

Dear Toronto Police Service Board

Dear Mr. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General, MPP

Dear Mr. Myron Demkiw, Chief TPS

Dear Ms. Olivia Chow, Mayor of Toronto

I am a psychologist working in Ontario for the past 20 years, and part of a group of psychologists and psychotherapists, with decades of experience, working with the public at large and with members of the Police Service. This letter is aligned with the experience of this entire group.

The reason for this letter is to share with you a general feeling of increasing anxiety regarding the lack of protection by the law enforcers, that, based on our work experience, Ontarians are experiencing lately.

I am writing below about the ever-escalating emotional damage that we, as psychologists and psychotherapists, are witnessing in our society, through our clients, coming from all over Ontario. The increased rate of crime, even if not always reported (for which we are grateful) it is felt, unfortunately often experienced and constantly feared in the community. This fear keeps escalating every day, to the extent that it often impacts people's normal functioning in everyday life and ultimately productivity. For example, in certain parts of Toronto women are advised by the Police, to not walk by themselves as they may be attacked. In other parts of Toronto people report that masked mob patrol Jewish neighborhoods harassing people outside their homes, obviously not fearing repercussions. Women are reporting being attacked while driving alone, when stopped at traffic lights. These experiences are felt to be associated with a significant failure of the system under current circumstances, a systemic failure of leadership/city leadership.

There is a common, ever clearer sense in our clients, that we do not live in a society ruled by law and order anymore. A sense that laws are being bent to be enforced only when and how they serve political interests, rather than respected, as they should be in a lawful society. Therefore, there seems to be a general feeling that we are not protected either by the Police, or by the law.

And this is not felt to be the fault of THE MEMBERS OF THE Police. Rather, there is a general feeling that the Police Service often has no ability to enforce protective laws. The members of the Service themselves feel more and more discouraged and conflicted, as they feel themselves prey to politicians and politics, to a justice system that recently more often punishes them for performing their job, while rewarding the criminals by allowing them to go free. In other words, the Service feels unprotected itself, caught in the net of helplessness, conflicted between their duty of enforcing the law and protecting the public, and the fear of repercussions when doing so.

Members of the service as well as members of the public feel that laws seem to be easily circumvented by political interests, while Police officers often are shown in the media as being humiliated when trying to serve and protect, with no obvious consequences. The inability to dismantle the occupation of Toronto University, despite clear discomfort and disturbance of other members of the University, is only one such example. Other clear infractions as seen in the media become permissible, described as a matter of the circumstances, even before anybody seems to be addressing the victims, particularly when they are part of the Service. The resulting perceived inability to prevent this from happening again, becomes conducive to a loss of motivation and burnout.

Moreover, our clients feel that the public is mostly informed about wrongdoings, which of course should not be permitted and should be punished, but very seldom is the media engaged in describing any acts of heroism, or just good deeds, by members of the Service, or even the reality of circumstances under which many of the heroes of the Service function. I say heroes, because we, as psychologists working with members of the service, often hear about how many lives have been saved by these men and women, or how many times these men and women sacrificed themselves to save the public. It is a general feeling, that very little does the media dwell on these acts.

Furthermore, our clients express a lot of frustration related to the way things are presented in the press, which defies accountability, for it is felt that there is no differentiation or acknowledgment of journalistic opinions, over facts. This further reinforces the general feeling of frustration inherent in the efforts to cope with the current situation.

Moreover, while Ontario in general and Toronto in particular, show a negative correlation between the increase in population and the size of the Police service, this predicts an increase in the ratio of crime per Police officer, and with it an increase in burnout and PTSD cases among members of the Service on one hand, and an increase in mistrust of the members of the public in the ability of the Service to actually satisfy the needs of public security, on the other.

I am writing this letter as a psychologist and as a member of the public, hoping, like our clients, and probably all good people of Ontario in general and of Toronto in particular, that things can improve: that the Police can be Refunded, and the funds invested in the best way towards restoring public trust in the ability of the Police Service to recapture the rights to exercise their obligation to help and protect; that the Police and the public can again feel that we can return to being a law-abiding society, and, like not so long ago, not live in fear and enjoy the wonderful, well-understood freedom that living in Canada had to offer.

This letter has been sent before to the attention of all bodies mentioned above, but I never received an answer. I am now resending it in response to the last plebiscite of the TPSB. I trust that the members of the board know the laws and all we are hoping for is that they be enforced for public well being and protection. We hope that freedom of speech not be confused with incitement to violence, that violence is not tolerated and therefore there is no need for defence (as it occurred during the last week, during a peaceful demonstration when an 88 year old men was attacked), that Universities continue to be free of illegal encampments and students and professors do not fear participating in classes or performing their jobs, and that threats towards schools, hospitals and other institutions are taken seriously and treated as intentions towards acts of terrorism.

Thank you for your attention

June 2024

August 2024

Respectfully,

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