

A CALL TO DEFUND POLICE AND REDIRECT FUNDS FOR ALTERNATIVE CALLS TO PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCIES

FACT: “Police are more likely to use lethal force when attending to an emergency call when a person is experiencing psychiatric distress.” (<https://www.ontariondp.ca/end-police-violence>)

FACT: The CBC analysis reveals that more than 70 per cent of victims of police brutality suffer from mental health and substance abuse problems. (newsinteractive.cbc.ca)

FACT: Victims of police brutality in these mental health crises are overwhelmingly over-represented as Black and Indigenous. (newsinteractive.cbc.ca)

FACT: “The Toronto Police Services (TPS) budget is over \$1.1 billion dollars, which is more than public funding allotted to libraries, housing, shelters combined. “ (<https://blacklivesmatter.ca/defund-the-police/>)

We have seen time and time again how armed officers in mental health emergencies are not only inefficient at de-escalating, but tend to cause more harm than good. Instead of serving and protecting, calling on police in mental health emergencies can lead to a death sentence for many. Recently 62 year old Ejaz Choudry was shot dead by Peel police during a schizophrenic episode. His family is still pleading that the officers responsible “receive the same level of justice as the rest of us”. (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ejaz-choudry-1.5622160>)

Redirecting funds from police services can help mitigate issues before they arise, whether that be investing in more mental health resources in marginalized communities, creating more substance abuse addiction centres, and funding recreational and educational programming to name a few.

Taxpayers, why do we continue to fund a racist and inefficient police force to attend to these psychiatric emergencies when the work would be better handled by mental health professionals who are experts in their field? Why do we continue to normalize the brutality this and not hold those in power to the same level of humanity, decency and law that is required of us?