

Hi,

My name is Ethan Sabourin, and I am a recent graduate from the University of Waterloo, where I studied, among other things, design thinking and problem solving.

During my five minute today, I want to bring up some of the same things that I presented to this board during last month's regular meeting. I have been thinking a lot about how the City of Ottawa can respond to calls to Defund the police and reinvest those funds into community services like public housing and free public transport.

As you might have seen, a recent IPSOS survey showed that this kind of policy suggestion has majority support across the country, with 51% in favour. The survey also showed that young people, and people in urban settings support defunding the police in even greater numbers. We now know that the attitudes of Canadians have changed as they have witnessed the brutality and racism of our own police services: from the killings of Chantel Moore, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and Ejaz Choudry, among others, to continuous footage of beatings, to repeated instances of racial profiling in COVID restrictions enforcement. It is now time to look at the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada, which are outlined at [Black Lives Matter .ca](https://blacklivesmatter.ca) and some of which I read to you all last month.

Reading the agenda of this meeting illuminates that you, the Police Services Board, seem to have completely ignored those demands, and are continuing to act as though ongoing police racism does not need to be immediately addressed, particularly through the curtailing of bloated police budgets, and incredible police power.

I will outline some of the demands for you once again.

6. Remove police and school resource officers (SROs) in all schools, at all levels, across Canada.
7. End all special constable programs and all policing on campuses.
8. End the policing of public transportation.

Instead of following the lead of Black Canadians fighting for justice, and for their lives, the agenda today calls to reify the exact systems that are criminalizing Black, Indigenous, impoverished, and other marginalized people. What you need to be doing now is deciding how to cut the OPS budget, by 50% or more, and meeting these demands. I am asking the Board to vote against the appointment and re-appointment of special constables at Carleton University and on our city's public transport. These appointments would be in direct violation of the clear and concise demands of the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada.

I will also outline some of the demands by Ottawa's own Justice for Abdirahman Coalition:

2. We call on the city to prioritize coordinated services in community well being from municipal budgets, with a focus on mental health supports.
3. To commit to the reallocation of a significant portion of the OPS budget towards holistic community safety and well-being. There should be systems in place that provide alternatives to armed responses when the community calls for help.

These demands are asking you to rethink the role of police in this city, and recognize that the abolition of policing, while we build the housing, transportation, health care, food, and other systems that truly keep us safe, is the way forward to a more just society.

I will return to the kind of radical imagination that I have been asking of you and other policymakers by repeating the kinds of possibilities that I laid out in my public comment last month, and at council. I ask you and councillors to "consider simple and sometimes radical ideas that can bloom under legislative constraints" in our city. I suggested ideas like

1. "City-backed food production and distribution plans that put the means of food production into the hands of regular citizens ranging from the planting and

harvesting of fruit trees across the city, to helping establish front yard gardens and suburban farms.”

2. “The expansion, electrification, and delivery of free public transport for all, in order to drastically reduce our dependence on cars.”
3. The development of social housing, from public and community land trust, to co-op, which fits into neighbourhoods and helps flatten growing land prices. It also fights gentrification and puts tenants first.
4. Finally, I asked that we enact a sharp reduction in the OPS budget to help fund and enable these projects.

It has been a difficult month. Ottawans are justifiably organizing to counter the regressive, pro-eviction legislation signed by the Ontario Government, especially in the context of rising COVID-19 numbers in this city. Tenant activists have also made demands that are necessary for you to pay attention to and support. The Herongate Tenant Coalition is calling on the Mayor Jim Watson to:

- 1) Use the Mayor’s emergency powers under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection act to enact a moratorium on evictions in Ottawa.
- 2) Call on the Ontario Government to repeal Bill 184 and take evictions and forced rent payment off the table for unpaid rent during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) Direct OPS to not participate in the enforcement of evictions
- 4) Declare support for all ottawa tenants who cannot pay rent due to COVID-19 who refuse to abandon their homes

As the Board, please support each of this demands but in particular the third demand which asks that police not enforce evictions, particularly in this dangerous and uncertain time.

It is time to build a healthier, safer, and more caring city. I believe that that might be what your job is asking of you. It is definitely what your city is asking of you. I was at the Regis Korchinski Paquet vigil, the protest at parliament hill, and the protest on

Saturday outside of the police station and city hall. It is time to act. I direct the board to commit to implementing the relevant changes from BLMTO including defunding the police.

I also hope that you all read or listened to interviews about the work of Angela Davis, Mariame Kaba, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore. I will again link them in the sourcing of my document. We can actually change our society for the better.

1. *Defund the Police – Demands – BLM – Canada*. *blacklivesmatter.ca*, <https://blacklivesmatter.ca/defund-the-police/>. Accessed 23 June 2020.

Please use these demands as a framework for Ottawa, at least until you are presented with new demands from Ottawa organizations.

2. Wilson Gilmore, Ruth. “Intercepted Podcast: Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition.” *The Intercept*, 10 June 2020. *The Intercept*, <https://theintercept.com/2020/06/10/ruth-wilson-gilmore-makes-the-case-for-abolition/>.

This is necessary listening for anyone unfamiliar with abolitionist frameworks. Please get acquainted before we move to fundamentally change things and defund the police.

3. Kaba, Mariame. “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police.” *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html>.

Mariame Kaba is one of the most important voices of this moment. Read her work and let her guide your imaginations toward a better world.