Hello Toronto Police Service Board,

As a tax-paying citizen of Toronto, I feel I should have a say in the services my funds go towards. Looking at the stats of the TPS, most of the calls and duties performed by Police in our city are either non-violent, domestic disputes, or mental health crises. Therefore, it makes little-to-no sense that a large portion of the extremely large (over $1 billion) TPS budget goes to arming police with military weapons, while training takes under a year to complete. Considering the prevalence of police violence (especially towards marginalized populations such as folks struggling with homelessness, BIPOC, queer, disabled, and sex workers) do you think it wise to arm untrained officers with deadly weapons?

Having personally witnessed the poor de-escalation skills Police have, as well as their inability to respond to mental health crises with anything other than violence, I consider this highly irresponsible. I called 911 because friend of mine was actively suicidal, and we were unable to take her to the hospital ourselves. The police arrived and proceeded to break her arm, arresting her instead of listening to us. I demand that the city invest in services that help people, rather than hurt people.

Divest from militarization, divest from policing, divest from body cameras, which are proven to do nothing to create accountability and instead only create outrage when more footage of police violence is released to the public. Instead I demand that you:

* Document Police violence
* Hold officers accountable, treat that as you would citizens
* Invest in community led initiatives, not police services
* Train officers in de-escalation (one or two de-escalation professionals in a unit is insignificant)
* Send un-armed officers to answer non-violent calls
* Defund police services and reinvest in communities

We cannot afford to lose another community member to senseless violence committed at the hands of untrained officers doing work they are not trained for.

Thank you,

Michael Berger
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