Dear Toronto Police Service Board,

As discussed in the meeting when trying to pass the motion to defund, 10% was pointed out to be an arbitrary number by people such as Michael Thompson, Jennifer McKelvie, John Tory and others. However, that is not the point, as Josh Matlow pointed out, some communities are asking for even 50%. The point is to reallocate our budget into programs that could help with crime prevention in the first place.

There have been many places that have implemented body cameras and studies that have looked at their effectiveness and what has been found was ”it has no overall impact on police use of force”, such as studies conducted by Ariel B. et al (1) (Although, I know Kristyn Wong Tam cited a 2019 study that is more updated). There has been reform in the past with anti-black racism with Toronto's Action Plan back in 2017(2), yet we still have a higher death rate of black people at the hands of police officers in comparison to the US(3).

Look, I agree with parts of the motion, we should have alternatives to call when responding to emergencies that police don’t need to be at. but i fail to see how the band aid solution of police reform is gonna do much.

If you really want to address the problem of policing first, we need to redirect efforts into crime prevention, which is a more sustainable and resilient solution, giving a strong base for the citizens of our city. LA saw this when they implement gang prevention programs(4), or when Chicago saw a double digit drop in shootings when investing in outreach programs(5). Those situations are not perfect, but those were key steps in reallocation. systemic solutions rely on addressing systemic problems (not making reforms on the chance that police officers maybe, might, sort of use excessive force on the right person...). The TPS represents most of what was spent using our tax dollars, and i think it was funny when John Tory at the meeting not too long ago addressed how it would be impossible to make transit accessible, but there’s no hesitation to implement a 5 million dollar a year plan to implement body cameras.

We are currently experiencing a housing crisis in the city, and instead of allocating funds to help with that, I see my neighbourhood of Scarborough being gentrified by approved gated communities and real estate businesses, in the places of where recreation centres and schools used to be. On top of that, the city really has the gall to use mean average to determine affordable rent in Toronto(6), which doesn’t accurately depict the typical income of a Torontonian citizen.

City Council recently requested more money from the federal and provincial government to help recover a 1.35 billion dollar deficit, yet we give so much money to the police, with a budget of 1.1 billion dollars (which is siphoned into suburban communities anyways, so the tax payers of the city do not even receive the total benefits of their taxes, and is leaving your government hanging (6)). Although it doesn’t wipe out the deficit, it does help to remove the, I repeat, 1 billion dollar cut of the deficit. Also, in the long run, when we provide a stable economic base for our citizens, (if you’ve taken any economics course and are aware of the production function or the security-development nexus) you would know that securing the needs of the people that provide labour, is gonna be healthy for the economy in the long run. Continually terrorizing and criminalizing them is not healthy in the long run.

I do think the PARTS of the proposal that you and the mayor put up were good. but ultimately your efforts to discredit the 10% cut is misguided, and tone deaf to the people YOU represent.

Citation list:

1. Ariel, B., Sutherland, A., Henstock, D., Young, J., Drover, P., Sykes, J., … Henderson, R. (2016). Wearing body cameras increases assaults against officers and does not reduce police use of force: Results from a global multi-site experiment. European Journal of Criminology, 13(6), 744–755. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370816643734>
2. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-109127.pdf>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/10/toronto-black-residents-more-likely-shot-dead-ontario-human-rights-commission-report>
4. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-12-31/crime-in-los-angeles-drops-2019-police-community-partnerships-and-gang-intervention>
5. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/crime/2020/1/1/21045319/chicago-2019-crime-stats-decrease-murders-shootings-gun-violence-police-department-lightfoot>
6. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/social-housing-providers/affordable-housing-operators/current-city-of-toronto-average-market-rents-and-utility-allowances/>
7. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-data-analysis-reveals-three-quarters-of-toronto-cops-reside-outside/>