

To all the members of the Toronto Police Services Board,

I am writing today as a concerned citizen of Toronto to address the calls to defund and abolish the Toronto Police Service (TPS). I moved to Toronto three years ago from Calgary, AB and over the three years have repeatedly seen and heard about unprofessional and brutal interactions the public has had with TPS. Overwhelmingly, these stories have come from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities as well as the LGBTQI+ community. There is a deep seeded distrust of Police from communities that have been otherized and marginalized by the systemically racist, colonial society in which we live. I would like to take this time to put forth my, and many others', arguments for defunding and abolishing the TPS.

Black people are 20x more likely than white people to be shot by police. The juxtaposition of the way police respond to white people vs BIPOC is visible and unacceptable. How many times must we watch as police calmly stand by attempting to deescalate situations with a white person at the same time as we would watch police from the same organization respond with hostility towards a BIPOC individual? BLM Toronto has submitted 27 demands for the defunding, demilitarization, disarmament, and dismantling of the Toronto Police Service. Each of these demands are easily attainable if you approach them with a critical perspective that does not assume Police are the only institution that would be able to respond to these calls. The document even goes so far as to list specific alternatives, so the board does not need to do the work in figuring out how things can be done differently (read: better). These demanded alternatives are as follows:

19. Create Crisis Intervention and Mad co-lead support teams; work with communities to develop models that work for them.
20. Create police-free, community-led, trauma-informed emergency service for mental health/psychiatric distress and other forms of crisis.
21. Invest in community support for shelters, drop-ins, after-school programming in low-income, Black, and Indigenous neighborhoods.
22. Create restorative services, mental health services, and community-run health centres
23. Invest in harm reduction, including safe supply, safe injection/inhalation sites, and harm-reduction outreach workers.
24. Establish a community-based and trauma-informed emergency service for people who have experienced gender-based violence.
25. Implement of civilian transportation safety service and better/safer road infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit
26. Create a civilian conflict resolution service to replace policing of minor bylaw infractions/noise complaints
27. Provide permanent, secure housing options for all people who need housing.

The recent outcries from the citizens of Toronto surrounding the call to defund and abolish the TPS have been met with willful ignorance from Mayor John Tory and the 16 city councillors who voted to increase, rather than decrease, the TPS budget. Reform and budget increases have not worked in the past. There is a myriad of research that exists that has demonstrated and proved that any improvement in police brutality from reform, training and body cams is short lived and unsustainable. The time for reform is over. How many times will TPS continue to repeat the same mistakes over and over again while expecting different results? This indicates that the city councillors and the TPS board believes themselves to have better knowledge of the impact of changes in police budgets and the implementation of additional technology than that of the many researchers that have been doing this specialized work for a significant amount of time. It implies that you believe the citizens of the city that you serve, that you say you represent don't matter and aren't relevant. It's time to listen to the people you say you represent and make the changes that they are calling for.

With annual budget increases rationalized by indicating that they will go towards reform, training, and technology to decrease police brutality and decrease crime rates we have seen crime rates continuing to rise. In any other public service sector, take healthcare or education as examples, if they failed to achieve goals used to ask for budget increases the budget would be slashed. In fact, budgets in these sectors are routinely cut and reallocated even when there have been increases to the number of students to teach and patients to treat without these organizations failing to fulfill their primary purposes. However, TPS routinely receives budget increases while failing to fulfill their primary purpose. Why is that? Not only have crime rates continued to rise, pointing to the failure of the TPS to prevent crime but the TPS also frequently fails in its response to criminal behaviour.

I would like to raise two specific examples of this blatant failure of the TPS. First is their response to mental health crises, what the TPS refers to as wellness checks. Especially recently the failure of TPS to adequately handle these calls has been brought to the forefront. There is no reason that in responding to a mental health call that the person suffering should end up dead. Unfortunately, we know that very often the person struggling and seeking help is met with hostility and violence by the TPS. There is no excuse or justification as to why Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Ejaz Ahmed Choudry and others like them end up dead during a "wellness check". This points to the deeply rooted patterns of ableism in the TPS and our society at large and leads to the criminalization of mental illness and disability.

Secondly, I would be remiss if I did not bring up the example of the way that TPS handles, or more accurately fails to handle, instances of sexual trauma. The percentage of sexual assault

instances that were reported to police and subsequently cleared by charge sits around 35%. These are only the cases where a recommendation by police is made that the victim press charges. In 2019 there were 1355 reported instances of sexual assault to the TPS. So far in 2020, as of July 10, there have been 1087 reported instances of sexual assault. I was unable to find statistics that represent an accurate TPS arrest rate in sexual assault instances. I highly suggest this be made public record. However, using the average percentage of cases cleared by charge and the 2019 reported cases of sexual assault it is reasonable to assume that the victims were only recommended to press charges against their assailants in as few as 474.25 reported cases. Further, it is crucial to note that many organizations have found that only about 6% of total sexual assault cases even get reported to the police to begin with. That would bring the number of cleared by charge cases of sexual assault down to 2% of total sexual assault instances, including both reported and unreported.

The 1981 Toronto Bathhouse raids 306 gay men were arrested in one night. In 1982 TPS raided Glad Day Bookstore and charges of possession of obscene material for purposes of resale were laid. Even if we disregard the many historical and recent examples of instances when the TPS was the perpetrator of the violence against the LGBTQI+ community, which we should not do, we can turn to examples of the many times the TPS willfully ignored instances of mass murder of LGBTQI+ people. One of these occurred in 1981 where 14 gay men were murdered, half of which remain cold cases to this day, 39 years later. The more recent example is of the Bruce McArthur murders with eight murders spanning seven years. In 2016 Bruce McArthur was arrested for assault but TPS never laid any charges against him, he then went on to murder two more men in 2017. These are only

The examples and statistics I have outlined in this letter represent a fraction of the disservice TPS has provided to Torontonians. I have not provided citations here because I know that you and your team are full capable of doing some basic research into these things. How many BIPOC people need to be murdered by TPS? How many sexual assault survivors must be ignored and blamed for what happened to them? How many LGBTQI+ people need to be targeted? How many communities that have been marginalized by society need to suffer and for how long? The gross negligence of the TPS must be addressed immediately. No more reform. No more training. No more money.

With disdain,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lavery', written in a cursive style.

Jenna Lavery