

I want to share with you a recent experience I had with the Toronto Police Service and urge you to honour the demands of Black Lives Matter Toronto to defund the police by 50%, 10% at minimum to start.

On June 15th, I was walking north on Bathurst towards Queen Street by the community health centre, an area where many people who are homeless hangout who need the services there.

I saw three uniformed, armed police officers with 3 police vehicles (partially blocking traffic) with a man who was clearly mentally ill in handcuffs. I stopped to watch and make sure that they were treating him fairly, and when I asked what happened it turns out that he had stolen two chocolate bars and a pack of children's socks from Shoppers Drug Mart. A crime amounting to less than \$10 in damages. The items had also already been returned.

The witness decided not to press charges and left the scene, but the police continued to keep the man in handcuffs for an additional 30 minutes as they collected his information claiming that he was being aggressive and refusing to speak. From what I could see, they were doing nothing to de-escalate the situation and only agitating the man further.

The police then decided to give him a \$50 trespassing ticket that the man was obviously in no position to pay. I asked them to reconsider the ticket since he clearly needed help and the ticket would only cause more damage to his life. One of the officers then came towards me to say that I have no idea what it is to be a cop and that he must act as a social worker, psychologist, marriage counselor and other roles because of the "type of people" he has to deal with.

And while he may feel that way, I'd like to point out that it only takes 24 weeks to become a police officer in Ontario. And by no means should any police officer consider themselves educated enough to provide mental health support or transformative support to ANY individual, and neither should this city.

Did you know that people who suffer from mental illness are 16X more likely to be murdered by law enforcement? I was and am incredibly concerned for this man, and others just like him.

When the police officers handed the man his ticket, they finally took the handcuffs off and left. When I asked the man what I could do to help, all he asked for was a meal.

Needless to say, I am absolutely outraged at the treatment of this poor man and the amount of tax dollars that were spent pursuing and harassing him. What do you think the cost of 1 hour of 3 officers' time, plus their gear and weapons, and 3 vehicles is worth? I can tell you right now, I would rather my taxes go to feed and shelter people rather than exacerbate their issues.

The answer is not more police, or more training, or body cams. Despite video evidence, police officers literally get away with murder with paid time off on my tax dollar. There are also several

studies that indicate that body cams have no effect on cop behaviour, and in some instances actually increase violence.

With a grossly bloated budget of over \$1 billion dollars, I am deeply upset. Decreasing that amount by \$100 million is just a minimal first step when you realize that the TPS budget is more than paramedics, firefighters, public libraries, and public housing COMBINED.

I am asking that you pledge to do the following:

1. To never again vote to increase the Toronto Police Service budget.
2. To immediately redirect a minimum of 10 percent, preferably 50 percent of the \$1.1 billion TPS budget toward the communities they have devastated by investing in secure, long-term housing for street-involved and unhoused communities, food security programs, public transit, public health, public libraries, and community-led anti-violence programs.
3. Remove all weaponry from police and other law enforcement, including tasers, batons, firearms, rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and sound cannons.

This violence happened on your watch. You are supposed to protect your constituents, and now is the time to truly rise up by defunding the police and reinvesting that money into social services and community support.

Focus on health and education.

No more police state.

Sincerely,  
Brittany Tilstra

Davenport area