

## Markham African Caribbean Canadian Association

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### YRP School and Police Programs Review of Protocol

MACCA has had a long standing relationship with the York Regional Police. We have worked in partnership with the police to improve relations in the Black community for three (3) decades and we believe that this is a continuation of those same efforts. As a Board, MACCA needs to listen to the community and be responsive to evidence, both anecdotal and research-based which indicates that Black youth are racially targeted by police. We cannot turn a blind eye. While we understand that there needs to be extensive training and a process of organizational change within police services as a whole to reverse the culture of anti-Black racism within it, it goes without question that we refuse to have officers targeting and killing our children. We refuse to allow our children to be targeted at school where they are assumed to be safe. High level accountability measures within police service AND within the schools need to be implemented. We are asking for the suspension of the police in schools to ensure that racial injustice at the hands of police is not upheld within the school system. It is the intersection of these two systems which we will address today.

“Black Canadians are over-represented in arrest and incarceration statistics. Researchers have now named racial violence and trauma as being a leading factor affecting the health and well-being of African Canadians. ( Maynard, 2017) We need to ensure our children feel safe at school and that they are not being harassed or mistreated by police in schools. We need to suspend the School Resource Officer program and VIP program pending review to ensure that the program is not being weaponized to exact harm on our children.

The Police and School Boards Protocol Document, explains that **“This protocol is developed with the understanding that cooperative involvement, prevention and intervention will facilitate compliance with the law”** This implies that the goal is to have police assist in the implementation and enforcement of criminal law. Officers of the law are not required to enforce school safety rules. Are school staff not adequately trained or equipped to instill the importance of school policies? There is a history of racialization and racial discrimination and violence targetting the Black Community. How do we ensure that Black students feel safe in an environment where both the education system and the police are working collaboratively against them to exact punitive measures?

### **How might these messages about “compliance” contribute to the systemic criminalization, adultification and pathologizing of Black youth in the school system?**

School Administration call the police in to mediate and investigate issues at school which can be vital to keeping children safe from harm, criminal activity as there are “exigent” situations. However, the practice can be done arbitrarily to disproportionately vilify and victimize black children and youth, and is rarely used to protect Black Youth. Often those same calls are not made when black students are victimized.

We need more specific language to categorize behaviour and reasons for police involvement with respect to the section of the Protocols Document under Discretionary Notification of

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police. Page 8 One of the specified reasons for contacting police is “other instances requiring police involvement”, which is not a reason. This is a loophole which gives school staff permission to call police without due cause. How do we mitigate the risk this places on our Black children?

**Systemic hypervigilance and hyper-surveillance of Black children and youth mean that school staff and administrators are more likely to deem Black children’s behaviour as suspicious and threatening.** The Towards Race Equity report 2017, tells us that 48% of students suspended/expelled from school from 2011-2016 were Black students. Black Students are targeted and punished at a higher rate. (James , 2017) This will have a significant and direct impact on the number of school related arrests and investigations involving Black children. What evidence do we have that assigning an officer to a specific school has proven beneficial for Black youth and has helped to reduce suspensions and expulsions of Black students?

Findings from a 2015 report on racial discrimination of Black youth provides empirical evidence suggesting that because of racial profiling, Black youth are subject to disproportionately more stops for gun, traffic, drugs, suspicious activity and related reasons. (Meng, 2015) These are ambiguous categories which give people the chance to search and question youth without proper explanation.

Black boys in Ontario are admitted to prisons at a rate that is four times higher than their White counterparts (Toronto Star, 2013), and are stopped by police 2.5 times more than White males of the same age. (Toronto Star, 2010) A review of carding practices reports that 27% of all carding incidents are focused on Black Torontonians, three times their representation in the overall Toronto population. We cannot pretend that these trends are isolated outside of the schools system. Schools are not neutral territory. It is the intersection of these systems that is problematic.

In Community consultations used to inform the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, two of the ten most concerning issues for Black youth were trauma from racialized policing and Anti-Black Racism in the criminal justice system. This was informed by youth from York Region. At our Youth Conference in 2018, Minister Coteau and his team consulted with 200+ Black youth present.

The School to prison pipeline report, published in the US. states that 31% of school-related arrests involve Black youth. “Zero-tolerance” policies criminalize minor infractions of school rules, while police in school lead to students being criminalized for behaviour that should be handled inside the school. Students of colour are especially vulnerable to push-out trends and the discriminatory application of discipline.

Theoretically, the zero-tolerance policy as part of the Safe Schools Act was reversed and expunged, however, even the Ontario Human Rights Commission writes in it’s report that

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“zero tolerance is neither a policy nor a program, but a practice.” This practice is said to have had a significant negative impact on racialized students (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Clearly the racial biases are at the root of a disproportionate number of black children being expelled, suspended and charged. Again let’s remove the doubly impacting intersection of education and police and suspend the program.

**We are asking for a disclosure of outcomes data which prove the success of the School resource officer and VIP programs. We also need to see evidence that the police involvement in schools does not disproportionately and negatively affect black youth and children.** For the benefit of the community, we need to remove the school resource officers and VIP programs from schools until we can be certain that they don’t place our children at risk.

I understand that it would seem most reasonable to those vested in this change to continue the program pending review until we have the supporting data. But THAT is precisely what we have been doing forever up until now and we have not fared well under that premise.

We also need a copy of the annual review done in 2019 of this Protocols document and any previous relevant documents or policies which govern procedures with respect to police and schools.

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