

Dearest Budget Committee,

My name is Bernice Couto, I live and work in Ward 4, and I am writing to you all today regarding the proposed City of London 'Multi-Year Budget 2024-2027,' and to state on the record that I am against Business Cases P-28: - Public Safety and Infrastructure Modernization, P-29: Police Vehicle and Equipment Requirements, and especially P-57: LPS Facilities Masterplan and Protective Services Training Campus. Further, I urge you, as my representative at City Council, to vote against the above stated Business Cases.

To be clear, I am not asking to "defund the police," I am asking that the City of London does not vote to increase tax payer dollars by 5% to fund the militarization of this city instead of the resources that our communities desperately need. I support Business Case P-L8: Next Generation 911 Centre. I further urge this Committee to explore and engage with London community members - not just the CEOs of large, "public" corporations, who have a vested, financial interest in policing - building non-Police response teams to respond to Code 2 and Code 3 calls to 911.

I also question the democratic integrity of the London Police Association and its sitting members with regards to its libellous statements against taxpayers who are asking questions about the proposed \$672M budget. Where is democracy when I never do not receive even a response from my Mayor or from my City Councillor. I also question the appropriateness of my City Councillor who remains sitting on the London Police Services Board while she is undergoing multiple investigations by the Integrity Commissioner. As a constituent and a taxpayer, I have zero faith in the accountability of the LPS Board.

In an interview with the London Free Press, Police Chief Truong offers that mental health, addiction and homelessness are the biggest challenges we believe our city faces - then, why are we not spending most of our tax dollars on those services? Why is the LPS demanding for the biggest line item in the proposed City budget at 17.4%? Which is more than eight times the proposed spend on London & Middlesex Community Housing (at 2.1%), for example. For the safety of the whole community - Indigenous, First Nations and Metis Peoples, elders, the disabled, youth, our children, and those of us who are blessed to be housed, as well as those who have been unhoused - we need housing, not guns, surveillance, or armoured vehicles.

Online, I have read research results which concluded that an increase in police budget does not correlate to a decrease in crime; as well as research that shows how it is cheaper for us to care for people, rather than to criminalize and hospitalize them (over and over again). All of this data concludes that it costs taxpayers less to provide people with healthcare, food and safe, accessible and affordable housing than to police our communities. The data concludes that if the basic needs of everyone in our communities are met - if we improve people's material conditions - that is when crime decreases. We need public resources, not armed police.

In yesterday's press conference regarding the Hockey Canada sexual assault case and resulting charges, I was disgusted at Chief Truong's suggestion that sexual assault of women and girls is the responsibility of community at-large and the suggestion that the sexualization of women and girls leads to them being sexually assaulted. To be clear, the only cause of sexual assault is the assaulter. How can I have any trust in a Police Chief who wants to share the blame of alleged rapists with the community? The LPS are not safe for women and girls in the City of London

Lastly, I understand that LPS proposes to build a new police training centre with this Multi-Year Budget, and I want to specifically implore you to vote against this Business Case (P-57). I am aware of the

ongoing, mass protests against the building of a police training facility in Atlanta, GA and I do not want that in the London area. As a citizen, as a taxpayer, as your constituent, and as a human being, please know that building a new compound for practicing militarization tactics against protestors and unhoused people does NOT make me feel safer.

To make London safe, we need community care not militarization.

Sincerely,
Bernice Couto
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