July 9, 2020

**The Policing Committee of the Law Union of Ontario**

**Joins Others in Demanding Transformative Change in Policing**

Members of the Toronto Police Services Board,

For far too long, Torontonians have demanded an end to racism and brutality in policing. Despite all the tragic deaths, the numerous trials, inquests and judicial rulings, and the countless studies, reports, and inquiries spanning decades, the Toronto Police Services, the Toronto Police Services Board, the police, the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario have failed to take concrete and effective steps to put an end to these injustices.

It is time for this Board to take leadership and act now. The brave and resounding call to action from black and Indigenous communities across Canada over the past several weeks has created a priceless opportunity for transformative change in policing in our city.

This city needs a real and fundamental transformation of policing.  This is the clear message from the black, Indigenous and racialized communities and from the advocates and families of people in mental distress and the marginalized and disadvantaged.

No more studies. No more task forces.  No more passing the buck from the police to the police board to the City to Queens Park to Ottawa and then back again, around and around.

No more people shot in their homes during a wellness check.  No more unpunished police brutality.

This Board can act now to make the real and effective changes needed. This Board has the power to do so. This Board has the expertise to do so. All this Board needs is the will and the courage to do so.

Here is what we say in what the Board should do now.

**Stop racial profiling.**  Prohibit carding under whatever guise it is currently being carried out.  Prohibit random vehicle stops based on race and ethnicity.  No more Driving While Black stops.  Remove police access to and retention of the databank of carding data that was seized from innocent people in breach of their Charter rights.

**Stop police brutality.**  Issue a comprehensive use of force directive to the police.  Make it public and available online.  In particular, ban knee-to-the-neck restraints, chokehold and carotid neck holds before we have our own George Floyd death.  Require de-escalation and communication as the primary go-to tactic in defusing any crisis.  Deadly force should be the absolutely last resort and then only after all alternatives have been exhausted.  Require officers who witness excessive use of force to intervene and not just stand by as officers did while George Floyd was being killed.

**Get the police out of the mental health business.**  Dispatch social workers and nurses not armed police to mental health and social issue calls.  Put in force strict guidelines for the use of force by police when called to assist on wellness calls.  No weapons and above all no shooting.

**Hold the police accountable.**  Adopt a no-tolerance policy for excessive use of force.  Require that any complaints of use of force causing bodily harm be independently investigated and not by the police force. Require a mandatory review of any incident involving the use of force causing bodily harm by the officer’s supervisors with the officer.

**Improve police governance.** Make policing more transparent.  Line-by-line, program-by-program police budgets and estimates is long overdue.  Make it permanent.  Enshrine it in Board policy and ask the Province to require for all police services and all police boards in Ontario.

Remember that this is just the start.  Much more needs to be done to transform policing.

Above all, the police and the board should be governed by the Sir Robert Peel’s nine Principles of Policing, the first principle of which is worth re-stating:

**To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.**

Sincerely,

Jack Gemmell and Dyanoosh Youssefi

On behalf of the Policing Committee of the Law Union of Ontario