A New Era for Police Reforms: How Canadian Police Agencies Have Approached to Defunding the Police after the Death of George Floyd

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Abstract

Soon after George Floyd was brutally killed in the United States, Black Lives Matter and its sub-movement defunding the police was quickly adopted by Canada. As defunding the police is a relatively new concept in Canada, and there are many controversies around the meaning of defunding the police, the current research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the movement in an exploratory manner with the intention to provide the public with some valuable insights about the movement. In particular, the current research asks how Canadian police agencies have approached defunding the police after the death of George Floyd. Based on Williams and Eichenthal (2020), the present research operationalized the three most common approaches used to defund the police. Conducting a secondary analysis of government archives and media publications, Canadian police agencies' policies and actions of defunding the police were classified into the three operationalized approaches for further analysis. Three agencies were identified to have approached defunding the police in Canada. Throughout the analysis, the current research was able to identify the weaknesses of the actions taken to defund the police in Canada and the potential problems of movement. Proceeding to the future, policymakers and the people must pay close attention to these potential problems in order to achieve the complete success of defunding the police.

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Dedication

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A New Era for Police Reforms: How Canadian Police Agencies Have Approached to Defunding the Police after the Death of George Floyd

The police, being one of the most frequently-deployed groups of emergency responders, must deliver their services at the best quality to ensure our society's security and justice. If the police ever fail to be just and impartial, the people, the authorizer of the police's power, have the right to stand up and call for changes. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States, in May 2020, a 46-year-old black male named George Floyd was killed on the street upon his arrest after a police officer kneeled on his neck as he gasped his breath (The New York Times, 2021). Three other officers were on the scene but did nothing even Floyd had called for help. The incident has aroused the public's questions about the officers' behaviours and the role of racism in policing. The social movement "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) emerged once again as outrages spread across the country. With police agencies being the primarily targeted institution called to change, defunding the police was brought up again under the BLM agenda to strike for a better quality of police services (Levin, 2020).

Defunding the police in its literal sense is to divest from the police or cut their resources with a more straightforward explanation. However, cutting resources can de done in many different ways and can cause very different results. For instance, cutting some resources and reinvesting them into some other items is a resource reallocation. Regardless of whether to do something with the resources, cutting all the resources might result in disfranchisement or

disbanding of the organization. In the end, these resource reduction movements, in different extent, would still fall under the idea of defunding (Koziarski & Huey, 2021). As a matter of fact, some people would even operationalise "defund" with a mixture of the ideas discussed above (Koziarski & Huey, 2021).

Social movements are essential in a way that the future of our democracy, freedom, justice, and civilization depends on them (Touraine, 2002). In this case, no free and democratic society should claim to be innocent of social responsibility when there is a call for the better (Touraine, 2002). Being a very close neighbour to the United States, the Canadian society has quickly adopted the idea of BLM and its sub-movement defunding the police soon after the Americans have started theirs. With the existing controversy around the concept of "defund", it is within the expectation that the movement will also have a different meaning in Canada. For this reason, the goal of this research is to identify and understand the characteristics of the idea of defunding the police in Canada. In particular, what actions have Canadian police agencies taken to defund the police after the death of George Floyd?

To explore these questions, the current research will look at government reports, documentation, academic articles, and media reports to investigate how Canadian police agencies have approached the movement of defunding the police. Throughout this research, we intend to help the readers to understand the sophisticated meaning of the Canadian police agencies' approaches to the movement of defunding the police, thereby generating awareness

of the policies and the need for changes in the future.

Background

To start with, it is important to acknowledge that the movement of defunding the police does not simply get adopted by Canada for no reason. As it will become more comprehensible later, the idea of defunding the police is about cutting the police power, such as their authority, financial ability, and workforce, so that other services can have extra resources to do their jobs. Such an idea of defunding the police is solidly based on one foundation, that Canadian police agencies have been spending too much money compared to other agencies and social services. Without further understanding of the sophisticated context of the "money matter", the big picture is that almost all municipal police agencies in Canada are being listed as the largest consumer of their city budgets.

A brief report provided by Ho (2020) from CTV News outlines the police spending in eighteen of Canada's largest cities and compares the amount to their cities' overall budget in 2020. Among all eighteen cities, the city of Quebec spent only \$128.3 million out of its overall budget of \$1,422.7 million on its police in 2020, which takes up about 9 percent of the total budget (Ho, 2020). On the other end, the city of Winnipeg spent \$304.1 million of its overall budget of \$840.4 million on its police in 2020, taking up about 36 percent of its total budget (Ho, 2020). These eighteen cities averagely gave about 15% of their total city budget to the police in 2020. Considering hundreds of projects also need to be funded by the city, putting

15% of the total budget just into policing every year is undoubtedly an unequal division of resources.

In Canada, cities like Toronto and Vancouver have put more resources in policing than housing, childcare and community programs combined (Glauser, 2020). Nevertheless, Statistics Canada (2019) indicated that in 2017-2018, calls for services, also known as non-criminal events, were estimated to have taken up 50% to 80% of calls that police agencies across Canada have responded to. With many social problems such as poverty, homelessness, mental health, and racism arising, the spending on Canadian policing is questioned. These questions around the overspending issues in policing and the problems of underfunding in social services have shaped the movement of defunding the police. People have adopted different ideas of defunding the police intending to reduce the power of the police and resolve the problems that have been existing in the country for decades. Calls have been made, and actions need to be taken.

Literature Review

The idea of defunding the police was not invented under the BLM movement after the death of George Floyd (Bakare, 2020). The Camden City Police, which will be discussed more later, used the idea of defunding the police in 2013 to deal with corruption within the agency (Koziarski, 2021). As such, the movement is still very closely related, but not limited to, the idea to strive for the rights of African-Americans. Noticeably, African-Americans' struggles to

survive can be dated back to as early as the American Civil War in seventh-century when they were slaved (Toldson, 2020). These struggles still exist today due to the direct influence of police violence that also comes with mental health issues such as traumatization, stress, and failure to cope (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). Black lives activists like Angela Davis, who has been witnessing the violence against African-Americans for decades, have started to pursue movements such as prison reform, the reconstruction of the bailing system, and defunding the police back in 1960s in the United States (Bakare, 2020). Davis' ideas of reform were largely ignored at the time because contemporary politics were intolerant with such radical concepts (Bakare, 2020). To Davis, the death of George Floyd has catalyzed and changed the acceptability of defunding the police to a new level, in a way that this time he has made people of other ethnicities, including the Caucasian people, understand the need for changes in the system (Bakare, 2020).

