

From: The Parkers

To: LFP Letters <lfp.letters@sunmedia.ca>

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 10:10:45 a.m. EST

Subject: Police Budget

The police budget if approved will increase property taxes 30% over the next four years. This is inflation on steroids. The budget contains gadgets, hardware and personnel that sound more like a list prepared to send to help Ukraine. London, Ont. is not a war zone. The Police Board chair has said (on local news) we are all living in fear and this increase in Police resources will make us safer. Where is the research to support this? Exploiting fear has always been a successful tool in Police budget negotiations by trying to justify egregious increases to our property tax base at the expense of other necessary programs. Not all home owners can assume such increases, as well, renters will see such increases passed on to them making housing more expensive and less accessible. The mayor supports this budget "unequivocally" as he has regrettably drunk the cool aid. The mayor's new extra powers is concerning in this regard. The Police Board offers us no protection for unreasonable increases in Police budget requests. This is not 'de funding' police rather 'right' funding. This position should be seen as common sense not portrayed by police as "zealotry." Police complain many of their calls are for mental health issues; where is the allocation of resources for mental health professionals in this budget to respond to this need? Having two cops dressed in black with body armour and guns showing up at the door is neither an appropriate nor therapeutic response to someone experiencing a mental health crisis. We have seen examples of this in Toronto when a young woman suffering a psychotic episode jumped over her balcony to her death after seeing two police officers at her door; or the young man shot to death by police while (isolated, alone and unarmed) on a street car. We can do better than this. City Councillors are our last hope to insist on a reality check in spending: our pockets are only so deep. We need to support programs, services, and organizations who are in the business of making our community better and safer for all. Police Services is only one component in this equation. However, this budget skews this relationship.

I am sending my concerns not only as a resident of this city but offering a perspective as a retired Social Worker (BSW, MSW) of over three decades having worked in the community and hospital settings with Canadian War Veterans, Geriatrics, and in Forensic Mental Health care.

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