



June 17, 2020

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE POLICE SERVICES BOARD; MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL**

**RE: SEARCH FOR A NEW CHIEF**

The Centre in which we are professors has conducted world-leading research on policing and related issues for many years. We are always ready to engage with public authorities that want to improve aspects of our legal system, including policing, since we believe that in any field, the best policy is evidence-based policy.

At this crucial time in the history of our city, we make two suggestions, one short term and one longer term.

- 1) **Courage in choosing a non-traditional chief.** What Toronto needs now is someone who can truly transform not only the institution (the TPS) but, perhaps more importantly, the relationships between City Hall, the Police Services Board, the citizenry, and the myriad community agencies and activist organizations that together make this a relatively harmonious and orderly city. For that reason, it would be wise to look well beyond policing itself for possible candidates for chief. Further, for any future reform, and for effective democratic control, there needs to be proper data collection and a transparent sharing of the data. Experience with transparent sharing of data collected with public resources should be a factor in the hiring.

For too long, calls for policing reform have resulted in more money being given to the police, in the hope that they will reform themselves. We have thus seen more training, more officers, more civilian staff, and more technology (the latest being body-worn cameras): but the problems persist, both the problems of gun violence and the problems of racism and discrimination. We must not keep doing the same thing (giving the police more money for new programs or new items) and expecting a different result.

We acknowledge that there are many officers and managers, including a good number of our own graduates, who are sincerely committed to serving the public in a just manner. But the problem is not individuals. Bureaucracies are always seeking to do more, to claim more functions, to take up fashionable ideas, and to pad their budget. Police forces are not in this respect not unusual; what is unusual is that they are often regarded as the key authorities on their own powers and their own budgets (in contrast to other bodies of public employees). Real reform can only come from the outside – in this case, from city council, from the citizenry, especially those already organized in community groups and agencies, and to some extent from the Police Services Board.

- 2) **A civic ‘safety and justice’ table.** In conjunction with City Council, the PSB could initiate a process by which police core functions will be defined, while other functions aiming at community safety, justice, or both are allocated to other entities, existing ones or future ones, or to combined teams. On this municipal ‘safety and justice’ table the police would sit alongside community agencies, social services, and activist groups; they would not be at the head of the table or determine its agenda. There are now many calls for defunding police; and many sensible suggestions for cutting the police budget have been made over the years, and a few have been implemented (though often partially). But instead of arguing about which item on the budget should be trimmed, without context, it would be far more sensible, not to mention democratic, to set up a process by which the community’s safety and justice needs are evaluated and prioritized. The needs assessment would then then be followed by a deliberation on the best way to meet those needs.

The anti-racist demonstrations of recent weeks are not demanding that the police reform themselves or that a few items be trimmed from the police budget. They are demanding justice and true accountability. That can only be achieved if there is a broad-based, transparent process by which safety and justice needs are evaluated and prioritized so that the best way of meeting those needs can then be agreed upon. That will not happen overnight: but the police budget cannot be changed overnight either.

Once this civic table has met for some time and generated recommendations, then city council can and should operationalize those through the budgetary process. A reformed city budget that reorganizes how safety and justice needs are met, using the most suitable personnel, should be the product of a broad-based democratic discussion in which Black, Indigenous, racialized, LGBT, and feminist voices have more of a say than is the case on city council.

We would be happy to provide our expertise to the Board, the mayor's office, and/or any members of Council that would like advice or feedback. In this letter, however, instead of offering ready-made specific reforms, we offer thoughts on what to look for in a new police chief along with one higher-level, longer-term idea about how civic leaders might usefully respond to the current crisis with true innovation.

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Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M Valverde'.

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