



Centretown Community
Health Centre

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communautaire du Centre-ville

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Coalition for Justice for Abdirahman
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November 1, 2016

Re: Recommendations of The Justice for Abdirahman Coalition

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Centretown Community Health Centre. We are responding to your request that we support the 10 Recommendations the Coalition originally presented at a news conference on August 4, 2016. As a community-governed Health Centre, we share your commitment to work towards an anti-racist city that cares for all people and all communities. Accordingly, all of us at the Centre were saddened and concerned about the circumstances surrounding Mr. Abdi's death during his arrest in July.

I would like to thank you, first of all, for the compassion and support you have shown Mr. Abdi's family following his death as well as your ongoing efforts to let our elected officials know that transparency and accountability in our law enforcement institutions are crucial to ensuring that no other family has to suffer the pain and loss of the Abdi family.

The Board has carefully reviewed your recommendations and support them all in principle. We do not feel, however, that we have the expertise to comment on the issue of equipping police officers and cruisers with cameras. We whole heartedly agree with your overarching recommendation that the City of Ottawa and The Ottawa Police Service need to take meaningful steps to address issues of racism and discrimination within its ranks including: the implementation of an effective mechanism to hold police accountable for systemic discrimination; the collection and reporting of race-based data on police encounters with civilians; and a more transparent and independent civilian oversight and accountability of police. In addition to these measures, we support the recommendation that there must be better training of the police when dealing with individuals with mental health issues.

We also recognize that maintaining trust and confidence between our police and the community is a collective responsibility. We all have a role to play. To that end, the Centre's Executive Director and front-line staff held conversations with the Ottawa Police Service Community Development and Race Relations division staff and relayed some of our client experiences when dealing with police. As well, front-line staff have been directed to collect further community feedback particularly within the LGBT, racialized and street-involved communities. This feedback is intended to be shared with the OPS outreach team that was recently formed as a direct response to the events surrounding the death of Mr. Abdi.

Furthermore, the Community Developer Network of the CHRC Coalition has also met with the OPS Community Development division staff as well as members of the newly-formed OPS outreach team and relayed experiences of police encounters from the communities we serve. The recurrent themes in those conversations were the following: citizen/community trust in police service; mental health and diversity training for police officers, independent oversight and accountability of police service and ultimately, fair and just treatment of all Ottawa citizens at the hands of its police service.

In addition, our Board Advocacy and Communications Action Team has identified the issues of racial discrimination and police accountability as key areas of focus this year. So, you can be assured that we will continue to work with the Coalition, our elected representatives and Police Services to ensure that justice is served and that citizens do not lose faith in the people and institutions that have the responsibility to keep them safe.

Thank you so much for seeking our support on your thoughtful and comprehensive recommendations.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Doolan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Doolan
Board Chair

Cc: Mayor Jim Watson, City of Ottawa
Councillor David Chernushenko, Capital Ward
Councillor Catherine McKenney, Somerset Ward
Charles Bordeleau, Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service
Councillor Eli El-Chantiry, Chair, Police Services Board
Yasir Naqvi, MPP Ottawa Centre