The Family of Defunding the Police

Defunding the police can involve different degrees of readjustment of the resources given to an organization, which can carry out some very different outcomes. It is noteworthy that divestment is the one persisting concept in all actions related to defunding the police. These divestments can be in the forms of labour, financial support, authority and power, etc. For the goal of this paper, only a few types of divestments will be discussed as they are more likely to be adopted by society.

Abolishment

One of the most commonly accepted and perhaps misunderstood concepts about defunding the police falls under the category of abolishment. "When we talk about abolition, we do a shorthand; for we're not just talking about abolishing, we're talking about building" (Bourne, 2020, p. 10). In American history, the abolishment of a system or an organization are not uncommon. It can be dated back as early as overthrowing the British colonial government through the Independence War, abolishing the slavery system through the American Civil War, and more recently, the elimination of the punitive approach to crime (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). According to McDowell and Fernandez (2018), there are three possible approaches to the idea of the abolishment of the police: disband, disempower and disarm.

The advocates of disbanding the police emphasize the fact that the police in the United States were started off as slave patrols, and they believe that the police nowadays are still protecting racial capitalism instead of serving the people (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). They suggest that disbanding the police and building a new system to respond to crime is the only way to outroot the discriminative nature of policing (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). Such a concept is not impossible, but it is often criticized to be incredibly unrealistic in large cities because it would have so much to do with the transition and the uncompromising politics (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018; Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020).

There is, nevertheless, a more gradual way to achieve the same goal, which is through

disarming and disempowering the police. As a matter of fact, each year, many Native Americans and African-American men are disproportionately killed by the police with firearms and tasers etc. (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). Disarming the police then, will ideally decrease these visible minorities' likelihood of being killed when encountering the police. Disempowerment, on the other hand, is a long-term project that involves calling for major divestments in policing, attacking the policies that empower the police, and finally rebuilding a community capable of dealing with social issues (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). Although these approaches are more feasible compared to the idea of immediate disbanding of the police, the ultimate goal of these methods are to completely get rid of the old discriminative policing method and system. After that, the question will swift toward: what kind of a new system are we looking forward to?

Reorganization

Theoretically, reorganization of the police is the extra step after the immediate disband of the police in some cases (Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020). The principle of reorganization rejects abolishment and suggests that we still need the police at the end of the day. According to Williams and Eichenthal (2020), the main action involved in reorganizations is often a change in agency policies, jurisdiction, or sometimes both. An iconic example of police reorganization in the United States is the reorganization of Camden City Police (CCP) to Camden County Police Department (CCPD).

Before its reorganization in 2012, the CCP was notorious for its incapability to prevent crime and its officers' misconducts such as evidence planting, fabricated reports and corruption (Andrew, 2020). Soon after the city announced the disbanding of the CCP, Camden County, an independent government of Camden, created its own police, the CCPD, and started serving the city of Camden (Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020). Despite the CCPD's rehiring, with a lower salary, of officers who worked at the CCP, the violent crime rate in Camden has dropped significantly after its reorganization (Andrew, 2020). The key to such an achievement, as a result, is the improvement of trust and the police-community relation. New recruits of CCPD are asked to knock door by door to introduce themselves to the community and acknowledge what they can improve (Andrew, 2020). Police officers also hold street parties and drive-in movies to reinforce the police-community relation (Andrew, 2020). Although it seems like the city of Camden has only "let someone else do the job", it is undeniable that the fundamental change has involved a significant divestment in the CCP budget and a change of jurisdiction to CCPD. Such a divestment has urged to create of a new police agency to improve society, which is in essence, the core value of defunding the police.

There is no one reorganization model suitable for all agencies. Another option for police reorganization is creating public safety agencies or hiring public safety officers. Cities such as Cleveland in Ohio, Providence in Rhode Island, and Sunnyvale in California have adopted this approach to reform their police department (Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020). The creation of

public safety agency puts different types of emergency responders such as the police, fire department and EMS together working as one (Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020). Some police agencies would only distribute a part of their workforce into the public safety department, while some would merge their entire agencies into the department and completely eliminate the police title. In other words, at heart, this type of police reorganization is to make the police work with other authorities under a new appellation. Another common use of this approach is to address the relationship between mental health issues and "crimes". A study looking into the implementation of Street Triage in the United Kingdom - a unit that functions under the collaboration between the police and mental health workers – indicated that the police often put people with mental health disorders into custody as a safety measure for both society and the "offenders" (Horspool et al., 2016). A reorganization was adopted in this case to reallocate police funding into mental health services. The police have also assigned its officers to collaborate with mental health workers, which basically was a collaboration with external agencies through a divestment in labour (Horspool et al., 2016). However, no evidence has yet shown the effectiveness of such an approach, and this approach may require more financial input in the maintenance of safety and justice (Williams, & Eichenthal, 2020).

In short, reorganization in defunding the police is any police divestments made in workforce, financial support, and jurisdiction that can change the structure of a police agency.

An iconic characteristic of reorganization is the collaboration between the police and other

external agencies. The idea of police reorganization, however, must not be confused with the idea of police reforms. Although the term "reorganization" and "reform" are commonly used interchangeably, it is important to distinguish these two terms to comply with the purpose of this paper. As Williams and Eichenthal (2020) suggested, the idea of police reorganization in defunding the police only takes place in three forms: a reorganization that involves the abolishment of a police department and creation of a new one; the creation of public safety department that involves the collaboration between the police and other external agencies while maintaining the structure of the police; and the creation of public safety department and public safety officers with a complete merge of the police into the department. Apart from the first form of reorganization that requires the abolition of the police, the other two models of police reorganization have a commonality in that they all involve divestments in policing and collaboration with other agencies.

