



Our Communities Deserve Safety from Police Violence: A Joint Statement in Solidarity with Survivors of GBV and Communities

August 5, 2026

Content Warning: This statement contains discussion of gender-based violence, sexual misconduct, police violence, and institutional betrayal. We recognize these topics may be difficult or triggering, particularly for survivors and those directly impacted. If you or someone you know needs immediate support, a list of crisis lines and support services is available at www.octevaw-cocvff.ca/get-help.

To Survivors and Communities: We See You, We Stand With You

Recent news reports have exposed a pattern of misconduct and violence within the Ottawa Police Service (OPS). This includes violence against women, abuse of authority, and the misuse of police databases to obtain women's personal information. These reports have brought renewed public attention to longstanding concerns about gender-based violence and accountability within policing institutions.

We are writing this statement to speak directly to the people most impacted: survivors, families, loved ones, and communities.

We want survivors to know:

We believe you. We see you. We recognize the harm caused when those entrusted with authority and public safety use that power to violate privacy, dignity, and trust.

For survivors of gender-based violence, these incidents can reinforce grounded fears that many already carry. Seeking institutional support can carry significant risks. Policing institutions and colonial forms of justice expose survivors to further harm, surveillance, institutional betrayal, or criminalization. Their experiences may not be taken seriously. The misuse of police databases and the abuse of institutional power are not merely internal workplace issues. They are systemic forms of violence. They create real fear, harm, and barriers to safety for survivors and communities.

We recognize that many survivors choose not to engage police because of previous experiences of harm, racism, criminalization, colonial violence, ableism, immigration concerns, or fears of not being believed. Choosing not to involve police is a legitimate and informed decision that most survivors make in pursuit of their own safety. Survivors have long relied on families, friends, grassroots organizations, and community networks, not policing, as their primary sources of safety, support, and accountability.

These choices reflect survivors' knowledge of what they need to feel safe, supported, and believed. Survivors have always been the experts of their own experiences and safety. We see these communities. We stand alongside them. And we remain committed to supporting survivor-led approaches to safety and accountability.

Communities Have Been Naming This Harm for Generations

We honour the anger, exhaustion, grief, and frustration that many community members are feeling. These feelings are not new. For many survivors, advocates, and communities, these reports reflect patterns of violence and abuse that women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people have been naming for generations. Communities have repeatedly challenged policing systems and the harms they experience within them. Rooted in the colonial history of policing, these systems have long operated through surveillance, criminalization, and the control of communities marginalized by systemic inequities. For many survivors and communities, policing institutions have been sites of violence, re-traumatization, and institutional betrayal rather than sources of safety.

We also acknowledge that these harms have never been experienced equally. Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, migrant, refugee, disabled, sex worker, and other communities have long experienced disproportionate surveillance and harassment in policing systems. They have been over-policed while under-protected. They have faced disproportionate criminalization, surveillance, violence, and discrimination. These experiences are shaped by the intersecting impacts of colonialism, racism, poverty, ableism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and other systems of oppression. Together, these forces create additional barriers to safety, justice, and healing.

Any meaningful responses to gender-based violence must recognize these intersecting realities and be shaped by the voices, leadership, and lived and living experiences of those most affected.

In Ottawa, documented incidents of police misconduct involving violence against women have highlighted serious concerns about the treatment of women and gender-diverse people by policing institutions. They have also raised questions about whether existing accountability systems can prevent harm, protect survivors, or hold officers meaningfully accountable.

These concerns are not unique to Ottawa. Across Canada, inquiries, independent reviews, and community advocates have documented persistent failures in policing responses to violence against women, Indigenous women, and communities marginalized by systemic inequities. The [231 Calls for Justice](#) from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered, Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people call for transformative changes to policing and colonial justice systems.

The recent incidents involving OPS officers, including the abuse of police databases, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence, must therefore be understood within this broader history.

Safety Is More Than a Police Response

Safety requires more than a response after violence has occurred. It is created through prevention, support, accountability, and addressing the conditions that allow violence to happen in the first place.

