

**Submitted: January 23, 2022**

**Deputation by Beverly Bain and Gary Kinsman for the No Pride in Policing Coalition to the City of Toronto Budget Committee, January 24, 2022.**

**The No Pride in Policing Queer and Trans Coalition opposes any increase in the police budget and at least a 50% Defunding of the Toronto Police**

We are outraged that there is discussion of more funding for the police at the very same TIME that the shelter system in this city has collapsed; the health care system is under severe strain with many needed surgeries being cancelled and ambulances sometimes not being available. And this is also funding for the very same police force (TPS) that engaged in violent clearings of the encampments of unhoused people last summer that created part of this crisis in the shelter system.

The No Pride in Policing Coalition (NPPC), which has mobilized since 2018 to keep an organized police presence out of Pride Parades and festivals, is calling not only for no increase to the Toronto police budget but for TPS to be defunded by at least 50%. Many community organizations are demanding this and for this funding to be redirected to badly needed community agencies and supports.

The Toronto Police budget is now \$1.08 billion and it is the largest single item in Toronto's budget. There were increases in the Toronto police budget every year for a very long-time until last year. The Toronto Police Services Board has approved an increase of 24.8 million (a 2.3% increase) for TPS this year. Areas this funding will cover include expanding 'community policing' in neighborhoods and mental health training for officers.

While 'community policing' sounds gentler it is an extension of the carding, surveillance and policing of communities. It arose as a specific policing strategy in response to Black rebellions against police violence in England, as an attempt to intensify policing of activists and communities. It is not a kinder form of policing. All mental health work must be taken away from the police (all too often they kill people when they do 'wellness checks') and be given to community-based group trained to do this work. No budget increases in these areas are justified and must be opposed. This work must be de-tasks from the police and re-tasks to community-based agencies (See "Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM," Jan. 2022, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vbWhAujfjs0rccqtghgoSGwCrm3lw7lx/view>).

The Toronto police remain a major threat to the lives of Black, Indigenous, South Asian and racialized people, as well as poor and homeless people, sex workers and others in our city. And we know that despite no formal budget increase for TPS last year police funding (including for TPS) has increased with new funds being allocated by the provincial government to extend policing into social services and agencies through Bill 251 and the five year strategy if it part of (\$307,000,000), and the initiative to address "gang violence" (often a code work for war on Black communities) of \$112 million since 2018 with a new addition on Nov. 2021 of \$75.1 million. On this see Jamie Magnusson and Beverly Bain, "January 2022 Discussion Paper: Expanding the Policing and Prison Industrial Complex," (<https://www.noprideonpolicing.ca/nppc/jan-2022-discussion-paper/>)

The police continue to provide us with more arguments for defunding every day. In the past two years the Toronto police were involved with the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet (during a 'wellness check'), and the death in police custody on Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 of Coco, a Black trans woman. There are many other cases of police brutality by the Toronto police. This is part of a long history of police violence against Black people at the hands of Toronto police, including the police shooting of Sophia Cook in 1989; the killing of Andrew Loku in 2015, and earlier of Buddy Evans, Albert Johnson, Lester Donaldson, and Michael Lawson. We need to remember that between 2013 and 2017, the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported that a Black person was nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be involved in a fatal shooting by the Toronto Police. Encounters with the police all too often lead to the deaths of Black, Indigenous and racialized people. Last year we saw the arrests of a number Black activists, along with the violent onslaught against the encampments and their supporters which cost close to two million dollars. This police racism, violence and killings are enmeshed with anti-poor, anti-trans, misogynistic, and heterosexist practices of violence and neglect.

When a serial killer was stalking our communities, and particularly the South Asian gay men's community, our pleas for help were ignored by police and our community blamed by the then Chief of Police as men went missing. Year after year the police left men in our community vulnerable to murder. The police actively discouraged community organizing to try to find the missing men and to organize for community safety. In the 2021 Missing and Mised report into this there is a devastating critique of police practices, and the NPPC, Maggies Toronto Sex Worker's Action Project and Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network) called for taking missing persons investigations away from the police and transferring them to community-based groups who are better placed to locate and find out what happened to people (See: <https://www.nopriderinpolicing.ca/nppc/missing-persons/>). There were also the Marie Curtis Park charges in 2016, and the unsolved murders of sex workers and Trans women such as Aloura Wells, a multiracial trans sex worker and Sumaya Dalmar, a Somali Canadian trans woman.

As mentioned, the Toronto police actively participated in 2020/2021 in destroying the encampments homeless/unhoused people have built for their own safety in the pandemic. It is clear, that the current pandemic affects Black, Indigenous and racialized people at a higher rate, given systematic, institutionalized racism, as many studies in Toronto point out. This has an impact on the increased powers police have been granted as enforcers of regulations under the pandemic which should, we argue, have nothing to do with policing.

We have learned from decades of report after report and recommendation after recommendation for reforming the police that none of these have improved the situation. The police are still lethal and dangerous to Black, Indigenous, and racialized people. These reform efforts have clearly been a major failure, although they had major success for policing in containing movements for social and racial justice. We can also see this in the long history of setting up dialogue committees between members of the queer communities and the police, which the police have used to try to get us to police ourselves and to do surveillance on our movements and communities.

The police must be defunded. Defunding the police is a step towards demilitarizing, disarming, dismantling, and abolishing the police. We begin to see alternatives to policing when we envision where funds from the massive budget of the Toronto police could go in meeting the needs of Black, Indigenous and racialized people and other communities. Imagine spending that money on badly needed community driven initiatives, such as: secure, long-term affordable housing; overdose response and harm reduction; public transit; supports for survivors of gender-based violence; youth programs; community-led anti-violence programs; and non-police, community-based crisis response groups.

If the City will not listen to communities demanding defunding the police by at least 50% we know that people will soon be marching in the streets again in a masked and physically distanced fashion to call not only for defunding the police but also moving towards abolishing the police.

*The No Pride in Policing Coalition (NPPC) is a multi-racial antiracist queer and trans group focused on defunding and abolishing the police. We initiated the Pride Day 2020 Defund and Abolish All Police rally and teach-in of close to 3,000 people held at Nathan Philips Square, June 28, 2020; the 600 person rally for defunding and abolishing the Toronto police held outside Toronto Police HQ on July 16, 2020; and the Pride march to abolish police and prisons of 600 on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2021.*