Nevertheless, the actions of reforms often in times target only internal adjustments and they rarely involve divestment. For stance, after one of its officers' killing of an African-American male because of a missing front license plate, the University of Cincinnati Police Division (UCPD) reformed in multiple aspects, including the change of leadership, improvement of training and accountability system, and the use of body-worn cameras etc. (Engel et al., 2020). These actions are often called piecemeal reforms, and they have been used over the years whenever the legitimacy of a police department is questioned (M4BL, 2020).

Critics of these piecemeal reforms argued that if these reforms have been effective, we should not be seeing incidents like the death of George Floyd.

Divest and invest

A very similar approach to a reorganization is called divest and invest. According to Williams and Eichenthal (2020), the divest and invest approach focuses more on the development of a community, rather than the major changes in policing, as a path to address the root cause of "crimes". In other words, this approach aims to produce more protective factors against crime by investing more in the community and preventing people from encountering the criminal justice system. For instance, in Chicago, mental health clinics have been closing down and privatized due to the cut in city funding since 2011, while the budget for policing has been remaining high (Eaglin, 2021). This has caused the increased criminalization of mental health problems and jail detainees (Eaglin, 2021). After recognizing this problem, Chicago Police Department (CPD) was ordered to contribute a part of their policing budget to mental health services as way to reduce the arrest of people with mental health problems (Eaglin, 2021). The divest and invest approach is different from a reorganization in that it does not involve the collaboration between the police and other external agencies. The goal of the divest and invest strategy to defunding the police is not to eliminate the police force ultimately, like the abolitionist. Instead, it takes away a part of the police resources and puts it into some community developments to resolve issues that the police are

not supposed to be dealing with.

The American Concept of Defunding the Police

The call to defund the police in the United States under the BLM agenda after the death of George Floyd in 2020 does not only look at police brutality but also how African-Americans in general have always been living with great disadvantages within the American society. Over these years, African-Americans are ongoingly subjected to police killings and systemic racism. These victims include Tamir Rice (age 12), Michael Brown (age 18), Stephon Clark (age 22), Eric Garner (age 43) and Walter Scott (age 50) etc. (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019). Looking back at these tragedies after George Floyd was brutally kneeled to death, it becomes evident that those police reforms made over these years have not been very effective. As Angela Davis said, George Floyd has made a wake-up call for many Americans, particularly raising the argument that police reforms or other alternatives should be made more effective in our future (Bakare, 2020).

As a matter of fact, how BLM after the death of George Floyd is different from other BLM movements is a consistent emphasis on the divestment from policing and investment in the community. For example, Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) (2020) suggested that the safest place in the United States does not centre on policing and that the government should invest more in living wages, health care, education, and freedom from police brutality etc. The official website for BLM demands the government spend less on all levels of policing and

reinvest the African-American communities (BLM, 2020). In particular, it suggests that the government should divest the police in schools and invest in teachers and councillors; stop criminalizing mental health issues and invest in mental health services and restorative justice; and divest military weapons against citizens and invest in community-led harm reduction programs (BLM, 2020). Such a call to divest in multiple aspects, essentially, is to address systemic racism by understanding the root cause of "crime" and bringing African-Americans out of the livelihood disadvantages.

A study investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that African-Americans are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Snowden & Snowden, 2021). One reason is that African-Americans earn about 42% on average less than Caucasians (Gio, 2020). During COVID, African-American families are more likely than Caucasian families to report being unable to pay household expenses, food and rent etc. (Snowden & Snowden, 2021). With 39% of the job that African-Americans hold being risky to exposure to COVID, the African-American communities and families are also more likely to face physical and psychological illnesses (Snowden & Snowden, 2021). With the inadequate system in addressing mental health disorders, people who suffer from mental health disorders are more likely to have contact with the justice system. Note that this is not a new phenomenon to African-Americans since the COVID-19 pandemic or even the death of George Floyd. African-American youths were already disproportionately represented in the

juvenile justice system, and around 70% of them were reported to have mental health disorders as of 2011 (Bains, 2014). After years of frustration in calling for quick fixes and piecemeal reforms to the police, the social movement BLM after the death of George Floyd aims to outroot the livelihood struggles that the African-Americans have been suffering over the years (M4BL, 2020).

Although the increase in living wages is important, education is more important in keeping children away from deviant behaviours and providing the avenue to early intervention for mental health issues. Raval et al. (2019) conducted longitudinal research studying the effectiveness of an elementary school-based mental health service, "Turn 2 Us" (T2U), in New York City, on a group of Latino students. These participants were in grade five at the time of the study, and they represented students from families with low income, food insecurity and minority background who also had a higher risk of developing mental health disorders later in their lives (Raval et al., 2019). The research concluded that early intervention programs for elementary students with mental health disorders like T2U are indeed effective in reducing both the internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing (e.g., anti-social behaviours, delinquency) behaviours (Raval et al., 2019). Although Raval et al. (2019) did not discuss the long-term effectiveness of T2U, many other scholars indicate that early interventions are effective in preventing mental health disorders from getting worse in the future (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). Other criminological theories such as Hirschi's social control theory also

suggest that good educations, especially the one with the ability to motivate students to commit to school, can reduce the individuals' future likelihood of committing deviant behaviours (Bell, 2007). Thus, it is evident the demand to invest in communities and schools does have its scientific basis.

Under the circumstance where there is only a slight possibility to change the police's culture and the practice of systemic racism, changing the living quality of the African-American communities might be an excellent alternative to save lives. Barbara Ransby, a famous African-American writer, historian and activist, commented that the goal of BLM is not only to reduce the power of the police and the prison but also to "revitalise our [African-American] communities and our [African-American] schools and make health available to everyone [entire population], and have a sustainable green economy" (Bourne, 2020, p. 17). In other words, although police brutality is still a main issue bothering African-Americans these days, defunding the police after the death of George Floyd goes beyond the recognition of police brutality and gain a bigger picture aiming to address the livelihood problems as a result of systemic racism.

The Canadian Concept of Defunding the Police

Soon after the death of George Floyd and the explosion of the call to defund the police in the United States, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), which represents more than 90% of the police community in Canada, released a statement in regards to the tragic

death of George Floyd and the need to address racism in Canada. In its statement, CACP (2020) acknowledged that the new wave of police reforms would focus on racism against African-Canadian, the Indigenous people, and other ethnic minorities including Asian-Canadian, who were experiencing a great increase of hate crime victimization in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it did not specify how this would be done within the Canadian context and how it would be related to the agenda of BLM (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police [CACP], 2020). Other municipal police agencies also did not specify the way how they would approach addressing racism within their services. For instance, Calgary Police Service (CPS) also released a statement in September 2020 only to acknowledge the existence of structural racism in their services and show their commitments to anti-racism along with the City Council (The City of Calgary, 2020).

