



January 20, 2021

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, Health Canada
Dr. Stephen Lucas, Deputy Minister, Health Canada

The Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Mr. Michael A. Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ms. Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

His Worship Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto

Mr. Chris Murray, City Manager, City of Toronto

**RE: TORONTO POLICE SERVICES BOARD'S REQUEST FOR
ADDITIONAL, SUSTAINED INVESTMENT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED
MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES IN TORONTO**

As part of the Toronto Police Services Board's (the Board's) ongoing police reform work, we are writing to request additional and sustained investment in community-based mental health and addictions services in Toronto. As this letter will outline, this request is being made in the context of an evolving approach to community safety and the role that other stakeholders, in addition to the police, can play as part of this reimagined concept.

Board's Comprehensive Police Reform Roadmap

On August 18, 2020, the Toronto Police Services Board approved a report entitled "Police Reform in Toronto: Systemic Racism, Alternative Community Safety and Crisis Response Models and Building New Confidence in Public Safety." The full report and Board Minute are available at: <https://tpsb.ca/component/jdownloads/send/57-2020/634-august-18>.

Mobile Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT) Program Expansion and Beyond

Among its 81 recommendations, the report instructs the Chief of Police to expand the Toronto Police Service's Mobile Crisis Intervention Team program to ensure that teams will be available to answer calls across the city at all times. A police/mental health professional mobile crisis response is an important initiative that has proven itself useful in de-escalating situations and leading to positive outcomes for all of those involved.

As the report notes:

The Board has long supported the MCIT program, which pairs a specially trained police officer with a mental health nurse to respond to people experiencing mental health crises in our community. Through this innovative and progressive program, we have seen a number of important benefits: the delivery of swift and compassionate support with a focus on de-escalation, the prevention of injury, the ability to more readily link people in crisis to appropriate community services, and reduced pressure on hospitals and the justice system.

That said, addressing the complex issue of mental health and addictions requires a multi-faceted, ‘full court press’ approach that sustainably invests in community-led proactive and responsive initiatives. Recognizing this, the Board’s report also noted the following:

However, the recommendations and submissions received suggest it is time to consider an even bolder approach, namely redirecting certain calls currently handled by police into the more specialized hands of non-police response teams.

As a result, the report also included a recommendation that the Board:

Advocate with the municipal, provincial and federal governments for additional funding at a level consistent with or greater than the cost of the proposed MCIT expansion, specifically for community-based services to work in collaboration with police crisis services and Ontario Health Teams and, more specifically, for organizations that provide relevant resources, services and support to assist individuals responding to mental health and addictions related issues. (Recommendation 11)

This direction was premised on similar recommendations made to the Board by its Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Panel and Anti-Racism Advisory Panel in their reports of July 23, 2020 and July 24, 2020, respectively, which are attached as Appendix F and Appendix G, respectively, to the above Board Minute.

This recommendation should also be considered within the broader context of the Board’s comprehensive and ongoing police reform work, which has, at an area of explicit focus, the development of alternative models of community safety response including mobile mental health and addictions crisis interventions, and the support and funding for community organizations working in this area.

The August 2020 Board report included, alongside the recommendations for an expanded MCIT program, the recognition that it is time for a broader re-imagining of what community safety in this context means, and a movement to support more fully and concretely the development of community-based mental health and addictions services.

Since the Board approved this report, we have been collaborating with the City of Toronto and the Service in developing just such a bold approach: a civilian-led model for mental health crisis response that does not require the presence or intervention of the police. A recommended model is being considered by the City's Executive Council at its meeting of January 27, 2021.

Board's Governance Role

Under section 31 of the *Police Services Act*, the Board is responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in Toronto; within that broader governance role is a number of responsibilities, including generally determining, in consultation with the chief of police, the objectives and priorities with respect to police services in Toronto, and establishing policies for the effective management of the police service.

