



**Submission from Floydeen Charles-Fridal,
Caribbean African Canadian Social Services**

November 12, 2019
Councillor Cressy
Chair, Board of Health
City of Toronto

Good morning, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Before going further we would like to state that our support of the recommendations.

Caribbean African Canadian (CAFCAN) Social Services serves to be a hub for Toronto North, specifically the Jane & Finch community- alongside surrounding areas. We are a Black lead, Black informed, Black mandated agency that is extremely aware of the public health concern that stems from the increasing violence that has spread among the GTA. We live it every day. We are deputing today in collaboration with the Black Health Alliance (BHA) the Black Action Defence Committee (BADDC) and, Urban Rez Solutions.

Addressing community violence as a public health concern is urgent. The by-product of violence is not limited to the perpetrator and victim; citizens and tax payers will and have been affected. Investments need to be made in our community and communities across the GTA to improve social determinates of health.

Evidence shows that violence is only a variable of larger systemic issues that are co-located with the social determinants of health such as:

1. Income and social status
2. Employment and working conditions
3. Education and literacy
4. Childhood experiences
5. Physical environments
6. Social supports and coping skills
7. Healthy behaviours
8. Access to health services
9. Biology and genetic endowment
10. Gender
11. Culture
12. Race / Racism

Community violence has been categorized as one of the many complex traumas impacting children and youth by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN); a US-based think tank funded by the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and jointly coordinated by UCLA and Duke University.

This type of trauma is shown to have lasting psychological impact extending into adulthood without the proper intervention. This growing concern therefore requires our urgent attention and must be

prioritized and intentionally treated as a public health issue so it can get the attention required by municipal and other governments.

Having reviewed the report of the Board of Health, regarding the Public Health Impact of violence on the City of Toronto, we are very pleased that these recommendations signal a significant change in linking violence to public health. This is a baby step in the right direction. We are very disappointed however that after spending much time and resources to develop this report, that it has not been successful in addressing the fundamental issue giving rise to the crisis in public health resulting from gun violence. There is a plethora of literature on the social determinants of Health and the Social and economic determinants of violence.

There is overwhelming evidence that Black populations are significantly overrepresented in shooting incidents in the City of Toronto. For example, the study conducted by Toronto Public Health identified two recent studies that examined Toronto homicide rates from 2004 to 2014 among Black residents and Somali-Canadian youth, and found that violence in communities in Toronto disproportionately affects young Black males. However, Despite this evidence the report from the Medical Officer of Health does not contain any specific actions targeted to address this disproportionate burden of incidences on Black populations, specifically young Black males.

According to the April 2019 report, Promoting Health and Well-Being through Social Inclusion in Toronto: *Synthesis of international and local evidence and implications for future action, Social inclusion has emerged as a critical issue in mental health and social policy work nationally and internationally. Social inclusion is now being recognized as a social determinant of health, and as particularly integral to promoting mental health and well-being. Locally, there is cause for concern about increasing economic inequity, within and between neighbourhoods and social groups, and its attendant negative effects on health inequities.*

With increased recognition of the perils of inequities, there is growing appreciation of the key role social inclusion can play in promoting well-being, particularly among those experiencing greater isolation or marginalization.

The 2018 Ontario Public Health Standards, which dictate the minimum requirements for public health programs and services, outline the role of boards of health in supporting and protecting the mental health, well-being, resiliency, and social connectedness of the health unit population. These standards also identify social inclusion as a key determinant of health.

Boards of health are required to apply multiple strategies in order to address health inequities and promote inclusion, including developing their capacity to apply anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and culturally safe approaches to public health practice, as well as carrying out community engagement and inter-sectoral action strategies.

SOURCE: <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Social-Inclusion-Report.pdf>

Overall, the basis of understanding the issues around community violence is founded in the Roots of a Youth Violence Report as well as the Federal, Provincial and Municipal acknowledgement of the existence of Anti Black Racism as a major contributing factor to a wide array of disadvantages that

Black Canadians face including but not limited to, barriers to employment, education attainment and sense of belonging. The relationship between these barriers and community violence, especially violence associated with economic gain is undeniable and well documented.

As such we would like to put forward the following recommendations for the consideration of the Board of Health:

- The Board of Health request that the Medical Officer of Health works with the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to identify, collect, and review data on the incidence and impacts of violence in communities with a targeted focus on Black populations for appropriate action by Toronto Public Health and other City Divisions in partnership with relevant community stake holders.
- The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health consult with the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and community based stakeholders from Black communities in Toronto to inform its contributions to the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and other relevant initiatives.
- The Board of Health request that the Medical Officer of Health support the infrastructure required for public health systems to build an understanding of this overrepresentation of these incidences of violence among Black populations and the specific risk factors which underlie these trends, so public health systems can employ the surveillance mechanisms to detect these trends, identify the correct risk and protective factors specific to young Black males to develop and evaluate interventions with a view to scaling up the interventions that evidence suggests do work.
- The Board of Health must be clear in its directions to the Medical Officer of Health so it is sure that actions taken in the future, are taken with a lens to ameliorate the conditions which leads to a disproportionate burden of incidences on Black populations. Therefore the Board must issue recommendations that take this racialized disparity into account and specific actions focused on Black populations.
- The Board of Health recommend to the Medical Officer of Health to consider and implement an approach similar to that of the Marshall Plan which was put in place after WWII where Europe and Japan were decimated and a Marshall plan was put in place to finance the reconstruction of those war- torn countries with significant positive effects. It takes an initiative analogous to a Marshall plan for children, youth, families and communities, to address the pathology that they have been suffering through this ever increasing rate of gun violence.
- The Board of Health recommend to the Medical Officer of Health to review and take action on the 10 action areas identified in the Promoting Social Inclusion and Well Being Report that require attention including supporting local community initiatives via sustainable funding and innovative/adaptive evaluation requirements.
- Board of Health recommend to the Medical Officer of Health to convene specific consultations with the Black Community.
- In recognition of the Decade for People of African Descent work closely with the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit to develop a results based framework. This is consistent with the UN Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2019) which has as its theme recognition, justice, and development. The federal government has committed \$25m in budget 2019 to honour the decade
- Board of Health recommend to the Medical Officer of Health that the CABR Toronto For All Action Plan to be embedded in this report and recommendations.

- Board of Health recommend to the Medical Officer of Health to fund sustainable interventions outlined in a results based framework that are evidenced based, culturally safe, and grounded in healing from the ongoing various forms of trauma Blacks experience and that are really at the root cause of the community violence we are here to address today.

We recognize the problem; justice requires that we bring Black communities, leaders and experts in to shape the solutions for change. If, we do not do that, healthy development of our communities and the city in general is impossible.