

My name is Kathryn Dennler. I am speaking today on behalf of the Rights of Non Status Women Network, a network of agencies and community members in Toronto that addresses barriers to services and resources faced by non-status women. Our members have expertise, through lived experience as newcomers and non-status women; our work in frontline services, where we have seen firsthand the impact of cuts to social services; and research into the impacts of border enforcement, policing, and Toronto as a so-called sanctuary city.

The Rights of Non Status Women Network has grave concerns about police policies and practices that put many Torontonians at risk, rather than protecting them. These policies and practices persist despite recommendations by numerous reviews that have recommended concrete changes to dismantle anti-Black racism and other forms of discriminatory policing, such as the inquest following the death of Andrew Loku; changes that were not fully implemented. Finally, we are concerned that the current report was written without consulting the Anti-Racism Advisory Panel.

Thus, the Rights of Non Status Women Network demand the following:

1. A permanent end to cooperation and information sharing between Toronto Police Services and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA);
2. Defunding the police - meaning diverting at least 50% of municipal funds from policing to support housing, poverty reduction, mental health and addiction services, and ensuring that City services are accessible to all City residents, regardless of immigration status;
3. Collection of race-based data on stops, questioning and searches; Use of Force Reports; charges; arrests and discrete interactions between an individual and an officer that “determine an outcome for the individual” and annual reports to the public of this data; and
4. Meaningful consultation and engagement with members of affected communities with lived experience of racial discrimination.

Although City Council passed a motion declaring Toronto to be a sanctuary city in 2013, Toronto Police Services remain inaccessible for non-status community members. The police defend their policy to report non-status immigrants to CBSA, and research has documented cases of the police calling CBSA about witnesses and even victims of crimes. Cooperation with CBSA undermines the ability of the police to address crime and safety issues. In particular, it means that women and trans women who experience violence may be too afraid to report abuse and that abusers do not face consequences for their violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased incidents of gender-based violence. However, no provisions have been made to ensure that non-status women and trans women can seek protection by calling the police during this time. In fact, the additional powers that have been granted to police during the COVID-19 pandemic - to check identification and conduct surveillance - amplify the risks to non-status Torontonians. Even though we know the pandemic can only be resolved by ensuring the safety and health of all members of the community, the additional police powers make non-status and racialized Torontonians less safe than ever.

In Canada, victims of police killing, violence and harassment are primarily Black, Indigenous and other racialized people. This violence is systemic and persistent in the face of repeated public outcry against the disproportionate use of force, including deadly force, against racialized people. In this context, the Rights of Non Status Women Network call for defunding the police - not more training, not body cameras, not social workers to accompany police officers - in other words, not toothless reforms that appease people while the same practices are allowed to

continue. We know that the police respond to calls about a wide range of issues, many of which would be better addressed by people with different training, tools, and accountabilities than police officers. It is time to fund those services at higher levels, while defunding the police service.

Now it is more important than ever to make Toronto Police Services an accessible service, by ending its role in immigration enforcement and ending police harassment and violence against racialized communities. It is also a time to defund police to allow for proper investment in mental health and addiction services, poverty reduction, and affordable housing. The City must never underfund essential services in order to make room in the budget for policing.