

COMMUNICATION: *Email dated November 21, 2021 from Thea Lewis*

**From:** Thea Lewis

**Sent:** November 21, 2021 1:38 PM

**Subject:** written deputation

Good afternoon Board and Committee Members,

I am unable to speak at the Ottawa Police Services Board on November 22, but I wanted to share my thoughts, and to urge you to vote against the increase of \$14 million to the Ottawa Police Services.

I am astonished and dismayed that the Board would consider a budget that proposes an increase to the OPS budget, after last year's declaration that a freeze would be investigated. I hoped last year that that might mean potential change, and that the Board might be listening to the calls from community at last. Instead, it seems this was merely an image-saving move when Black Lives Matter had the media spotlight, and now that the media has moved on, the Board has lost its motivation. But know, the residents of Ottawa are watching what you chose to do today. We would celebrate a bold move, a powerful act in the name of healing the fractured relationship with the community, a courageous step in building a safer and more compassionate city: please, I urge you, refuse to increase the Ottawa Police Budget, and call for a freeze.

As a white woman living in Ottawa, I want to make it clear that I do not support an increase to the Police Services budget. I center my gender and my race because I know that the spectre of violence against my body in public spaces is often used as a justification for increased policing. I do not feel safer in spaces where there are armed and authoritative figures who have consistently shown a lack of accountability and consequences to their actions. In addition, it is not a person like myself who is targeted by policing; in fact, I have never experienced the harassment, violence and increased surveillance that I hear of from my neighbours, coworkers and friends who are racialized or poor. That doesn't mean I don't believe and know it to be true. More policing harms the lives and wellbeing of Black, Indigenous and racialized Ottawa residents. I know this to be true because it is what they have been shouting at us for decades. We need only listen. I don't think there are any more statistics or data that can tell us what we already know.

There are so many places where the limited and stretched municipal budget is desperately needed – I'm sure over the last months of deliberating this question you have heard many of them. Social services, transit, library, public health – all of these are essential municipal services upon which Ottawa residents depend, who are consistently fighting for scraps. But today I feel the most distressed by the state of Ottawa's Energy

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Evolution program. Currently, in British Columbia, cities that were ravaged by fires only months ago are under water. The threats of climate catastrophe are no longer in our future: we are watching them right now. We are watching the increased climate volatility, the decimated villages and reserves, the cities' infrastructures failing. There is no pushing this matter off any longer, we must act radically and immediately. To watch the Ottawa city's own plan to address the climate crisis, to transition to cleaner energy, to make moves to ensure a livable future; to watch this plan be consistently desperately underfunded while the police budget continues to inflate is devastating. I am at the age where I am considering having children, and one of the major factors giving me pause is the question: would this child have a livable planet to grow up on? We're not talking generations down the line anymore. We're talking about my life and my family's lives. We need the leadership of this city to have clear and grounded priorities: we need investment in a livable future, and in a safer city. That means redirecting the funds that are being asked for by the Police Services towards programs such as municipal environmental programs.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will listen to all the voices calling on you to do the right thing.

-Thea Lewis

Ottawa, ON