To the members of the Toronto Police Services Board:

Thank you for organizing this town hall and allowing community members to have their voices heard. My name is Maddy Macnab, and I am a lifelong Toronto resident. I am a White settler person who has had the privilege of feeling safe and feeling like I belong in this City. I am devastated and sickened to know and to see time and time again that my friends, neighbours, and fellow community members who are Black, Indigenous, and racialized do not share that same privilege or guarantee of safety. In particular right now, I am referring to: 1) the violence and harm enacted on Black and Indigenous people in this City by the Toronto Police Service (recent examples include Michael and Christian Theriault’s violent assault on Dafonte Miller, and the murder of Andrew Loku); 2) the systemic anti-Black racism that I am glad to hear my elected officials admit is real and is woven into the fabric of the police as an institution (a recent Ontario Human Rights Commission Investigation showed that [Black people are 20 times more likely to be shot by Toronto police.](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/black-people-20-times-shot-toronto-police-181211090335752.html)); and 3) the lack of accountability that has meant that police have faced very few consequences for both incidents of police brutality and overall racist practices for far too long.

I am glad to see these conversations taking up time, space, energy and thought at City Council and at the Police Board. However, I was extremely disappointed to see the lacklustre nature of the small, piecemeal reforms that were voted on at June 29th’s Council meeting, and I would like to bring 2 key issues in regards to those reforms to the Board’s attention:

1. I find it unacceptable that Mayor Tory and Council made no firm commitment to reducing the police budget, nor any specific monetary commitment to reallocating funds to other crucial community supports. I consider this to be a bare minimum starting point for the conversation about addressing systemic anti-Black racism in our city’s police force, transforming that institution, and finding new ways-- that are desperately needed-- to keep everyone in our community safe. I believe that defunding and reallocating are so crucial and urgent, given that the vast majority of Canadians killed by police are not in need of police targeting and scrutiny, but are in fact in need of other, easily achievable social supports: a recent CBC investigation showed that [70 per cent of Canadians killed by police since 2000 suffered from mental health or substance abuse issues.](https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/most-canadians-killed-in-police-encounters-since-2000-had-mental-health-or-substance-abuse-issues-1.4602916) Maintaining or increasing police resources is not the answer to this tragic and avoidable crisis-- the police are demonstrably the problem here. Further, this is a demand coming from Black and Indigenous organizers and communities: what will it take for Council and the Police Board to listen to these voices on the frontlines of this crisis in our city? Toronto is already behind the times as cities across Canada and the U.S. including New York and Edmonton begin to make bold, swift and innovative commitments to defunding and transforming policing. We know what the issues are; now is not the time for more consultation, investigation, or research: now is the time for action.
2. I was very frustrated and disappointed to see that Mayor Tory and Council voted to provide Toronto Police with body cameras / that Mayor Tory put forward this reform at all. Mayor Tory and the Board, if you are serious about transforming safety in our city for the benefit of all who live here, if you are serious about celebrating diversity and building Toronto into a place where all can thrive, I suggest you take the time to review the most recent research on body cameras before going forward with this reform. [A significant body of recent empirical research has shown that body cameras have had very little effect on preventing police brutality and have not effectively increased police accountability or community trust in jurisdictions where body cameras are already in place.](https://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-body-camera-effects-research-gmu-study.html) Mayor Tory, I heard you respond to a community member’s comment about body cameras at the July 9th town hall meeting expressing surprise that this reform has been met with criticism by many in the community. I am glad to hear you are looking for ways to build a more robust accountability infrastructure to hold police accountable for violence and prevent police brutality: however, as stated above, I encourage you to do your research to know that body cameras are not the way forward for true police accountability, and further, that these represent more money for police (which, with already over $1.1 billion of the City budget at their disposal, I do not believe they need). As stated above, I believe the reforms we need begin with defunding the police, taking away their weapons, and reducing their presence in spaces/interactions where they are known to cause harm (e.g. any encounters involving someone struggling with mental health or substance abuse)-- not giving them cameras to document the status quo. Regarding other accountability measures that might be more productive, I did hear Mayor Tory speak to [the need for SIU reform](https://globalnews.ca/video/7094631/toronto-mayor-john-tory-says-theres-need-for-siu-reform-mental-health-supports#autoplay) to make those investigations more transparent and more timely, and I agree that SIU reform is important. Further, Black organizers have recently put forward several proposed accountability measures that could accomplish police accountability in a more robust way, and I support their proposals. From the group Not Another Black Life’s demands: “Establish an Accountability Table for Police Officers. Create a record to keep the public apprised of officers who have been disciplined for violence and other misconduct. The "Accountability Report" which Council agreed to implement is nothing more than an Annual Report and does nothing to guarantee transparency or accountability.” From Black Lives Matter Toronto’s demands: “Mandate the public collection of data regarding police killing, and incidents of police brutality for all local, regional, provincial, and federal police or law enforcement agency disaggregated by race, gender, age and citizenship.”

Members of the Board, if you are truly listening to the voices of the community, of Black and Indigenous organizers, and truly listening to the most current research on police reforms and community safety alternatives, then you already know it is clear that we are past the point of piecemeal reforms. They have been tried before and they have not worked. Black, Indigenous and racialized people, people with mental health and substance abuse issues, are still dying disproportionately at the hands of police. Communities and research are telling us that beginning to defund the Toronto police and reallocate that funding to other key community supports including housing, mental health, food security, childcare, and more, in addition to establishing alternative community safety plans and infrastructure-- led by and in in meaningful consultation with Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities-- is the best start for a transformative and just way forward. Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing how Council and the Toronto Police Board takes this mandate for transformative change from the community forward into your work.