Dear Toronto Police Services Board,

**RE Consultation on Public Order Policy AND the lack of Funding required for public order**

The residents and business owners of Toronto urgently call for **increased support and funding for the city's police force as well as a change to our Public Order Policy in order to avoid protests that disrupt the lives and livelihoods of others.**

The recent increase in time that needs to be dedicated by our police officers to protests that are disrupting our city every weekend only puts more stress on a system that is already struggling to keep up with the safety needs of a growing community. These protests have disrupted the lives of all those living, working or wanting to visit downtown on the weekends. No one from outside the city wants to visit and be confronted with the traffic jams they are causing. Those living in the city are not able to go to work (not everyone gets the weekend off) or access the entertainment they seek on their day off due to blocked roads. These types of protests should not be allowed where they disrupt the way of life of others. It is particularly distressing to observe how badly our police officers themselves are being treated by certain members of our community during these protests. Police officers should be allowed to disband any protest that promotes and or applauds terrorism and criminal behaviour, or interferes with anyone else’s right to the roads in this city, and arrest anyone who threatens their safety or the safety of others. A policy for handling protests must ensure adequate funding and the safety of the officers as well as those of all the citizens that they are expected to protect.

Insufficient resources and support from the Mayor, City Council and Police Board over the past decade has affected public trust and safety, but also officer morale, resulting in poor mental health, increased absenteeism, and declining interest in policing careers. This situation threatens the safety of our city today and in the future. Enhanced policing efforts and funding are deemed necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of both our valuable officers and the community they serve.

To that end, **in addition to a change in the Public Order Policy, we respectfully request an increase in the number of officers** to address rising crime rates and our growing population in general. The following three key points of concern must be a priority for our Police board and all lead to a requirement for more officers on the ground:

1. Crime rates and emergency calls have been rising at rates of 18-20% per year due to lack of funding. Toronto is facing numerous security challenges, including but not limited to car jackings, car thefts, assaults on public transit, shootings, attacks on our officers themselves, human trafficking, open drug deals, disruptive and even violet protests and hate crimes and most recently, rising antisemitism to unacceptable levels. All require more officers, yet we have less. Despite significant population growth, we have 600 fewer officers on the ground than in recent years. All of these issues are top priorities that need to be addressed immediately but can only be addressed with more officers on the ground.
2. 911 response times although improving exceed 18 minutes, which is unacceptable for emergencies.
3. Toronto has the lowest number of officers per capita among major North American cities. Given our complexity due to size and our population growth, this is untenable and shows how much we have fallen behind.

While we appreciate the proposed budget increase for 2024 to hire 300 new officers, we urge the City and the Board to consider whether this is sufficient given our current challenges as noted above.

We also note the constant negative portrayal of police in the media and by some city officials, which has hindered recruitment efforts. This narrative has contributed to a pervasive sense of insecurity among citizens, affecting both public safety and local businesses. It has led to unacceptable violence towards our officers. It has also created severe mental health challenges for our first responders leading to high levels of absenteeism and suicide within the service. We implore the Board to:

1. Take immediate action to increase police staffing levels.
2. Work towards restoring a balanced perspective on law enforcement.
3. Foster a more supportive environment for our first responders.
4. Ensure all protests are carried out peacefully by enforcing the law when necessary and allow them only in areas where they are not disruptive to others so that less police officer time is required.

By addressing these issues, we can enhance public safety, revitalize our local economy, and ensure the continued funding of crucial social initiatives.

 Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to seeing concrete steps taken to improve public safety in Toronto.

Sincerely,
Mary Throop

Business Owner & Resident of Toronto