



Thursday, June 4, 2020

RE: Justice for Regis Korchinski-Paquet & Reconsideration of TPS Budget

Dear Mayor John Tory and members of Toronto City Council,

As the Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), representing over 38,000 full-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto - St. George campus, we are writing to you today to ask that you call for a thorough and transparent investigation by the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) into the recent and tragic death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. We also ask that you commit to dismantling and divesting from systems of oppression and anti-Black racism in our community, starting with the Toronto Police Service.

On May 27, 2020, Regis Korchinski-Paquet was killed after Toronto Police officers responded to a call and arrived in the apartment, and subsequently prevented her family from re-entering the apartment. Her death has raised serious concerns regarding the conduct of the Toronto Police, and it speaks to the systemic presence of anti-Black racism within our police force, our institutions, and our communities.

Further, we are concerned by the Toronto Police Service's considerable \$1.076 billion budget, particularly at a time when the City of Toronto is struggling to accommodate an estimated \$2.76 billion budget shortfall.¹ Redirecting these funds to community-oriented support and strategies, and reducing the size and scope of the Toronto Police Service, would better serve and support our community where attempts to reform police forces have failed.² This includes investments in affordable housing, reliable and affordable transit, increased mental health services, social workers, conflict resolution services, and more.

As such, the UTSU Executive Committee calls on Toronto City Council to:

- Advocate for a full, open, and transparent investigation by the SIU into the circumstances surrounding her death, accountability by the SIU to the public with the disclosure of as much information as possible, and ultimately, justice for Regis Korchinski-Paquet.

¹ "2020 Program Summary Toronto Police Service," toronto.ca (City of Toronto, 2020), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/9789-TPS-2020-Public-Book-V1.pdf>; Oliver Moore, "Pandemic Could Push Toronto's Budget Shortfall to Nearly \$2.8-Billion, Mayor Says," The Globe and Mail, April 18, 2020, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-pandemic-could-push-torontos-budget-shortfall-to-nearly-28-billion/>.

² Alex S Vitale, "The Answer to Police Violence Is Not 'Reform'. It's Defunding. Here's Why," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, May 31, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/31/the-answer-to-police-violence-is-not-reform-its-defunding-heres-why>.



- Propose and implement a reduction to the budget of the Toronto Police Service, and redirect these funds to community services, programming, supports, and initiatives, including but not limited to child care subsidies, affordable housing projects, City-funded mental health services, and the Toronto Transit Commission.

The above calls to action are only preliminary, and represent only a fraction of the work that needs to be done to dismantle systems of racism and oppression inherent in our institutions. These initiatives must support Toronto's most vulnerable communities, and should centre the experiences of Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, people of colour, and historically marginalized communities in our city. We encourage Toronto City Council to listen to and learn from the countless organizations in Toronto who are already committed to this work, such as Black Lives Matter - Toronto, the Toronto Police Accountability Coalition, the Black Legal Action Centre, the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, and many more.

We cannot deny that systemic and institutional racism is inherently present within our city, our province, and our country. We must put in the work to dismantle these colonial systems that disproportionately perpetuate violence towards Black lives and Black bodies. In order to live up to its motto "Diversity Our Strength," the City of Toronto must ensure that these diverse communities are safe and supported at all times.

Yours,

The UTSU Executive | executives@utsu.ca | 416-978-4911

CC:

Bhutila Karpoche, Member of Provincial Parliament (Parkdale-High Park)

Jessica Bell, Member of Provincial Parliament (University-Rosedale)

Sylvia Jones, Solicitor-General of Ontario

Toronto Police Service Board