Toronto Police Virtual Town Hall July 16 2020

**1. Thank the Chair and the committee.**

**2. Introduce yourself and why you are speaking. If you are representing a group, explain briefly their focus and concerns.**

**3. Explain your concerns and how they affect you and the community. While it’s best to be as personal as possible, using examples, statistics, and other research can help your argument.**

**4. Thank the Chair, the committee, and Council and remind them that you will be observing their voting on this issue.**

Thank you to the board for hosting this virtual town hall and allowing myself and others who are unable to attend to participate via written response.

My name is Gabriella DaRienzo. I’ve lived in Toronto for over 13 years and have resided in Parkdale for over the past 5 years.

As a resident of Toronto, I’m concerned about:

* Deaths of BIPOC at the hands of police (including that of Ejaz Ahmed Choudry, D'Andre Campbell and Sammy Yatim among others).
* Deaths of BIPOC due to negligence by police (including that of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and Bruce McArther’s victims Abdulbasir "Basir" Faizi, Majeed "Hamid" Kayhan, Skandaraj "Skanda" Navaratnam, Soroush Mahmudi, Andrew Kinsman, Selim Esen, Dean Lisowick, Kirushna Kumar Kanagaratnam in The Village).
* Mishandling of sexual assaults from Toronto police
* Harassment by Toronto police officers on public transit and during minor bylaw infractions, including noise complaints

I’m concerned with the violence carried out by Toronto police. I demand that all weaponry should be removed from police and other law enforcement, including tasers, batons, firearms, rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and sound canons. I demand the removal of police and school resource officers in all schools in Toronto. I demand the end of the policing of public transportation, the policing of minor bylaw infractions and noise complaints, and the end of paid-duty policing program (officers for hire by developers, street festivals, etc.). I demand the elimination of all stealth police cars and plainclothes operations, and community policing patrols in highly racialized communities.

I demand the decriminalization of selling marajuana, and demand that anyone currently imprisoned or with charges relating to marajuana should immediately be released from prison and have any related charges expunged. I demand the drecriminalaztion of sex work, and demand that anyone currently improsed for sex work should immediately be released from prison and have any related charges expunged.

I am concerned with how many responsibilities Toronto police have without the necessary training to do so. I am concerned with police officers arriving during mental health crisis calls and not having deescalation training. I’m concerned with police officers handling sexual assault cases without proper counselling and trauma training. I am concerned with police officers harassing the homeless and those in poverty, and charging them over minor infractions.

I am concerned with Toronto’s police budget of over $1.1 billion dollars, and believe that much of that budget could be reallocated to:

* Create alternative organizations who specialize in mental health crises, sexaul assaults, homelessness and addiction support, to name a few.
* Investing in community support for shelters, drop-ins, after-school programming in low-income, Black, and Indigenous neighborhoods.
* Investing in harm reduction, including safe supply, safe injection/inhalation sites, and harm-reduction outreach workers.
* Implementing civilian transportation safety service and better/safer road infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit.
* Creating a civilian conflict resolution resolution service to replace policing of minor bylaw infractions/noise complaints.
* Providing permanent, secure housing options for all people who need housing.

Other cities that have reallocated police funding into other areas in their communities include Edmonton, Baltimore, Portland, Philadelphia, Hartford, and Seattle. I believe we should look to our neighbours’ actions to see how reallocating funding, resources, and responsibility can only better our communities, including that of the Toronto police.

Thank you for your time.

Gabriella DaRienzo

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