For too long, responses to gender-based violence have prioritized policing and criminalization while the resources that survivors and communities identify as essential to safety remain underfunded. If we are serious about preventing gender-based violence, our public investments must reflect what survivors have long told us creates safety.

The Resources That Create Safety

Communities have repeatedly identified the foundations of safety: safe and affordable housing, income security, accessible healthcare and mental health supports, culturally specific services, survivor-led programs, and community-based prevention. **These are not secondary supports or alternatives to “real” responses. They are the foundations that enable people to leave violence, heal from harm, and build lives with dignity, safety, and choice.**

Yet our public investments continue to tell a different story. Police budgets continue to grow, with OPS receiving over \$414.9 million in 2026 alone. Meanwhile, many organizations providing frontline support, prevention, advocacy, and healing remain underfunded. They are asked to do more with less, often while operating beyond capacity. **We cannot continue to rely on overstretched community services to prevent violence and sustain survivors. Not while we keep investing more heavily in systems that have repeatedly failed them.**

A safer future requires a shift in priorities: divesting from responses rooted primarily in policing and punishment, and reinvesting in survivor-led, community-led solutions that address the root causes of violence.

Safety will not be created by expanding the systems that have caused harm while leaving communities without the resources they need to care for one another. Safety is created when survivors and communities have the resources, relationships, and power to shape the responses that affect their lives.

Accountability Requires Structural Change

Accountability cannot begin and end with institutional promises. Communities have heard commitments before. We have witnessed reviews, recommendations, training, and reforms that have too often failed to address the deeper cultures and structures that allow harm to continue.

True accountability requires confronting the conditions that allow abuses of power to persist. It requires creating systems that prevent harm. These systems must respond meaningfully when harm occurs. And they must prioritize the safety and dignity of those most impacted. This includes independent community-led investigations of police misconduct. It includes meaningful transparency about outcomes, the prompt termination of officers who abuse positions of trust and power, and a shift away from relying on policing as the primary response to gender-based violence. In its place, we need investments in non-carceral community-led supports and prevention.

This moment requires us to confront difficult questions about whose safety is prioritized, whose experiences are believed, and whose voices shape responses to violence.

When people entrusted with authority abuse that power, communities deserve more than reassurance – they deserve accountability that is transparent, meaningful, and rooted in justice.

As a sector, our responsibility is not only to call for accountability. We must also remain present with survivors and communities in moments when systems fail them. We are committed to creating spaces where people can seek support, share their experiences, and imagine responses to harm that are rooted in dignity, care, and collective safety.

Building Collective Safety Through Prevention and Care

We know that ending gender-based violence requires more than responding after harm has occurred. It requires listening to survivors, investing in community-led solutions, and building conditions where people have real choices about where and how they seek support.

We are committed to challenging the systems and structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and institutional harm. We will continue advocating for sustained public investment in prevention, housing, survivor supports, culturally responsive services, and community-led responses that address the conditions that allow violence to occur.

We believe another future is possible, one where safety is rooted in care rather than punishment, where survivors are met with dignity and support, and where communities have the resources and power to prevent violence, respond to harm, and create pathways toward healing and accountability.

In Solidarity with Survivors and Communities

We invite community members who are seeking support to connect with local gender-based violence organizations and resources: <https://cfsottawa.ca/survivordirectory/>

For those looking to contribute to creating safer communities, we invite you to support survivor-led advocacy, participate in community conversations, and join collective efforts to prevent, intervene, and respond to gender-based violence.

The work of ending gender-based violence has always been led by survivors and communities. We stand with those who have experienced harm, those who have lost their lives, those who continue to speak out, and those building a future where safety is not defined by surveillance or punishment, but by care, accountability, and collective responsibility.

We commit to continuing this work alongside survivors, advocates, and communities by challenging the systems and structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and institutional harm. We will advocate for the resources and conditions needed for community-led approaches to safety, healing, and accountability to thrive.

We see the communities who have carried this work for generations. We honour your leadership. And we stand committed to building a future rooted in justice, care, and collective safety.