



## **Environment Hamilton Statement Against Racism**

June 9, 2020

All around the world, demonstrations of righteous and profound outrage are erupting against a systemic, anti-Black racism that is exemplified once again by the recent police killing of yet another Black person south of our borders.

George Floyd was murdered on the street by members of the Minneapolis Police Department on May 25, 2020. Closer to home, Regis Korchinski-Paquet died on May 27, 2020 after falling from her 24<sup>th</sup> storey apartment during a closed-door interaction with the Toronto police. Before them were Jermaine Carby, Abdirahman Abdi, D'Andre Campbell, Machuar Madut, Nicholas Gibbs, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Freddie Gray, Jr., and the thousands of other unarmed black and brown people who have died, been killed or brutalized by law enforcement in the United States and Canada over the years.

Environment Hamilton stands in solidarity and mourns with the Black community in Hamilton and beyond. We condemn racial violence and racism in all forms. As a community-focused organization that works through leadership, education, and advocacy to provide Hamiltonians with the knowledge and skills they need to protect and enhance the environment around us, we fight for both environmental and social justice: the two are inextricably linked, with racialized people disproportionately impacted by degraded urban environments and pollution.

Our organization recognizes that the institution of white supremacy and its racial violence stretches back to the founding of the United States and Canada and began with the genocide of Indigenous Nations inhabiting these lands. It is deeply chilling and heartbreaking that over 150+ years, lessons have not been learned and anti-Black racism and police violence continue to occur, including here in Hamilton. Insidious practices, such as routine police patrols in public schools that have a high proportion of black students and the carding (street checks) of racialized people without any reason, reflect ongoing local racism. Disregarding and undervaluing Black talent and contributions to the life of this city is customary.

Therefore, we have a responsibility to speak out against such systemic hatred, and we add our voices to those groups working in our community to overcome systems of white supremacy.

We endorse the demands put forward on June 2, 2020 by Black youth organizers in Hamilton, which stem from experiences of racism at the hands of the Hamilton Police Services and other municipal and educational institutions. We support their full list of demands, copied below, including the principal demand to defund the Hamilton police and transition to transformative justice alternatives. We encourage Environment Hamilton members to sign [the petition](#) put forward by this group.

We believe the Hamilton police budget should be reallocated to social programs like affordable housing, food security, education, job training, public transit, recreation, the arts, healthcare, mental health counselling, and substance use harm reduction. Greater investments in municipal social programs will reduce crime by addressing the sources of poverty and alienation. Many of the tasks done by police could be better done by professionals like mental health counsellors, substance use support workers, housing support workers, nurses, and paramedics. We believe in the capacity of members of the Hamilton community to self-organize to address problems affecting our community. Rather than dealing with problems individually and deferring to the police – an outside force that many of our neighbours deeply fear – we should work towards models of collective care and accountability.

We support the courageous efforts of Black youth in Hamilton and elsewhere who are leading this struggle and who are taking the actions they believe are necessary to challenge systems of racism and



capitalism. We reject attempts by politicians and media commentators to undermine the movement by attributing actions to “outside agitators.” Present day attempts to label Black Lives Matter activists, antifascists, and anarchists as “identity extremists” or “domestic terrorists” recall similar efforts during the Civil Rights Movement to discredit Freedom Riders as “outside agitators” or “communists” and supporters in the labour movement as Russian spies. We see these moves for what they are: attempts to split the progressive movement and alienate those who otherwise would sympathize with the cause.

We encourage our members to donate in support of racial justice organizations, especially those on the front lines of this work in Hamilton. Please see [here](#) for a suggested list. We call on everyone (EH Board and Staff included) to do more to educate ourselves about white supremacy and struggles for Black liberation. Please see [here](#) for a list of articles, books, films, and podcasts to get started.

As an organization, Environment Hamilton commits to apply an environmental racism analysis to all of our work; hold industry and government to account for the disproportionate impacts of pollution and environmental degradation on working-class Black, Indigenous, and racialized residents of Hamilton; and support the efforts of local anti-racism initiatives and organizations to fight for justice, in whatever way we can.

