global protests, that aim to amplify the voices and diminish the injustices that are embedded in our systems. In our city, protests have continued for seven weeks now from people of all backgrounds who desire a Toronto that is more equitable and safer for Black and Indigenous communities.

The issue of anti-Black racism and discrimination is not a foreign concept to our city. The Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC) continuously aims to use an Anti-Black Racism and anti-oppressive lens in its approach to advocate for a more equitable and safer city. We acknowledge the imminent effects that negative police interactions and gun violence have had not only the many lives that were taken, but also the communities across the city who live and deal with the trauma thereafter.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, between 2013 and 2017, a Black person in Toronto was nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be involved in a fatal shooting by the Toronto Police Service (TPS). Despite making up only 8.8% of Toronto's population, Black people were grossly over-represented in police use of force cases (28.8%), shootings (36%) and deadly encounters (61.5%). Across the city, Black people are systematically over-policed, surveilled, detained, questioned, and searched without justification.

The TYC, along with many other community led organizations, have advocated for social and institutional reforms that promote a safer city. Instead, the City and the Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB) has chosen to invest millions into a police service that has continuously failed to protect and address the preventable deaths that occur within our city. It is imperative that the TPSB work in collaboration with the City to evaluate alternatives to addressing violence in Toronto. We have seen over the years that increases to the police Budget to counteract the increases in gun violence year over year have not worked.

While the City of Toronto has developed strategies to address the roots of violence, funding required to implement these recommendations often takes a back seat to more enforcement. The City's main response to violence should not be increased enforcement but rather enhanced community support to prevent violence. Some funds have been allocated to address the needs of marginalized communities,

but community services and supports are usually left without adequate funding levels needed to create lasting change. This is partly why we have yet to see the fruits of their labour as we continue to experience anti-Black racism, gun violence and a lack of initiatives that adequately serve people experiencing mental health and/or addictions in the City of Toronto. As an institution that is supposed to serve the community, the TPSB should take a more proactive approach to safety and that includes building the underlying community infrastructure to serve as a foundation for the roots of violence to be addressed long before someone decides to turn in that direction.

Addressing community safety in the city is not a monopoly that the TPS and TPSB are in control of. It is disappointing that measures to address the disparities in funding for community supports through a reallocation of funds from the police budget did not pass at the June City Council meeting. We are however welcoming the decision of Council to request more transparency from the TPSB in regards to how current funds allocated to the TPS are spent. This will better inform how we can all work together towards a new approach to community safety that addresses the root of the issues rather than the symptoms. **As a result, we urge the TPSB to work with the city as the TPS develops their budget for 2021 to strongly consider the equity impacts of any funding requests. These reductions could be reallocated to Council approved strategies such as Immediate Steps to Address Gun Violence, the Poverty Reduction Strategy and new initiatives which would go a long way in addressing violence.**

We also believe that the TPSB should work towards developing a team of unarmed professionals trained in de-escalation to respond to non-violence calls, such as school calls, mental health crises, drug overdoses, gender based violence, and homelessness. We are disappointed that these measures tabled at the June City Council Meeting did not pass, however, the TPSB can play a role in taking these recommendations and working with the City to reform how we respond to these situations.

We are now at an inflection point and it is important that as we move onto the next chapter of our city's history, we can reflect on these times as the catalyst for change that led to a safer and more equitable city. This is our vision at the Toronto Youth Cabinet, and we hope that the TPSB takes the steps to contribute to progress and advancement.

Sincerely,

Zenah Hussun, Community Safety Lead
Stephen Mensah, Education Lead

Eli Aaron, Budget Lead
Michael Manu, Executive Director

Created by City Council in 1998, the Toronto Youth Cabinet is a youth-led advocacy organization and the official youth advisory body of City of Toronto. Through outreach, engagement and training, the TYC provides a critical gathering place for diverse young people interested in making change within a municipal governance context.