

July 16, 2020

To the Toronto Police Services Board:

My name is Julie Tomaino; I'm writing today in support of defunding the police and redistributing the 1.1 billion dollar Toronto Police Services Budget. I am tax paying resident of Toronto, specifically, Mimico. The police need to be defunded and the monies divested into community programs by 50%.

The presence of police in Toronto is actively contributing to violence against vulnerable residents, specifically Black and Indigenous residents. Police do not make marginalized communities feel safe. They discriminately target Black, Indigenous, and low-income neighbourhoods.

Police reform does not work. Police reform does not prevent the killing of those experiencing mental health distress. Police are not protecting and serving our community. When reports of missing persons are made regarding Indigenous women, members of the queer community, sex workers, and impoverished peoples, they are not taken seriously. Police response to reports of domestic violence and sexual assault continue to be a traumatizing experience and are overall unhelpful.

Crime is a consequence of inequality, poverty that require services that will effectively respond, like social and health care workers, community centres, housing centres, investing in education and other prevention programs. Police target Black and Indigenous communities with harassment methods such as racial profiling and implicit biases. Excessive force is rarely needed as a response to even a high-stress situation. Healthcare workers can attest to the ability to effectively de-escalate and provide care to those in crisis.

I'm demanding that in addition to redirecting a minimum of 50% of the \$1.1B TPS Budget: end emergency task force (ETF) and emergency response team (ERT) (similar to the US SWAT teams), tactical squads, military grade weapons, and surveillance equipment. Remove all weaponries from police and other law enforcement, including tasers, batons, firearms, rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and sound cannons. End the mass surveillance of our communities through the use of technology, such as stingray, facial recognition, and predictive policing technologies, drones, robots, and G20 surveillance technologies that remained in Toronto. Mandate the public election of data regarding police killings, and incidents of police brutalities for all local, regional, provincial, and federal police or law enforcement agency disaggregated by race, gender, age, and citizenship.

The very purpose of police has always been an antithetical to the safety of citizens, particularly Black and Indigenous people. As Sandy Hudson of Black Lives Matter concludes, "Let's not be constrained by an inability to imagine a system beyond the one that currently exists. We can do far better than the institution of policing to create safety for all of us. It's high time we did so."

Thank you,
Julie Tomaino
416-576-2276