



HL18.5

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City Councillor | Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

June 28, 2020

Toronto Board of Health

Re: Advancing a Public Health Approach to Community Violence

Dear Board of Health members,

Community violence is a social determinant of health, with physical and mental health impacts for those who are victimized and those who commit acts of violence, as well as friends and family, and whole communities.

As the Medical Officer of Health reported to the Board in 2019, the root causes of community violence include: poverty; racism, racial/ethnic and gender inequities; discriminatory and stigmatizing educational practices such as zero tolerance; counterproductive criminal justice policies including over-incarceration; and a lack of economic opportunity.

It is no coincidence that the root causes of community violence have much in common with two other public health crises that our city is working to overcome today: anti-Black racism and COVID-19. Maps of COVID-19 incidence, neighbourhoods where Black Torontonians live, and community violence will reveal similar, all too familiar patterns.

The Board of Health and City Council endorsed numerous recommendations arising from [Item HL11.1](#), Community Violence in Toronto - A Public Health Approach, this past year, with actions for all levels of government as well as the Medical Officer of Health.

I am writing to recommend that the Board of Health request a status update on this important work to advance a public health approach to community violence.

Recommendations:

1. The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health to report in the fourth quarter of 2020 on advancing a public health approach to community violence in Toronto, including an update on the City Council and Board of Health decisions arising from Item HL11.1, Community Violence in Toronto - A Public Health Approach.

Sincerely,

Joe Cressy
Chair, Toronto Board of Health

Appendix A - City Council and Board of Health Decisions on Item HL11.1, Community Violence in Toronto - A Public Health Approach

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City Council, during its meeting on November 26 and 27, 2019, adopted the following:

1. City Council urge the Federal Government to:
 - a. prohibit the availability, sale, possession, and use of handguns, assault rifles, semi-automatic military assault weapons, and parts that are used to build firearms in Canada; and
 - b. adequately fund its Initiative to Take Action Against Gun and Gang Violence and consult with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Big City Mayors' Caucus to ensure that there is support for community-level prevention and enforcement efforts.
2. City Council urge the Provincial Government to:
 - a. restore funding to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board;
 - b. restore funding to the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan;
 - c. take actions, particularly within the Ministry of Health's Mental Health and Addictions portfolios, to address the interrelated challenges of substance use and mental health issues, including prevention, treatment, and community support programs;
 - d. adopt Bill 129, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Health Protection and Promotion Act in respect of addressing gun violence and its impacts, which will increase access to hospital-based violence interventions and affordable trauma-informed mental health supports to individuals exposed to violence, and amend this Bill to include that trauma-informed mental health supports be located in accessible community settings;
 - e. ban the sale of ammunition in the City of Toronto; and
 - f. focus and strengthen the strict implementation of laws over gun sales and the inspection of gun dealers and shooting ranges.
3. City Council request Statistics Canada to collect representative data on the exposure to community violence at the municipal level through their national surveys, including the Canadian Community Health Survey and the Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth, to enable the analysis of the health and other impacts of community violence.
4. City Council request City Divisions and encourage the Provincial and Federal Governments to use the social determinants of health in applications for projects funded through granting programs/strategies, including the federal National Crime Prevention Strategy.
5. City Council require City Divisions to adjust the "Equity Impact Statements" in their staff reports to reveal a more direct correlation with the "Financial Impact" sections for every recommendation brought before City Council for information and consideration.
6. City Council request the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit to consider the report (October 23, 2019) from the Medical Officer of Health for its programs and services.
7. City Council request all Toronto School Boards to add questions about exposure to community violence in their school climate surveys or to use other research tools to provide baseline data for Toronto Public Health and Social Development, Finance and Administration to support the development of culturally-

sensitive programs that deal with the effects of community violence, including counselling programs for unspoken trauma and community trauma stemming from community violence to be delivered by community and social services organizations.

8. City Council forward this Item to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Big City Mayors' Caucus, the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, the Toronto Police Services Board, all Toronto School Boards, the Toronto Region Board of Trade, Public Health Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Provincial Ministers of the Solicitor General, the Attorney General, Children, Community and Social Services, Education, Health, and Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and the Federal Ministers of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Public Safety Canada and Emergency Preparedness, Health, and Families, Children and Social Development.

The Board of Health, during its meeting on November 12, 2019, also:

1. Requested the Medical Officer of Health to:
 - a. work with the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to identify, collect, and review disaggregated socio-demographic and race-based data on the impacts of community violence for appropriate action by Toronto Public Health and other City Divisions and report to the Board of Health annually;
 - b. work with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, and community agencies and other voluntary organizations to inform the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan by bringing a public health perspective, informed by health equity, health promotion, anti-racism, trauma-informed care, and adverse childhood experiences, and identifying other relevant issues;
 - c. work with the General Manager, Children's Services, and the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, on including a child and youth component in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and engaging children and youth in the development process;
 - d. implement gun violence and health intervention programs and services within the public health mandate that support the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, in partnership with community agencies and voluntary organizations; and
 - e. report on the connections between social inclusion and gun violence and the feasibility of a municipal declaration of "a right to belong", in consultation with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration.