

Deputation re Item 3  
June 19, 2020

I am submitting a deputation today in regards to item 3, "RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD RELATED TO CURRENT EVENTS." My name is Donelle Fraser and I am an educator and a member of Showing up for Racial Justice Toronto.

I can see that the board is aiming to take steps to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism within the Toronto Police Services, as well to find ways to better address mental health crises. However, I strongly feel that these recommendations do not go far enough, and that what we need is in fact *not* more training, more auditing, more assessments, and more reports. What we need is for the police to be immediately defunded, and the over 1 billion dollars that goes to the police force each year be reinvested in social housing, community-led mental health supports, crisis intervention teams, public transit, and education programs.

I am tremendously concerned that the reforms and trainings called for in this item will require financial investments from the city that could be better spent on community supports that actually keep people safe. The cases of D'Andre Campbell, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Andrew Loku and too many others who have unfairly and unnecessarily died at the hands of police or in police presence, show us that police are *not* equipped to handle mental health crises. The racism and sanism on the force too often result in unnecessary deaths of Black and Indigenous people, poor people, people with mental health challenges, sex workers, and others who are marginalized and discriminated against in our society.

Racial-bias trainings are not the answer. We have seen again and again that de-escalation and racial-bias trainings do not result in less police violence; they simply result in more power and resources to the police force. Prior to the horrifying killing of George Floyd, the Minneapolis Police Department was seen as a model of progressive police reform. It has been shown again and again that reducing the power and funding of the police, and investing in alternative, *unarmed, community-led* safety initiatives is much more effective in increasing safety.

This is already happening. Minneapolis lawmakers have pledged to dismantle its police department and replace it with community-based safety initiatives. Oregon has had an alternative crisis response team called CAHOOTS active since 1989, which has shown to be extremely effective and much less costly than police response. North Yorkshire, UK, has had "health-based places of safety," a team that provides mental health crisis response without police, since 2013, with tremendous success.

We in Toronto need to catch up. What "modernizing" the police should actually look like is *defunding* the police, and investing in services that *truly* keep people healthy, happy, and safe. Defunding the police is a public safety measure, it is a racial justice measure, it is a public health measure, it is a gender justice measure.

The killing must stop. This motion does nothing more than create an illusion that the Police Board is responding to mass mobilization for racial justice, while simply funnelling more money to the police. We demand systemic change, not symbolic half-measures. I stand in solidarity with Black and Indigenous leaders who have long demanded that the police be disarmed, defunded, and dismantled.