Until white supremacy in our institutions, our minds, and our hearts, is overcome once and for all, we commit to tying our work for a sustainable, resilient, inclusive Hamilton to the wellbeing and safety of and justice for Black lives.

In solidarity,  
Environment Hamilton board, staff, and volunteers

Lynda Lukasik (Executive Director)  
Cindy Gangaram (Chair of the Board)  
Laura Ryan (Vice-Chair of the Board)  
Ron Ballentine (Director)  
Kerry Bear (Director)  
Robin Cameron (Director)  
Andy Coltman (Director)  
Ryan McGreal (Director)  
Emily Power (Director)  
Christine Yachouh (Director)  
Dave Carson (Director Emeritus)  
Don McLean (Director Emeritus)  
Joyce Munro (Director Emeritus)  
Jim Quinn (Director Emeritus)  
Ian Borsuk (Staff)  
Beatrice Ekoko (Staff)  
Juby Lee (Staff)



**List of demands put forward by a coalition of Black organizers in Hamilton on June 2, 2020:**

We call on the city of Hamilton to defund the Hamilton police.

We call on the city of Hamilton to invest the tax dollars that would have otherwise gone to the police towards initiatives fighting against food insecurity, racism and towards more affordable housing.

We call on the City of Hamilton to ensure that HPS are not ticketing houseless people for existing in public.

We demand that the Hamilton Police Services halt all purchases with tax dollars of weapons (guns, rifles, etc).

We demand that the Hamilton Police Services cease the ticketing and surveilling of homeless and disabled people in Hamilton, and that there be a moratorium on the hiring of police constables in Hamilton given the documented over-surveilling of homeless people during the pandemic.

We demand that the Hamilton Police Services stop surveilling communities, and that they halt the expenditure of tax dollars on high tech surveillance equipment.

We demand that the Hamilton Police Services stop targeting and criminalizing activists and communities pushing back against Yellow Vesters and other forms of white supremacy.

We call on McMaster University (President & Board of Governors) to immediately terminate Glenn De Caire's contract. De Caire was forced to resign from Hamilton police after he was caught saying incredibly racist things to other police officers. De Caire also has a history of violent policing that targets houseless people as well as Black people.

In line with the demands of the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Kids Need Help Coalition, we demand that the HWDSB immediately remove School Resource Officers (SROs) out of all schools and fully fund a public review of police violence that occurred in their schools.

We demand that the school board refrain from calling the cops on kids.

We demand that the school board collect and release data that documents the disciplinary action against students by race and gender.

We demand that the school board implement a community run alternative to disciplinary action based on the principles of restorative justice.

We demand that the provincial police act be rewritten to give municipalities full control over police boards. Currently, in Hamilton, the Hamilton Police Services operates as an autonomous body, giving municipalities little to no oversight in terms of what they invest in and the ways that they militarize themselves.

We demand that the province of Ontario work with grassroots groups to divest taxpayer money across the Province (Hamilton - \$171M, Ottawa - \$319M, Waterloo - \$182M, Halton Region - \$162M, London \$123M, Niagara - \$154M, Sudbury - \$63M) from policing and invest it towards community initiatives with the goal of moving completely toward transformative justice practices.

We demand that the Special Investigations Unit, which has a provincial mandate, needs to be 100% composed of people living in the city with which the investigation is being conducted.

We demand that the Special Investigations Unit needs to be composed completely of Black, racialized and Indigenous peoples with no current or former ties to the policing sector.



The SIU must begin collecting and publicly releasing race-based statistics on all fatalistic encounters between police officers and civilians. No more inquiries-- direct action needs to be taken as a result of the investigation into anti-Black racism that occurred in the 90's and again in 2014 with the establishment and subsequent defunding of the Anti-Racism Directorate.

In light of COVID-19, We demand that all prisoners being held and who are awaiting trial at the Barton Jail facility be released immediately, and that the outrageous costs of ankle monitors and other means of surveilling those who are released be waived.