



♀ ST. JOHN'S WOMEN'S CENTRE
💡 MARGUERITE'S PLACE
🚪 SAFE HARBOUR OUTREACH PROJECT

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The St. John's Status of Women Council stands with the Black Lives Matter movement in their calls to [defund the police](#)¹, for greater police oversight and accountability, and for the strategic re-allocation of funding to community organizations serving the most marginalized.

We are committed to action in ensuring our organization and its services reflect our anti-racist, anti-oppression, and anti-colonial values. As an organization, we have work to do in putting our values into practice. We commit to:

- The development and implementation of an anti-oppressive framework for our organization. We will consult with our community partners and members on this initiative, to develop a concrete, action-oriented, publicly available plan.
- The leveraging of existing funding to support strategic partnerships and projects with front-line community groups doing anti-racism work.
- The prioritization of diversity in our hiring processes. In line with this, preferences will be given to and applications are encouraged from women of color, Indigenous women, women living with disabilities, women with experience in the sex trade, and 2SLGBTQI women.
- The allocation of training budgets to increase organizational capacity to support women who are marginalized by race and de-center our existing programs from their current foundation in the experiences of predominantly white women.

We stand in solidarity with local groups, like the Anti-Racism Coalition NL, Black Lives Matter NL, and the members of the creative sector led by Eastern Edge, as they fight racism, systemic oppression, and police brutality. Black communities, Indigenous communities, and racialized communities have long known the depth and extent that racism permeates our institutions, society, and the lives of individuals. Further to this, sex working communities face criminalization and institutionalized stigma; sex working people of colour are doubly marginalized, as evidenced by the historical police inaction surrounding the serial killings of sex working women in Vancouver.

¹ "DefundThePolice" <https://blacklivesmatter.com/defundthepolice/>

While significant attention has been placed on the situation in the US, we needn't look [very](#)² [far](#)³ for examples of racism in our own backyard. While the actions of individuals are a symptom, the cause is that racism is institutionalized and woven into the very fabric of our systems. The status quo of those systems is [unsafe for so many](#)⁴. Within our own police force, we have seen instances where police officers have [inflicted violence on women](#)⁵ and engaged in harmful police operations with [sex-working women](#)⁶.

We echo the calls of [Women's Wellness Within, Nova Scotia](#)⁷, a group working with incarcerated women, who know all too well the realities of police sanctioned violence and its impacts on Black communities. They state:

"Women's Wellness Within is joining calls from anti-racist organizations across North America and the world to defund, or at least drastically restrict police funding, and to redirect the funds into our community. We've heard the calls for sensitivity and bias training, trauma-informed approaches, body cameras, dialogue with community members and we've watched other communities struggle and fail, even amidst great efforts to 'reform', at reducing anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racist violence inflicted by law enforcement.

As Professor Alex S. Vitale wrote for the Guardian on May 31, the scope of policing has expanded significantly over the past half-century. Funding and services provided by all levels of government across North America has slowly been siphoned from providing aid and support to the marginalized, racialized and disenfranchised towards an increasingly armed and militarized police

² "Minister resigns from N.L. cabinet after 'hurt' caused by comments that shocked Innu Nation"
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/innu-nation-perry-trimper-reaction-1.5282187>

³ "'My family is ashamed of me': Men apologize for racist remarks aboard Labrador flight"
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/racism-apology-labrador-1.5393719>

⁴ "For Black people calling the police can be dangerous. It's time we had another option"
https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/06/02/for-black-people-calling-the-police-can-be-dangerous-its-time-we-had-another-option.html?fbclid=IwAR1fajT5KOk10x8oGMKVnMPFf0GCgj_q7w4SuYrAbaJW-64abJn44TNuUDY

⁵ "RNC officer Doug Snelgrove likely headed back to trial for sexual assault"
<https://www.saltwire.com/news/local/rnc-officer-doug-snelgrove-likely-headed-back-to-trial-for-sexual-assault-294287/?location=burin-peninsula>

⁶ "Police sex trafficking sting doing more harm than good, N.L. groups say"
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/shop-wants-operation-northern-spotlight-to-end-1.4356772>

⁷ "Women's Wellness Within: Letter to Mayor Mike Savage re police defunding"
https://nsadvocate.org/2020/06/02/womens-wellness-within-letter-to-mayor-mike-savage-re-police-defunding/?fbclid=IwAR2M_qFIS9xmkpciJl7wclYQiaHz4K8yyITrqb7_sc9AVII2j6RAfDxgahI

force, now tasked with responding to folks in mental health distress, in poverty, those experiencing addictions, and gender-based violence.”

We support the call for the **redistribution of police resources to our communities**. Proposed police-based solutions and institutional reforms to stop police violence are [not working](#)⁸. In our experience working with women on the frontlines, those who are marginalized have the best insight into the brokenness of our systems, and often the best suggestions about how to move forward. We must listen and empower them.

Our communities know what is best for them, and how best to care for themselves and maintain their safety, if only these needs were prioritized and adequately funded. We believe a world that is safe for our racialized community, for those involved in sex work, for those in mental health crisis and for all members of our community – without policing, as it currently exists – [is possible](#)⁹.

Until then, we reiterate [our](#)¹⁰, and [First Light's](#)¹¹, call for a **civilian body of police oversight**. This is a tangible outcome that our local government could immediately work on as a preliminary step in response to the decolonization of our systems being called for by groups locally and across the country. We must act in solidarity. We must hold ourselves and each other accountable. We will start to do so by taking seriously our commitments outlined above.

*Thank you to the Anti-Racism Coalition of NL, from whom many of the resources here within were resourced.

⁸ “For those who are interested in research-based solutions to stop police violence, here’s what you need to know - based on the facts and data. A thread.”

<https://twitter.com/samswey/status/1180655701271732224>

⁹ “What a future without police could look like | Desmond Cole | Walrus Talks”

<https://youtu.be/Cf3kXspBbDE>

¹⁰ “Statement of the Board of the SJSOWC/SJWC re: Civilian Body of Police Oversight”

<https://sjwomenscentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Statement-from-SJSOW-Board-of-Directors-Oct-23-2019.pdf>

¹¹ First Light Statement on Recent Media Coverage: Call for Civilian Body of Police Oversight”

<https://firstlightnl.ca/site/uploads/2019/10/Statement-on-Recent-Media-Coverage-2019.10.23.pdf>