BLM (2021), a civilian organization pushing the defunding the police movement, suggests that we should invest more into the appropriate response for mental health issues, the rescue of people who live in poverty, and the funding for the education and the health care system etc. While people are uncertain of what should be done, Maynard (2020) indicates that people also hold different opinions about the ultimate goal of defunding the police that we should aim for. By way of illustration, BLM (2021) declared that although BLM in Canada aims ultimately to create a more secure society for everyone, it will focus on helping African-Canadians and the Indigenous people at the moment as they are the two most disadvantaged

groups targeted by the system. One thing that both the civilians and the police have pictured and aimed for ultimately is a system that benefits everyone, or at least, does not harm anyone. However, the emphasis on African-Canadians and the Indigenous people, whom BLM (2021) and other civilians think needed to be taken care of in the moment was not seen in both CACP and CPS' statements.

With so much confusion and uncertainties around the idea of defunding the police in Canada, defunding the police after the death of George Floyd does not seem to have a clear direction on how changes should be made. In Canada, a democratic and free society, it is the people's responsibility to oversee the government's action and always ensure that our society is going in the right direction. Although the general idea of defunding the police in both Canada and the United States is to spend less on policing and more on the community, the actual approaches to the movement can be very different in considering the differences in culture and social situation in both countries. Moreover, there seems to be a different understanding of the movement between the public and the government. In light of this chaos, this research aims to investigate how the Canadian police agencies have approached defunding the police after the death of George Floyd, thereby providing the public some insights on what needs to be improved and paid attention to as defunding the police moves on to the future.

Methodology

Deciding on the type of research method depends on the overall goal of the research

(Hesse-Biber, 2017). As the current study focuses on exploring how Canadian police agencies have approached defunding the police after the death of George Floyd in 2020, the collection and analysis of the research data are closely related to policy studies. Like many of the research projects reviewed, most of the research data in the current research is retrieved from secondary sources without the necessity to go through ethics approval. Many research projects on defunding the police, including Williams and Eichenthal (2020), Engel et al. (2020), and Horspool et al. (2016), have adopted a case study approach in their data collections, which mainly focused on "what" the police agency has done. Engel et al. (2020) and Horspool et al. (2016) even went further in their data analysis to discuss a wide range of topics, including the rationale and the effectiveness of a particular approach to defunding the police. Nevertheless, such an investigation into the rationale and effectiveness of the policy is only feasible when the policy has been implemented for a long time that it has produced plenty of measurable evidence.

In terms of the research target and sample, a message provided by M4BL (2020) on its website suggested that different places have different needs and understandings of defunding the police, and therefore, people should look at the idea of defunding the police towns-bytowns and cities-by-cites. Most of the research projects we discussed above also have conducted their studies on lower-level police agencies such as the city police CCPD, CPD, and university police UCPD. Taking these research projects as references, the current study will explore its research question on police agencies that operate at municipal and territorial levels.

While police agencies operating at the federal and provincial levels might have difficulties providing detailed information on their regional policies, the concentration on lower-level police agencies will provide more clarity and organization during the data collection, thus making our data analysis more manageable and reliable.

Qualitative Method

When it comes to social science and policy study research, a case study is undoubtedly one of the best research instruments as it allows the researchers to look at an issue from multiple perspectives (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The current research adopts a case study approach to investigate how Canadian police agencies have approached the social movement of defunding the police. According to Hesse-Biber (2017), a case study is often a method to gain an in-depth understanding of a topic and decide what to be studied in the future. With defunding the police just getting started in Canada and our society only has little knowledge on how police agencies are approaching the movement, a case study will help to gather some foundational knowledge on defunding the police in Canada and pave the road for future research projects. As such, the current research does not intend to produce a generalizing result but an overview of how police agencies respond to defunding the police.

Two research patterns on policy case studies were observed throughout our literature review. One pattern that is adopted in the research projects of Raval et al. (2019), Engel et al. (2020), and Horspool et al. (2016), only look at one case in their research. This type of research

tends to be more explanatory and likely to analyze why a certain policy is adopted or how effective the policy is. Another pattern, which is not very common in the literature we have reviewed, can be observed in Williams and Eichenthal (2020), looks at multiple cases in their research. This type of research serves a more exploratory and descriptive purpose, as it focuses more on categorizing the different types of responses to an issue with the provision of real-life examples. For instance, Williams and Eichenthal (2020) defines the general concept of defunding the police and looks at the various actions to defund the police by different police agencies in the United States. Unlike the others, Williams and Eichenthal (2020) did not do an in-depth analysis of why the agency adopted a specific policy.

Considering that not much has been known about defunding the police movement in Canada, the current research pays more attention to "what" than "why" a police agency has adopted a particular method to defund the police. In other words, our case studies will be more similar to the one done by Williams and Eichenthal (2020), in which there is more emphasis on categorization and comparison of the policy. The rationale of this decision is that we think it is essential for us, and other researchers as well, to first have a picture of "what" police agencies have done and are doing in responding to the movement before the researchers can investigate how effective these responses are. Therefore, the current research aims to produce a result to inform the public, government leaders, and academic researchers of the current direction of defunding the police in Canada. In particular, our data collection aims to determine

what has been done, what is being done, and what will be done by the police agencies in each Canadian city to defund the police.

Sampling

For the reason that not many police agencies in Canada have taken action to defund the police, an accidental sampling method, also known as a convenient sampling method, would be suitable for our research because it is a sampling method used by researchers who could only study what was available to them at the moment (Del Balso, & Lewis, 2012). Using an accidental sampling method, without a doubt, would save us time in selecting research targets since only those police agencies who have taken actions to defund the police could be qualified as research targets. However, as discussed above, actions taken by police agencies at different levels can involve different degrees of complexity and difficulties in our fundamental understanding of the meaning of defunding the police. Using an accidental sampling method, in other words, would possibly reduce the clarity of our research findings and bring confusion to our readers.