As part of its governance and oversight roles, the Board believes that that it is imperative that its work be done collaboratively, in partnership with the public. We have heard from members of the public that many people favour the creation of a community crisis response model that does not include police, or has reduced and tiered police involvement.

Furthermore, under section 1 of Ontario Regulation O. Reg. 3/99: *Adequacy and Effectiveness of Police Services*, the province has defined adequate and effective policing as including crime prevention initiatives. While the Board remains committed to ensuring the Service provides crime prevention initiatives that are evidence-based and founded on building public trust, community-based and community-led mental health organizations have a vital role in addressing the needs of individuals well *before* they reach a crisis point, where different types of police intervention may be required.

Community Safety as a Shared Responsibility

The critical role of the community is recognized in many of the crime prevention initiatives already carried out by the Service. For example, the Service's Gang Prevention Team's #Engage416 project (<https://www.engage416.ca/>) is based on the creation of neighbourhood teams, which include both community members with lived experience and local, community-led organizations, which work alongside the Service to prevent crime in the form of gang membership and victimization through sexual assault and human trafficking.

The Board is committed to continued engagement on these matters and to advancing and supporting bold and innovative proposals that will achieve our collective goal of a fair and equitable system of community safety, and a safe and welcoming environment for residents of Toronto.

We firmly believe that Toronto's community safety is a shared responsibility which relies on the cooperation of governments, organizations, experts and persons with lived experience, who together have the appropriate skills, abilities, and vested interest to

create and implement strategies to make our city safer – including with respect to the significant challenges our city faces when it comes to mental health and addictions. Moreover, as crime is linked to a large number of social determinants, its prevention cannot be achieved solely through the work of our police services. Crime prevention is part of creating a more equitable, fair, and safe society overall – work that requires a multitude of diverse partners, each bringing their own expertise and skills to these important efforts.

Request for Funding for Community-Based Services

At this time, specifically, as recommendation 11 states, we are requesting that the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario join the City of Toronto to provide funding for community-based services to work in collaboration with police crisis services and Ontario Health Teams and, more specifically, for organizations that provide relevant resources, services and support to assist individuals responding to mental health and addictions related issues. The Board's recommendation is clear that this funding should be at a level consistent with or greater than the cost of the Service's ongoing MCIT expansion.

The pre-expansion cost to the Toronto Police Service of the MCIT model was estimated at \$3,178,685.39, based on personnel costs. The expanded model, approved by the Board at its meeting of November 24, 2020, requires the redeployment of nine police constables and four sergeants, and increases the total cost of the program to an estimated \$6,215,834.14, an increase of approximately \$3M. These policing costs associated with MCIT expansion will be entirely absorbed by the Service from its operational budget, without requesting any additional funding.

Thus, at this time, we are requesting that the municipal, provincial and federal governments, together, provide funding for community-based services – and specifically organizations that provide relevant resources, services and support to assist individuals responding to mental health and addictions related issues – in the amount of at least \$3M.

While this is not funding that would be added to the Service's budget, the Board believes it is an appropriate request for the Board to make, given its responsibility to ensure adequate and effective policing, including crime prevention, and the common objectives we share with our stakeholders – both government and community – of achieving community safety for all.

In addition, the Board believes that if investment in such services will ultimately result, as we expect and hope, in a reduction of overall calls for service, this will allow the Service to reduce its own overall budget, achieving both greater public safety and lower policing costs to our community, beyond the substantial return on investment that the funding of mental health and addictions services is likely to have.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this request in more detail, and explore further opportunities for strategic alignment and investment. It would be appreciated if you

could have the appropriate staff contact Ms. Sheri Chapman, Executive Assistant to the Chair, to arrange a meeting. Ms. Chapman can be reached at sheri.chapman@tpsb.ca.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,



Jim Hart
Chair



Ryan Teschner
Executive Director and Chief of Staff

Copy: Chief Jim Ramer, Toronto Police Service
Ms. Jennifer Chambers, Co-Chair, MHAAP
Mr. Steve Lurie, Co-Chair, MHAAP
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