VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING SUBMISSION, July 2020

Re: The Toronto Police Services Board and matters concerning police accountability, reform, and community safety priorities.

In light of current events in Toronto, such as the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in the presence of police officers, I would like to ask that you defund the Toronto police, rebalance, and invest in a new approach to community care and safety.

I am very concerned that the recommendations made in the Sammy Yatim case (i.e., the Iacobucci Report) are not being followed.

Police are becoming increasingly militarized, which is causing budgets to balloon, despite falling crime rates. There is a rising use of SWAT teams to complete routine policing in Canada (Kevin Walby in MacLean's magazine, Jan. 25, 2018).

According to information provided by Statistics Canada (2018) on police resources in Canada, "a large proportion of police work involved responding to non-criminal events that are related to public safety and well-being." These calls for service are estimated, by Statistics Canada, to make up between 50% and 80% of all calls police respond to. The report gives examples of these calls: alarms, disturbances, domestic disputes, traffic accidents, sick or injured persons, overdoses, and mental health-related calls. Many of these calls could be dealt with by someone with expertise in the areas of conflict resolution, mental health support, addiction support, etc.

I actually think that it is unfair to send police into some of these situations because they fall so far outside of what the police are trained to do.

Investment in body-cameras for all police officers in Toronto will not protect racialized people from police. According to multiple studies (e.g., A randomized control trial evaluating the effects of police body-worn cameras, by David Yokum, Anita Ravishankar, PNAS May 21, 2019), body cameras for police do not achieve measurable improvements in their behaviour and will not ensure safety for Black and Indigenous Torontonians in their encounters with law enforcement officers. We need to *prevent* violence against racialized Torontonians, not *watch* it after it has already happened. The money could be better spent on many things that might help Black and Indigenous Torontonians lead safer and healthier lives in this city.