Ensuring that the current research would fulfill an exploratory and descriptive purpose in the topic of defunding the police, we attempt to make our data collection and analysis as less complicated as possible. In this exploratory research, we are also interested in the popularity of the idea of defunding the police. That is, are there many police agencies in Canada accepting the idea of defunding the police? To comply with these expectations, we have limited our

research targets to police agencies at the municipal and territorial levels only in the ten most populated cities in Canada. The current research will be using the summarised information of 2016 Canadian census about the ten most populated cities in Canada from the Canadian Encyclopedia written by Moreau (2021). According to Del Balso and Lewis (2012), one advantage of using a purposive sampling method is that it saves time and resources. Using a purposive sampling method, the current research should be able to make easier comparisons between each city's responses to defunding the police without considering the provincial and federal factors.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection will be cautiously carried out to reflect the reality as accurately and impartially as possible. The current research asks how Canadian police agencies have approached defunding the police after the death of George Floyd. The answer to our research question comes mostly from secondary resources. Official resources such as the agencies' press conference records, official reports, and government archives will be primarily used for the data collection and analysis, considering their relatively high reliability and accuracy. Academic resources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, will also be regarded as reliable sources in the current research. The less dependable and biased-potential sources such as news reports, magazine articles, and social media content will also be used, only if they are the last resort to obtain a certain piece of information. When the resources from the news and social

media must be used, the information retrieved from one resource would be compared to several other resources that provide the same information for consistency to ensure the information is accurate and reliable.

Once the data is collected, each agency's actions and policies to defund the police will be categorized into abolition, reorganization, or the divest or invest approach. The data analysis will hopefully be able to indicate where defunding the police in Canada is standing and how it is or is not aligning with the public needs.

Limitations

As Hesse-Biber (2017) indicates, one limitation of qualitative research as is that it involves the researcher's subjective interpretation of the researched content, which generates some degree of bias. The categorization of actions of defunding the police in the current research is most vulnerable to bias because an agency might adopt multiple means to defund the police. The attempt to categorize these actions into the three defined models, including abolition, reorganization, or divest and invest, then involves our subjective understanding of the meaning of defunding the police. In other words, the current research can provide an overview of the different actions to defund the police, but not one that can help to understand the complex relationship between each policy.

As the current research does not look into the rationale of each agency's method to defund the police, it can create the public's misunderstandings of the intention of the policies.

Any police reforms, including defunding the police, are often much more complicated than they look (Koziarski & Huey, 2021). It is always important to consider the reasoning behind the policies before we make any judgement about them. To make an objective judgement, one should take everything into considerations, including the barriers that the policymakers have gone through and the general balance of interest etc. As the current research does not look at these factors in a considerate manner, the lack of in-depth analysis can bring our audiences bias about a police agency, which becomes a limitation of the current research.

Result

Among the ten most populated cities in Canada listed in Moreau (2021), which include Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, Edmonton, Mississauga, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Brampton, Hamilton, only three cities have approached the movement of defunding the police after the death of George Floyd and succeeded in doing so. Please note that the result presented in the current research is only limited to actions that Canadian police agencies have taken to defund the police between May 25th, 2020, and February 1st, 2022. Any further actions taken after February 1st, 2022, are not considered in this paper.

Calgary

Less than six months after the death of George Floyd, the Calgary city council voted 9-5 in favour of creating a new Community Safety Investment Framework, which included a proposed reallocation of \$10 million of the CPS's budget in both 2021 and 2022 (Smith, 2020;

Rieger, 2020). The Community Safety Investment Framework aims to bring the city officials, CPS, and community partners together to address the inadequate responding system for Calgarians in crisis due to mental health problems, addictions and other similar issues (The City of Calgary, 2021). About two weeks after the vote, the same council made the decision that would mandate CPS to reallocate \$2 million of its budget in 2021 to implement the Community Safety Investment Framework (Anderson, 2020). Instead of drawing \$10 million from the police budget for the project, the city council has decided to use the city reserve funds to cover the partial cost of the project and give the police the option to reallocate another \$8 million to the process (Anderson, 2020).

The city ended up gathering a total of \$16 million funding to implement the Community Safety Investment Framework (Smith, 2021). CPS has contributed \$2 million on mandate and another optional \$6 million to the project, making its contribution \$8 million in total (Smith, 2021; The City of Calgary, 2021). However, only \$5.2 million of the CPS contribution has been committed to 26 projects, while the other \$2.8 million is unreported of its usage (The City of Calgary, 2021). Using the models that we have operationalized earlier to categorize the CPS's actions to defund the police, CPS has adopted the divest and invest approach. Among the \$5.2 million committed reallocations, about \$3 million has been offered to ten external agencies and partners, including the Alberta Health Services, Calgary Alpha House Society, and Distress Centre etc. (The City of Calgary, 2021). In the meantime, the other \$2.2 million has been

reallocated back to the police for projects including crisis intervention training, the creation of the Anti-Racism Action Committee, and the improvement of Missing Person Integrated Case Management etc. (The City of Calgary, 2021). Since these internal projects do not require the CPS to work with other external agencies but themselves, they can only be considered reforms instead of reorganizations. In other words, only \$3 million out of CPS's \$8 million reallocations has successfully been used to defund the police.

Just as people are about to celebrate that Calgary has successfully defunded the police, an inevitable increase of the police budget was announced. In November 2021, the Calgary city council voted 11-4 in favour of a \$6.1 million boost to the CPS budget in 2022 (Wright, 2021; Kost, 2021). It is also worth mentioning that the CPS budget was \$401 million in 2020 and \$411 million in 2021 (Rieger, 2020; Kost, 2021). Assuming that the \$411 million was the CPS budget in 2021 before the reallocation, \$411 million minus the \$8 million that CPS has contributed makes \$403 million. If the calculation is correct, CPS has actually experienced a \$2 million increase in its budget in 2021. Despite this, CPS indeed contributed part of its budget in 2021 to the defunding the police movement. According to the definition of defunding the police in the current research, defunding the police includes any divestment in policing. Therefore, the CPS's reallocation of its \$8 million budget is indeed qualified to be considered an act of defunding the police.

