

To the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act

Women Transforming Cities is a member of Feminists Deliver – a grassroots collaboration of BC-based Two-Spirit people, non-binary folks, Indigiqueer, trans women, lesbian women, and cis women and girls, and the more than 25 organizations that support them. We centre intersectional feminism, anti-oppression and decolonization in our practice.

Women Transforming Cities is joining Feminists Deliver in responding to the call of the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act to share our views on public safety and policing.

One of the first organized policing models that we know of today was established in the United Kingdom in the early 1800s with the Royal Irish Constabulary, a paramilitary police force the British created to keep Irish people under control. Sir John A. Macdonald, a British man who became the first prime minister of colonial Canada took inspiration and established what is now known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The RCMP were created to enforce colonization, clearing the lands of, and controlling Indigenous peoples. It is horrifying how a white supremacist, Anglo-Saxon-centred institution notorious for enforcing more than 300 years of oppression still continue to persist and garner support despite its track record for injustice. In reality, other perspectives exist. Global Indigenous perspectives on justice including perspectives rooted in Turtle Island as well as in Africa, need to be considered.

Policing in Canada did not exist prior to colonization, and an anti-oppressive society need not rely on an institution created to colonize, divide, dehumanize, and annihilate what they believe are barriers to upholding the current systems. If this government is committed to reconciliation, justice, and redress as often as it speaks of it, we urge the Special Committee to centre the experiences of people most affected.

Law enforcement has demonstrated relentless violence which expands over generations, most especially subjugating Black and Indigenous women, as well as transgendered peoples. Their voices need to be prioritized and is fundamental in eliminating violence.

Indeed, calls for justice have already been laid out multiple times as evident in The Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Calls for Justice, The Truth and Reconciliation: Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Red Women Rising report.

There is significant frustration already in these communities because of failure to act on the recommendations of these reports.

Resources need to be shifted from policing to community safety and decriminalize social issues. Intersectional feminist and community-based organizations that work in solidarity with the people being harmed, need to be funded and supported to be involved in community safety work.

The root causes of social problems need to be urgently addressed, including providing funding and immediate action on affordable housing, childcare, higher welfare rates, and the decriminalization of sex work.

Thank you for considering our input.

Women Transforming Cities International Society