

# CPEP

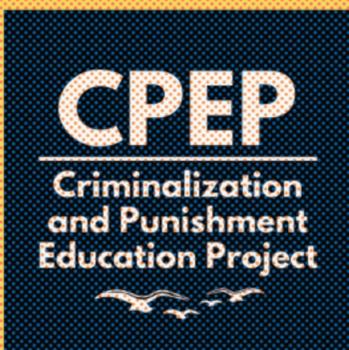
Criminalization  
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Education Project



Dec 2020

# Political Statement

By the *Canvassing to #DefundOPS* Team



Join our #DefundOPS/#WeKeepEachOtherSafe team [www.cp-ep.org](http://www.cp-ep.org) or @CPEPgroup



## Political Statement to Mark the End of the Canvassing to #DefundOPS Campaign

Odàwàng (Ottawa) - On 9 December 2020, the Ottawa City Council voted 19 to 5 in favour of increasing the Ottawa Police Service's (OPS) budget by \$13.2 million amidst ever-growing calls from various communities to #DefundOPS.

Leading up to the vote, we partnered with [@defund.ca](https://defund.ca) and created a [simple tool](#) to help the people of Ottawa voice their concerns with the 2021 budget. It was used to email/call/tweet Ottawa Mayor (@jimwatsonottawa)<sup>1</sup> and City Councillors, requesting they #RejectTheBudget and instead invest the \$13.2 million in Indigenous, Black, and other communities pushed to the margins by the very systems of oppression policing reproduces and upholds.

To encourage people to email their councillors and engage directly with fellow Ottawa residents about their points of view regarding policing, we organized and conducted the Canvassing to #DefundOPS Campaign. We volunteered 120 hours and knocked on more than 600 doors across Ottawa. We were greeted by many residents in wards 7 Bay (@tm\_kavanagh), 11 Beacon Hill-Cyrville (@timtierneyottawa), 15 Kitchissippi (@kitchissippiward), and 18 Alta Vista (@altavistaward18). There were numerous residents, especially BIPOC peoples, who support our efforts to #DefundOPS. We also engaged with undecided constituents about policing. We reasoned with many people who through our dialogue were convinced that safe communities can only be achieved through defunding and abolishing the police while bolstering our communities. We will keep working with these supporters and others to ensure our futures on Algonquin Land are free of the violence of policing.

Out of the councillors we targeted, only Councillor Jeff Leiper (@kitchissippiward) voted against the budget increase. The other councillors who voted against it are: Catherine McKenney (@cmckenney14), Shawn Menard (@capitalward), Rawlson King (@rawlson), and Mathieu Fleury (@matfleury). We ask these councillors to show up for the people behind the #DefundThePolice movement in Ottawa and contribute resources to our fight for futures without the violence of policing.

Although the budget increase was approved, we do not consider our efforts as a loss or as being spent in vain. Due to and during our collective effort, we were able to talk to dozens of

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<sup>1</sup> We are using Instagram handles because this statement started as a caption for a social media post. Social media platforms facilitated many politically progressive and even revolutionary social movements. We are grateful for its usefulness but are weary of its dangers due to capitalism, i.e. surveillance.



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supporters who are keen to hear from us again, we broke bread with each other, we pushed a revolutionary message of abolitionist love throughout the city, and we've created community amongst us, volunteer comrades.

Our wider communities are under constant attacks—we face oppression and state-sanctioned organized violence from policing, prison, social work, the education system, the workplace and other institutions. Although some of us are seeking complete liberation from systems rooted in capitalist imperialist colonial white-supremacist carceral heteropatriarchy, we acknowledge that our communities need to reduce the harms associated with policing in the immediate term.

We urgently need a city where the most affected by racist systems of disempowerment and violence are liberated and where the notion of public safety is not predicated on the oppression of criminalized and otherwise excluded Others. CPEP is dedicated to this goal and to coalescing with the incredible community members and groups who are leading this struggle on Algonquin Anishinaabe Land and beyond. People came together during these traumatizing, yet transformative times to mobilize their resiliencies in order to carve out futures where collectives and individuals can thrive. We are committed to organizing towards de-carceral futures where all communities are safe from state-sanctioned violence and repression.

For us, the #WeKeepEachOtherSafe is not merely a hashtag or a slogan. In our daily lives, we protect each other; we feed each other; we counsel each other; we build each other up; we show up for each other. The City Council showed its true colours by siding with a system of racial supremacy and voting for police expansion and meager social infrastructure increases at their December 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. We, as a group of disenfranchised people and those in solidarity with us, yearn to see the day when we can rely on life promoting services in this city without being forced to plead for help from the same institutions that, from their inception, have been violently abusing our communities and their members.

We recognize, more than anyone, that our communities face numerous challenges accessing healthcare, education, employment, mental health care, and transformative responses to interpersonal harm and conflict. A tremendous amount of work is needed to repair our communities and heal from the damage inflicted upon us. We cannot begin this work in an effective and sustained manner while we are barely surviving the violent attacks of the carceral colonial state whose officials would like us to believe that borders, cops, courts, and prisons are here to protect us. Yet we recognize, more than anyone, that these structures harm rather than protect our communities; they create rather than solve our problems.



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Our community members lose their lives due to policing and the ‘criminal’ injustice system. Anthony Aust would have still been amongst us if not for the war on people who use drugs and the military industrial complex that arms the police. He would have still been at the side of his mother Nhora if not for the police, courts, and prisons that target Indigenous and Black youth *en masse* to confine their bodies, exploit their labour, rob their land, and commit genocide against them. These systems and the people who uphold them are in fact abusers—they throw bombs in our homes, punch our neighbours to death, misgender our kin, and surveil our children in schools along racial lines for the purposes of apprehending them and pushing them through the school-to-prison pipeline and the youth injustice system. While abusing and being violent towards us, these same people try to simultaneously convince us they are the only protection from our problems. In fact, no one should ever be forced to appeal to their abusers for help. We can create the structures that can keep us safe and promote life by ourselves. We simply need colonialism and carcerality to stop sabotaging our collective power. We wish to see the day where we, the oppressed, are seen as humans. But until then, our canvassing efforts are proof that we will mobilize until a liberatory future where we can keep each other safe is secured.

We do so because we yearn to live to see the day when our Trans kin are safe, when our incarcerated comrades and friends are free, when we all have space to heal as communities and as individuals, when we are all free from the figurative and real shackles of modern day slavery and the prison industrial complex, when borders are dismantled and people have the right to stay, leave, and return. We yearn to live in a city where institutions and structures bolster our communities, rather than decimate, disenfranchise, injure, and maim our neighbours, and condemn them to social and physical deaths.

We would like to remind our communities and the readers that we did not only canvass to defund our local police force – we canvassed because we believe that our only way out of the social and natural catastrophes we are facing in the form of racial capitalism, colonialism, and global warming is through the fundamental restructuring of our societies based on decolonial and anti-oppressive thoughts and practices. The only way to our goal is through organizing and mobilizing.

To join our efforts to defund the Ottawa Police Services and become a member of CPEP’s #DefundOPS/#WeKeepEachOtherSafe team, please fill out [this form](#), which can be found @CPEPgroup or at [www.cp-ep.org](http://www.cp-ep.org).



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