Ottawa

Compared to CPS, the Ottawa Police Services (OPS) has taken a very different approach to defund the police. In July 2020, Ottawa's former police chief Peter Sloly acknowledged that the police are not the best group of workers to respond to calls involving mental health crises (Kupfer, 2020). Sloly suggested that the police should be integrated with social services and work closely together to provide better responses to mental health calls, which was essentially a call for reorganization (Kupfer, 2020). Sloly was against the idea of taking the money from the police, but he indicated that OPS would only use the approved funding from 2019 to 2020 in 2021, meaning that OPS would not ask for extra funding to implement the reorganization (Jones, 2020). This proposal was drafted fully in the colour of defunding the police as it proposed the idea of a budget freeze and a reorganization. However, this proposal did not stand for a long time.

In November 2020, about three months after the initial proposal was released, Sloly and his executives released a plan regarding the OPS's change of budget in 2021 (Porter, 2020). The project involved a proposed budget increase of \$13.2 million, by which OPS would expand its neighbourhood resource teams, boost the investigative power of the sexual assault, child abuse, and domestic abuse unit, focus more on the wellness of its officers, and recruit thirty new sworn officers (Porter, 2020a). The council quickly approved this new proposal in December, with a 19-5 in favour of the OPS's budget increase in 2021 (Porter, 2020b). Amid the public's

and the councillor of the city of Ottawa, indicated that the police's increased budget could be used to hire not only sworn officers but also social and mental health workers (Porter, 2020b). However, Deans' idea of the police hiring social and mental health workers with its own budget would not fit into the definition of reorganization in the project, mainly because it does not involve a police contribution to the collaboration with external agencies.

A worth-mentioning part of the OPS's approaches to defunding the police is the five 2021 focuses listed in its annual report 2020. These five focuses were essentially a clearer summary of OPS' "budget change" proposal in November 2020. In this annual report, OPS (2020a) outlines its five focuses in 2021, which include:

- 1. The community-led Mental Health Response Strategy;
- 2. The expanded Neighbourhood Resource Team strategy for suburban and rural areas;
- 3. Anti-Indigenous/Anti-Black Racism training for all members; and
- 4. New community coordinator roles in our [Sexual Abuse and Child Abuse/ Partner Assault Unit] SACA/PAU to address issues of Violence Against Women (VAW) and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (MMIGWG); and
- 5. Investments into member wellness (p. 11).

OPS promised that the implementation of these focuses would be community informed, involved, and co-produced, indicating that these focuses would be most likely to be the OPS's

approaches to its reorganization (OPS, 2020a). Nevertheless, there were no further details released regarding the implementation of these focuses, except for the first item – the community-led Mental Health Response Strategy.

The consultation approach is described to be the first step of a three-year communityled Mental Health Response Strategy, which would primarily involve conversations with the mental health communities to plan for a better responding system that would be led by the communities and supported by OPS (OPS, 2020b). Basically, OPS would only be the initiator of the conversation and the supporter of the community when the new system is finalized. A significant task for OPS in the consultation approach would be to build effective partnerships with external mental health agencies and communities on a solid foundation (OPS, 2020b). Although OPS has only taken a small step in defunding the police, it is important to realize that change in policing is a long road. It is unclear whether OPS will achieve a successful reorganization in defunding the police in the future, but it seems that the consultation approach will likely get OPS to a position where it will share part of its resources, such as officers and jurisdictions with the mental health communities. Therefore, the current research has recognized OPS as a police agency that has approached defunding the police as of February 1st, 2022.

Edmonton

Unlike other cities, Edmonton's journey to defunding the police is very long-lasting and

genuine in various ways. Soon after the death of George Floyd in May 2020, the Edmonton city council quickly approved twenty proposed actions for changes in policing, which included a budget reduction of \$11 million for Edmonton Police Service (EPS) over 2021 and 2022 (Cook, 2020a). The plan for the \$11-million budget cut was equally split into two years, meaning that EPS in each 2021 and 2022 would face a budget cut of at least \$5.5 million (Cook, 2020a). As a result, EPS experienced a \$5.5 million budget cut in 2021, making its operating budget drop from the original \$389.3 million to \$383.8 million (The City of Edmonton, 2020). Although EPS' 2021 final budget was still about \$10 million more than its 2020 budget, it did not mean that defunding the police in Edmonton has failed (The City of Edmonton, 2020). Because some police resources were indeed reallocated in 2021, the \$5.5-million budget cut in 2021 must considered to be an act of defunding the police.

In respect of what to do with the reduced budget, the Edmonton city council, at the same time that the budget cut decision was made, ordered to form a Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force to provide recommendations on police reforms and fundings (Cook, 2020a; Cook, 2020b). The task force was a community-led initiative committed to four main areas of change: appropriate responders; professional responses; sustainable trust; and less police demand (The City of Edmonton, 2021). Based on these four focuses, the task force serves the purpose to recognize that the police are not capable of responding to all incidents, and there is a need to increase the diversity and quality in crisis responses by reducing the

involvement of the police. In March 2021, the task force offered the city a report of recommendations regarding what needs to be changed in the system of Edmonton. There were fourteen recommendations in the report, among which four were very outstanding to the idea of defunding the police defined in the current research. On the other hand, other recommendations appear to be traditional reform strategies such as the increase of accountability, transparency, oversight, and diversity training.

First to mention is recommendation one, which suggests a new dispatch model. The idea of this new dispatch model is to have different branches of helping services such as 911(the police, EMS, and fire department), 211 (crisis diversion services), mental health services, and other social services merged into one number (The City of Edmonton, 2021). To make this work even better, dispatch centres will hire mental health workers and people capable of using compassion and empathy to pick up calls (The City of Edmonton, 2021). By doing so, some incidents might be able to be resolved over the phone without a social worker or a police officer dispatched to the scene. Recommendation two comes to expanding the police's collaboration with external agencies (The City of Edmonton, 2021). One thing that we must give credit to EPS for is their enduring engagements in the Police and Crisis Team (PACT), the Heavy Users of Service Program (HUoS), and the Human-Centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership Unit (HELP). These are community collaborations that EPS has been engaging in over the years that can perfectly represent the idea of reorganization in defunding the police. Even though EPS has been doing these programs for years, recommendation two would require EPS to contribute more resources to collaborate with external agencies, making it an act of defunding the police.

