

This is a transcript of a deputation given on July 10th, 2020.

Good morning, my name is Andrew Stewart, thank you for having me. I'd like to speak briefly to the subject of trust. I am a middle class, white, able-bodied cis-man, a settler. My parents grew up in Toronto, and Mr Tory, my mother was in your grade 2 class at Bedford Park. I grew up in a small town in Ontario, but moved to Toronto for university 13 years ago, and have chosen to make my life here. Growing up, I was taught I could trust the police.

The first time that trust of the police was truly broken for me was the G20. As part of a peaceful protest, I saw our streets lined with tens of thousands of police in riot gear, many without any identifying numbers or badges. We watched the police change the rules on the fly to suit their goals. We watched as police horses charged peaceful protestors in the "designated safe protest area". We saw friends stripped of their rights, kettled in the rain, shot with rubber bullets, and locked in makeshift cages without charge, in the largest mass arrests in Canadian history. In the aftermath of this, only two of the thousands of officers involved were charged, and ultimately they were only given reprimands, docked pay, and forfeited vacation days. As you all well know, one of the most senior people involved in this debacle, former chief Bill Blair, is now Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

That was 10 years ago. Since my eyes were opened by that event, I have been listening to friends, colleagues, and members of my community as you are now, and realizing how deep this mistrust is. How traumatized people are by police in this city. Especially if you're Black. Especially if you're Indigenous. Especially if you're homeless. Especially if you're a sex worker. Especially if you're a drug user. Especially if you're poor. Especially if you're suffering a mental health crisis.

I could go on.

The police may still believe they are here to protect and serve everyone, but that is measurably untrue. We do not trust the police. We fear the police.

Just this year, I have seen the Toronto police more and more use their power to intimidate and threaten, rather than protect. I have watched dozens of armed police threaten and dehumanize Indigenous Youth in this city as they stand up for their land and water and stand up against illegal government and police violence in other parts of this country. Just this week we saw the police lie to the media about using pepperspray on protestors, which they have since walked back after witnesses and photo evidence showed that they did.

The Toronto Police Services are proving time and time and time again they cannot be trusted. We do not trust the TPS. We do not trust the SIU. We do not trust the OPP. We do not trust the RCMP.

We are in a moment of crisis and a moment of transformation. Now is the time to make **real, significant** change. In the short term for harm reduction, we need to reallocate funding away from the police and remove the option of deadly force, and stop harassing poor folks just trying to get to work on the TTC.

I believe the way forward is to address the root causes of what is currently criminalized, to address our housing crisis, to decriminalize drug users, sex workers, and the poor, and to properly invest in mental health and social services. We need to all work together towards the goal of making the police obsolete, and aim for complete police and prison abolition.

The police at all levels in Canada including the TPS have proven over their history right up to the present that they are not here to serve and protect everyone, that they are here to serve and protect the system itself, and its colonial, capitalistic, white supremacist structures.

As the chant goes, the system isn't broken, it was built this way.

The system isn't broken, it was built this way.

The system isn't broken, it was built this way.

Thank you

Andrew Stewart