

28 September 2020

An Open Letter to Presidents, Chairs of Senate, Boards of Trustees and Boards of Governors of ALL Canadian Universities

On behalf of the Black Canadian Studies Association, we are writing to express our position that police and practices of policing do not belong on any university campuses, and to demand that all forms of policing be removed from ALL university campuses across this country.

We write this open letter on behalf of our membership and in response to a motion from our 2019-2020 AGM. Now is the time for police-free schools at ALL levels of education across Canada.

Police forces were established to protect and further settler colonial nation building, particularly to ensure the surveillance and control of Black and Indigenous populations whose very existence is understood to threaten this project. If Canadian universities are serious about “decolonizing” and “ending anti-Black racism” there is simply no place for police presence on our campuses—whether campus, municipal, provincial or federal level forces.

Black and other students, faculty and staff who organize against racial discrimination and colonialism in higher education should not be surveilled and assaulted by police, criminalized, jailed, and/ or deported. We have long known such police violence on university campuses: From the RCMP and SPVM activities and interventions [at Sir George Williams University](#) in the late 1960s; to the RCMP’s targeted surveillance of Black student unions at Guelph, McGill, Sir George Williams, University of Toronto and York University in the 1970s ([Hewitt, 2002](#)); to the ongoing surveillance by CSIS of Muslim students and student associations since the 1990s ([Hewitt, 2002](#); [Hauen, 2018](#)); from the historical and ongoing surveillance by the RCMP and CSIS of students and faculty who research and / or support —or are *suspected of supporting*—Indigenous sovereignty and anticolonial, anticapitalist, and environmentalist movements; to the surveillance and harassment of students of the Black Liberation Collective at Ryerson University and the racial profiling and unjust detainment of Black students by campus police and security forces at [University of British Columbia](#), [University of Ottawa](#), [Carleton University](#), and elsewhere.

ENOUGH!

WE, the BCSA, DEMAND THAT as senior administrators of Canadian universities you IMMEDIATELY Halt any agreements to have RCMP or police monitor international students who are quarantining or enforce public health protocols related to the COVID-19 pandemic on university campuses.

[Doctors for Defunding Police](#) have stated that policing is a public health crisis. They go on to state,

It is clear that the police force, despite increasing yearly budgets, has not made significant impacts in the reduction of crime, and in many instances, has threatened public safety, especially for Black and Indigenous people. After multiple decades of failed attempts at police reform, tangible solutions need to centre the voices of residents in our communities. We can no longer choose to ignore the urgent need to defund the police to advance health equity for Black and Indigenous communities.

Hundreds of academics and lawyers across Canada have written an open letter calling for all jurisdictions to defund the police in order to invest in healthier communities and well-being. Specifically, [they note](#):

Defunding the police is not a panacea. It is also not an invitation to privatize security or extend the scope of surveillance to other institutional bodies. It is one change among many that is needed to bring about a more just and less violent future. For these reasons and more, we call on governing bodies at all levels to take immediate action in support of building strong communities, not strong police forces. We expect that our governments will listen to the evidence provided to them and take the necessary steps now.

We congratulate [Carleton University's department of criminology](#) for ending all student internships with police and prisons, specifically, with Ottawa police, the RCMP, Correctional Service Canada and the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. We recognize this decision as a necessary step given the ongoing “anti-Black and anti-Indigenous sentiments, practices and policies” of these institutions.

We the BCSA echo and extend the call of [hundreds of our colleagues at the University of Toronto](#) and further demand that as senior administrators of Canadian universities that you:

- **HALT** all campus police involvement with students seeking support for concerns related to health and wellness;
- **END** all policies and practices requiring any staff or faculty to call campus, municipal, or any level of police services when they encounter a student in crisis or whom they deem to be “difficult”;
- **BEGIN** a comprehensive process for defunding and abolishing all campus police forces and creating anti-carceral community safety initiatives;
- **BEGIN** a comprehensive process for reallocating funding intended for further training and policy development related to policing, to retaining local counselors and trained personnel to support students in crisis.
 - This training must crucially and without exception include the racial literacy to understand and respond to the unique needs and concerns of Black and Indigenous students, and knowledge of how anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity often structure these students’ experiences both within and beyond academia. This also must include the analysis and experience to address the needs of all Black and Indigenous students, including those who also identify as LGBTQ2S, are disabled, and are living in poverty and/ or precarity.

To be clear: ALL Canadian universities must end ALL partnerships with ALL levels of police services, as well as ALL carceral institutions.

We call on senior university administrators across the country to act on your institutional commitments – particularly to Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities--to decolonize the University, by defunding and removing all campus police from Canadian university campuses.