Another outstanding recommendation is recommendation thirteen, which calls for the city to invest in those urgent projects such as creating more gender-neutral and barrier-free public washrooms and building more shelters for the Indigenous people (The City of Edmonton, 2021). In essence, recommendation thirteen has provided a very clear direction of what the city should do with the money they have received from the divest and invest approach in defunding the police. It points out which communities are in the most need of investments at the moment. The most critical recommendation comes from recommendation fourteen, which suggests bringing the EPS budget into line with other comparable city police agencies and spending the budget according to the task performance (The City of Edmonton, 2021). Spending the budget according to the task performance means nothing other than spending less on the things that do not work and more on the things that work. Attempting to bring the EPS budget into line with other comparable city police agencies, the task force suggested a budget freeze (The City of Edmonton, 2021).

Within a month after the task force submitted its fourteen recommendations to the city in March 2021, the city council voted 8-5 in favour of having all of these recommendations implemented upon reviews and strategic planning (Dyer, 2021). In December 2021, the city

council voted 8-5 again in favour of defunding EPS's budget by \$10.9 million in 2022, making its budget drop from the proposed \$395.7 million to \$384.8 million (Riebe, 2021; The City of Edmonton, 2020). Comparing it with EPS' budget in 2021, which was \$383.8 million, EPS has received an extra \$1 million in 2022 from the city. However, this extra \$1 million is allocated for the EPS' initiatives in the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (Riebe, 2021). Such a budget decrease was made to comply with the initial \$5.5-million budget cut plan created in 2020 and the budget freeze recommendation made by the task force in 2021. Regarding what the city has done to the other thirteen recommendations, the city said a report would be released in the first quarter of 2022 (Dyer, 2021).

In short, Edmonton has taken two approaches to defund its police. First to mention is the fact that Edmonton has been able to financially defund its police for two consecutive years with the divest and invest approach. Although EPS has received a slight increase in budget in 2021 and 2022, the level of the budget increase was insignificant compared to other police agencies in Canada. Edmonton has also taken the reorganization model in defunding the police. It is on its way to having more collaborations between the police and other external agencies to create a better crisis responding system. As such, Edmonton was considered to be another police agency in Canada that has approached defunding the police.

Discussion

There are two noticeable commonalities among the three successful cases of defunding

the police discussed in the current research. Firstly, money matters. Although not all three police agencies have directly given away part of the budget to other services, all three agencies have acted based on "money talks". All police agencies have shown only little if any voluntary interest in budget changes, such as a budget freeze and a budget cut. When agencies were called to defund the police initially, all three agencies were more inclined to use internal reforms than having their budget directly reduced to respond to the movement. The biggest reason why some of these agencies ended up having their budget cut is that the city councils have made the decision. Secondly, all agencies seemed to have the same understanding of the function and the purpose of defunding the police. The three police agencies have simultaneously agreed that defunding the police is meant to create a better response system to mental health calls. This focus on mental health problems has shifted away from the dominant idea of defunding the police in the United States. Based on these observations, the current research is also able to identify some potential problems in defunding the police that might have created loopholes for policymakers to make perfunctory actions in the changing process, which could possibly undermine the purpose of the entire defunding the police movement.

Putting Bandages on A Leaking Pipe

The understanding of defunding the police in Canada have shifted significantly away from the people's expectation of defunding the police when it was first initiated after the death of George Floyd in the United States. Noticeably, the core problem that defunding the police

aims to address is systemic racism, which is an issue that involves the unequal distribution of social, political, economic, cultural, and psychological rewards to social members (Bonilla-Silva, 2021). As demonstrated in the literature review, many African-Americans experience problems from working in hazardous environments with low wages to poverty, mental health problems with limited access to health care, and finally, the criminal justice system (Snowden & Snowden, 2021). As such, systemic racism is a ring of unresolved problems. M4BL (2020) suggests that the government invest more in living wages, health care, education, and housing etc. In other words, if defunding the police is to address systemic racism, it should not be about resolving just one problem. Instead, it should aim to address a wide range of social problems.

As a result, the three police agencies that have taken actions to defund the police in Canada have put much effort into creating a better response system for people in mental health crises. For instance, out of the five OPS' focuses in 2021, OPS has only taken initiatives in the first item, the community-led Mental Health Response Strategy. In fact, among these five focuses, the community-led Mental Health Response Strategy is the only item that can be considered the action of defunding the police within the standard of the current research. This lack of wide scopes and diversity in actions, as we argue, has undermined the original purpose of defunding the police so as to outroot systemic racism. Although the criminalization of mental health problems is a major social issue, it would not be considered a problem in systemic racism without its interaction with other problems in housing, education, and living wages etc. A

system would not be a system if only one unit, station, or institution operates on its own. Similarly, systemic racism is systemic because it requires different types and levels of racism to work together as one. Therefore, because the inadequate response system for people in mental health crises is only one part of systemic racism, and more social issues beyond mental health problems need to be addressed, putting heavy emphasis on mental health problems simply does do much to address systemic racism.

Another issue with such an emphasis on mental health problems in defunding the police is that our system focuses too much on dealing with the problem instead of preventing the problem. Despite the fact that many people are born with mental health problems, studies indicate that early interventions through education and other programs at early ages (i.e., elementary school age) can effectively prevent mental health disorders from getting worse (Raval et al., 2019; Mental Health Foundation, 2019). In other words, why are we putting more resources into dealing with the problem while we know that the problem can effectively be prevented? Therefore, we argue that how Canada approaches mental health problems in defunding the police does not really reduce mental health problems but keeps them alive.

Apart from wide scopes and diversity in actions, approaches to defunding the police in Canada also lack accuracy. Accuracy in the context of defunding the police refers to how much of systemic racism the readjustments of recourses are able to address. Accuracy is also closely related to effectiveness. For example, if a car has a problem with the engine and the owner

As a matter of fact, this issue exists in defunding the police in Canada. Take CPS's \$3-million contribution to external projects as an example, \$44 thousand was spent on matters of human trafficking and another \$33 thousand elder abuse issues (The City of Calgary, 2021). Although it ended up failing to defund the police with an \$8-million overspending to the proposed frozen budget, the Vancouver council had planned to use about \$750 thousand taken from the budget of Vancouver Police Department (VPD) in 2021 on street cleaning and park safety and environment (McElroy, 2020). Looking at these actions and plans, we ask how these reinvestments can actually contribute to addressing systemic racism. The current research does not seek to answer this question. However, as CACP (2020) indicates that Canadian police agencies are only interested in evidence-based actions of change, investigating "what does not work" can be a good direction for future studies on the topic of defunding the police.

