

From: [Asante Haughton](#)
To: [Executive Committee](#)
Subject: Executive Committee Deputation (to be read)
Date: January 26, 2021 4:29:13 PM

Dear City Clerk,

Please add our comments to the agenda for the January 27, 2021 Executive Committee meeting on item 2021.EX20.1, Community Crisis Support Service Pilot.

We understand that our comments and the personal information in this letter will form part of the public record, and that our names will be listed as correspondents on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, we understand that agendas and minutes are posted online, and our names may be indexed by search engines like Google.

My Comments:

"With respect to the initiative in which Toronto will move toward new alternative mobile crisis teams, I am writing in support of the proposed pilots.

In our society, we have trusted police to serve and protect civilians from danger, crime and physical harm. Yet, police officers have evolved to become the default catch-all responders to a variety of emergency situations. As such, police have very often been involved in mental health crisis response. This is problematic for a variety of reasons:

- 1. It further perpetuates the stigma that individuals experiencing high levels of mental distress or crisis are dangerous since the association we have of police officers is that they respond to dangerous situations and individuals.**
- 2. The presence of police officers--in uniform, wearing kevlar vests, and carrying firearms--can often be threatening, particularly when someone is in an agitated state, which can work to escalate the 'temperature' of a high needs situation. This unintentional escalation has a heightened effect for individuals who have traditionally been maltreated by law enforcement (ex. Black and Indigenous folks, other people of colour, queer and trans folks, disabled people, etc.). Unfortunately, the escalating presence of responding officers may make situations worse than they need to be.**
- 3. Police officers, when situations go awry, have the instruments to cause great bodily harm and/or death.**

With the proposed pilots, which should include peer workers on responding teams and integrated into 911 dispatch, the following positive impacts are possible:

- Creating a paradigm shift where people in distress and/or crisis are not seen as dangerous and instead are seen as vulnerable and needing help.**
- Result in fewer people, especially those from equity-deserving groups, experiencing less harm and/or death as a result of police response to mental health calls.**
- Providing specialized, relevant and more effective mental health care during mental health distress and crisis situations, including but not limited to opening up the opportunity to be connected to supports and services that can address the very social determinants that may have driven someone to crisis to begin with (such as housing, poverty, etc.).**

For these reasons and many more, I strongly encourage and implore the executive committee to support the proposed alternative mobile mental health crisis response pilots to move forward.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Asante Haughton

Mental Health Advocate and Co-Founder of the Reach Out Response Network"

Thank you!

Asante

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TEDx Speaker | Human Rights Activist | Change-Maker | Dream Chaser | Visionary

Link to My TEDx Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SipgIIf-Ehw>

