

TPSB Town Hall
July 9, 2020

Chair, you will name Ahmaud Arbery? George Floyd? Great. How about Andrew Loku. Dafonte Miller. Sammy Yatim. Also, as a point of pure respect, learn how to pronounce the names of the Indigenous nations whose territory you are enabling violence on.

It's hard to know what to say, having been to countless Board meetings over years to try to speak to the humanity of these Board members, asking you to take meaningful action to end police violence towards Black and Indigenous people. Each of you - and Mayor Tory, in particular - have had countless opportunities to consult and listen - around carding, SROs, and in the last two weeks alone, you have ignored hundreds of thousands of calls demanding that you cut the police budget. Every time, you have prioritized the police over the public.

It's hard not to think that you have added more Town Hall meeting days in order to stack the speakers list with individuals who fit your own pre-determined agendas, like you did with the SRO program "consultations". You did not listen to the public then. What will change now?

We need a Board that is invested in making the necessary changes in order to end the police killings of Black and Indigenous people. The choices that this board has made continue to put people's lives at risk. We know that this Town Hall is an attempt to placate, distract and deflect from calls to defund, disarm, and dismantle the Toronto Police. We already know the numbers - that Black people are disproportionately targeted, criminalized, and killed by TPS. And this Board released a statement that called these stats "feelings". The Board cannot continue to engage in the same failed strategies and call it progress. Your own Black officers are indicating that anti-Black racism is systemic in the force. That it is unchecked. I am telling you that we refuse to accept 'less deaths' over time. There can be no more deaths of Black and Indigenous people by police. Zero.

For years, we have come to this board to demand greater accessibility (of meetings), accountability (to the public), transparency (of decision-making), and oversight (of our publicly-funded police force). The Board claims its priority is "fair and equitable policing." There is no such thing. We have seen that the harassment, brutality, and violence towards Black, Indigenous, racialized, sex working, queer and trans, underhoused and homeless, drug using, and mad and disabled people is the norm. The so-called "good cops" are silent and deadly. This Board, in its compliance with all TPS matters, has only

enabled ongoing violence, rather than brought about any measure of accountability or change. Why is that acceptable to you?

The TPS already has all the money. Yet it has solved and/or prevented nothing. Activists and scholars have proven that reforms, including training and body cameras, have had no impact on police killings. We know how easy it is for police officers to turn off body cameras, block them, or refuse to turn over footage. The police already have the ability to choose not to cooperate with SIU investigations. What guarantees can this Board make to us? We don't need more diversity in policing methods of control, repression, criminalization, and violence. Your own anti-racism advisory panels do not see a point in continuing, and the co-chair states that there is "no will" to cooperate or change in the TPS! Your own Way Forward Scorecard is failing, with the public scoring the service lower and lower in each category! There is no training that will stop police killing without accountability, and nothing that will change without a Board that is listening to the public. The majority of speakers today will tell you that police interactions with mentally ill people need to end. That the carrying of lethal weapons needs to end. That the killing of Black and Indigenous people needs to end. That the killings of Black and Indigenous mentally ill people needs to end. Will you listen?

Some of the officers that have carried out the most egregious instances of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism - against Andrew Loku, against Regis Korchinski-Paquet, against Reece Maxwell-Crawford, and so many more - are still on the streets. Where does Andrew Doyle, the man who killed Andrew Loku within SECONDS work now? Will Michael Theriault return to the streets? How long was he still working after his beating of Dafonte Miller? Will his father continue to work within the TPS? Does the public even know? In many cases, we do not know the names of these officers. And yet they are out there, interacting with the public, conducting militarized raids in Jane and Sheppard, in front of children. We do not see these raids taking place in Rosedale, in Parkdale, in Bloordale. A Black woman was assaulted by Officer Jamie Pardy in Police HQ while she attempted to attend a POLICE BOARD MEETING. The Board did nothing and barely acknowledged this. That officer still works at the front desk of the Police HQ, interacting with the public. This is not a matter of implicit bias. This is deliberate.

You want to talk about trauma? Imagine the trauma of enduring an entire lifetime of police violence. But you can't, as none of you actually hold lived experience of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, or police violence.

We want police-free mental health crisis response services funded through the TPS budget, with no involvement or direction by police. Those of us who've worked in social

services de-escalate and respond to violence and mental health crises without the use of a gun or taser. We do it all the time, without killing anyone, and without the necessary resources and support. We need defunding of the police now, and the redistribution of these budget line items into social and community support.

You cannot dismiss these calls for change. There are more of us now. We are watching this Board, and we are engaged. We want the defunding of the Toronto Police Service and the dismantling of this Service and this Board. We want the disarming and de-militarization of the Toronto Police. We want the dismantling of any service that continues to disproportionately result in the deaths of Black and Indigenous people. You have control over the police budget. Return the money to the city council. Give it over to community-led and community-directed initiatives with no strings attached. As restitution. We do not want panels, bias training, diversity and inclusion into a toxic and racist organization.