To demonstrate further, defunding the police in Canada generally is putting bandages on a leaking pipe. More specifically, if different social problems, including crime, are the leakages of the pipe, systemic racism is a big hole on the pipe as a result of the connection between each small leakage. As such, focusing on mental health problems while ignoring other social issues is like trying to patch a big hole with a small tape. Having a low accuracy means taking the wrong actions, and in this case, it is like putting tapes over non-leaking cracks while ignoring the biggest leakage. Most importantly, dealing with mental health problems instead of

trying to put more resources to prevent mental health problems in this analogy would be emphasizing too much on fixing the leakages instead of thinking about how to turn down the water flow or reinforce the entire pipe so that it can handle the high water pressure. As demonstrated, having wide scopes, addressing the root cause of the problem, and taking accurate actions are the three aspects in which Canada has not met the original expectation of defunding the police as a way to address systemic racism. Without meeting these standards, any actions in defunding the police are as if putting bandages on a severely-leaking pipe, thus not very efficient in addressing systemic racism. Going beyond, are Canadian police agencies moving forward? This will be the question to be answered when future studies decide to investigative the effectiveness of Canada's action to defund the police.

The Narrow Scope and the Loopholes

Taking action and making an impact or good outcomes are two different events. Although the three police agencies, CPS, OPS, and EPS, have taken action to defund the police, their actions might not end up producing effective changes in the end. Thus, to what extent should defunding the police be considered successful? Moreover, how do we measure the effectiveness of defunding the police? The current research neither tries to operationalize the "effectiveness" or "successfulness" of defunding the police nor investigates the effectiveness of the actions taken. Instead, we will leave these areas for future researchers to explore. What the current research does, however, is to go beyond the recognition of the fact that Canadian

police agencies' approaches to defunding the police have many weaknesses and identify the possible problems within defunding the police that could undermine the entire movement. In particular, these problems create loopholes that policymakers can use to make perfunctory actions in the changing process.

Although taking the resources from the police is an inevitable part to defunding the police, the journey of change should never stop as soon as the police's resources are reallocated. In other words, defunding the police should not be purely a matter of resource distribution. The movement's name "defund the police" itself might have created this misconception that the movement is all about taking the resources from police agencies. This misconception may further create loopholes for policymakers to make perfunctory and performative responses to the movement by only taking the actions but not producing the desired outcomes. For example, out of the three defunding the police approaches operationalized in the current research, the divest and invest approach is probably the least genuine method, yet the biggest loophole among all in the movement. Using this loophole, police agencies can throw out part of their budget and keep themselves out of the ongoing changing process by doing the things they have been doing over the years proved not to be effective. Although there might be no meaningful outcomes because the police are remaining the same, and the reallocated resources might have been used for a different matter, it is still considered an act of defunding the police because there are indeed police resources have been reallocated. This loophole can undermine the entire

movement by allowing policymakers to make performative but not effective actions. Defunding the police should not be about the actions taken, but the outcome produced. The police should constantly be part of the effective changing process, and policymakers should fulfill their responsibility to make good use of the resources that have been taken away from the police and produce meaningful changes desired by the public. The focus of defunding the police should be on what the entire system, including the police, needs to achieve instead of what they need to do.

Another possible loophole that policymakers may use in defunding the police is the mindset that "we have done the job and we are good". People who really understand the movement and are always striving for changes would know that defunding the police should not be a one-time event. Defunding the police should be about making enduring and sustainable changes for the future instead of some emergency changes for the moment only. Just because the police have been defunded this year, it does not mean that the movement has ended. And certainly, it does not mean that society would need to wait until the next George Floyd incident to bring back the campaign. Policymakers should approach defunding the police in the same way how the police have started using body-worn cameras years ago and still are using them nowadays. Again, it is about the outcome instead of the process. Police agencies might get resources again the year after they have been defunded and it is fine because inflation happens, and we have to face the fact that the increased need of resources in all government branches is

inevitable every other year. However, we have to ask what the police are doing with these resources and more importantly, if society is moving toward a better direction. If not, the people have an obligation to call for further changes until the goal is reached. In other words, the constant calling for changes is the key to patching the loophole through which the policymakers may approach defunding the police as if it is a one-time movement.

In short, there are two potential problems with defunding the police movement itself that might undermine the entire movement. As indicated, the movement's name "defund the police" is more of a call to action instead of a call for outcomes. This misconception is fairly dangerous to the movement as policymakers may approach to defunding the police only to take resources from the police but not actually to make meaningful changes. The other potential problem with defunding the police is the misconception that it is a one-time event. Policymakers may decide to defund the police this year, but they might also choose to change everything back the following year. Without acknowledging these potential problems, we predict that defunding the police will never be able to produce meaningful outcomes and changes. To resolve these problems, defunding the police must be approached and looked at with a wider scope. In particular, policymakers and the people must realize that there should be no limitations on the types of actions and time in defunding the police as long as the policymakers are working efficiently to produce meaningful changes to society.

Conclusion

To conclude, defunding the police in Canada is still in its toddler stage. Out of the ten most populated cities, only Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton have approached defunding the police as of February 1st, 2022. Despite the fact that the current research could not assess the final successfulness of these agencies' actions to defund the police, it was able to point out some weaknesses of the actions taken and the potential problems for the movement in the future. In particular, defunding the police in Canada currently lacks diversity in actions, the ability to address the root cause of problems, and accuracy. Moving on, policymakers must recognize these weaknesses and make effective changes to future actions. On the other hand, Canada must realize the two potential problems with defunding the police. First, defunding the police is not about the process but the outcome. Moreover, policymakers should approach defunding the police with the intention to create enduring and sustainable changes in the future. Overall speaking, although Canada has taken initiatives to defund the police, success is still far. To reach the destination, policymakers in Canada must be open for new ideas and criticism.

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