

# Choosing Real Safety: A Historic Declaration To Divest From Policing And Prisons And Build Safer Communities For All

We can choose to build safe communities!

We, the undersigned, are invested in building safe communities for all. We believe that as a society we are capable of preventing harm and violence differently than the failed punitive approaches governments fund today. And we believe that it's possible to come together to STOP the expansion of policing and imprisonment, as well as move away from a reliance on policing, jails, prisons and immigration detention. We believe that we can invest, instead, in real safety for our communities by addressing the root causes of harm and violence in our society.

We are living through a historic moment of protest against the rampant colonial, racial, gender, sexual and economic injustice in our society. This is guided by a renewed understanding that we can choose another way forward. For some time now, Black, Indigenous, racialized, and gender-oppressed people, migrants, those living with mental health issues and disabilities, people who use criminalized drugs, and people without housing have experienced the harms of policing and incarceration instead of support. We recognize the violent infrastructure of prisons and policing also negatively impacts the land, water, air, and other-than-human beings through environmental degradation, disrupted relations, and capitalist extraction. Our public funding of policing, jails, prisons and immigration detention vastly exceeds the funds allocated to public housing, income assistance, childcare and mental health support. We can choose differently.

We wish to stand on the right side of history. We believe we can build a society that values human and other-than-human life and the land, and we commit to shifting away from using badges, guns and cages to manage inequality. Since early winter, rising COVID-19 rates have again made people held in congregate settings like homeless shelters, psychiatric centres and prisons more acutely vulnerable to outbreaks. We must release as many people that are confined in these settings as possible and start building communities capable of meeting everyone's needs now. This is crucial from an anticolonial perspective, a Black liberation perspective, a racial justice perspective, and a public health perspective: it is vital towards meaningfully addressing anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, especially. Today, we are prepared to commit to building a society that chooses to meet people's needs instead of locking them away, with a three-prong strategy: Defund/Dismantle/Build.

## Defund

STOP investing more public or private money into policing and prison infrastructure  
STOP increasing budgets to hire more police and prison officers  
STOP building new police stations, detachments and headquarters, courthouses, jails, prisons, penitentiaries and immigration detention centres  
COMMIT to dramatically cutting municipal, provincial and federal funding for carceral infrastructures

## Dismantle

REDUCE the use of policing and prisons over time with the goal of ending punitive injustice within a generation  
REMOVE police from all positions within essential social services including but not limited to:

schools, mental health services and responses, family and youth support programming, and community support initiatives

REMOVE arms and other military equipment from police, RCMP, military, border control, and prison officers to diminish their ability to injure, maim and kill human beings

END the removal of Black and Indigenous children from their families into the state foster care system

END labour union affiliations with all police, prison guards, and border guards, recognizing that these positions go against the larger stated goals of protecting worker interests

END the detention and deportation of migrants and the criminalization of migration

#### Build Alternatives

INVEST funds diverted from police and prisons toward building safety for those most impacted by surveillance and policing: Black, Indigenous, unhoused, migrant, people who use [criminalized] drugs, and people living with disabilities. This includes investments in long-term free and affordable housing for all, access to free and healthy food, clean water, and community gardens for all, free public transit, harm-reduction supports for drug users, child care, free post-secondary education, and regularization of migrants/status for all

INVEST in attending to the root causes of harm in our society: gross racial, gender, sexual and economic inequality

INVEST in community-based anti-violence initiatives' transformative justice capacity, and supports like non-carceral mental health care, community-based resources, and public safety approaches

INVEST in Care, Wellness and Healing, including non-coercive mental healthcare, wellness resources, non-coercive drug and alcohol treatment, peer support networks, community support counsellors and mediators, universal childcare, supports for family and kinship care, family support and youth programs that promote learning, safety, and community care,

INVEST in community centres, public libraries, recreational and cultural centres, schools, libraries, and other free public spaces.

ENACT the return of the land to Indigenous peoples (Land Back)

HONOUR existing treaties and Indigenous interpretations of treaties

HONOUR Indigenous sovereignty, including Indigenous governance and non-carceral Indigenous legal orders such as those outlined in the Unearthing Justices Resource Collection of 500+ Indigenous grassroots initiatives for the MMIWG2S+ , neighborhood-based trauma and healing centres

INVEST in land redevelopment for decommissioned police and prisons under the guidance of the Indigenous nations on whose land the buildings sit

CREATE a reparations model for survivors and families of people harmed by police, based on this Chicago model: repair, restoration, acknowledgment, cessation and non-repetition

<https://chicagotorture.org>

Authored by/Collaborators:

Anti-Carceral Group

Abolition Coalition

Anti-Poverty NL

Black Lives Matter- Toronto

Criminalization and Punishment Education Project

East Coast Prison Justice Society

Free Lands Free Peoples

Indigenous Joint/Joy Action Committee

Justice Exchange

Prisoner Correspondence Project  
Saskatchewan-Manitoba-Alberta Abolition Coalition  
Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project  
Wellness Within