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Robyn Maynard
Wilson Hall, New College
40 Willcocks St.
Toronto, ON

To whom it may concern,

My name is Robyn Maynard, I am a Vanier scholar, SHHRC Talent Award winner and PhD candidate at the University of Toronto. I am also an established journalist and an award-winning and bestselling author of the book *Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada from slavery to the present* (Fernwood 2017). It is in this capacity that I am writing to voice my strongest support for the efforts to immediately remove SLO’s from the Vancouver Schools Board.

My extensive research on the policing of Black lives in Canada has made it clear that any meaningful effort to end the extensive anti-Black racism in Canadian society requires—at the very least—a minimization of Black peoples encounters with law enforcement. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has found that Black people are 70% more likely to be shot by police than white residents in Toronto. The relationship between policing and anti-Blackness has been particularly harmful for young people: a 2014 paper published in the *American Psychological Association* uncovered that “Black boys as young as 10 may not be viewed in the same light of childhood innocence as their white peers, but are instead more likely to be mistaken as older, be perceived as guilty and face police violence if accused of a crime.”

The presence of law enforcement in facilities frequented by Black, Indigenous and racialized youth has been well documented as a form of harm. There is already extensive evidence which highlights how damaging SRO programs can be for young people, particularly for racialized and Black students who are already marginalized within North American public schools. Petteruti (2011) has noted that the presence of law enforcement in schools, and other zero tolerance policies, have been “disastrous” for racialized youth. The Justice Policy Institute (2011), has highlighted the sense of fear that SRO’s create in the school system, especially for students from racialized backgrounds. In *Police in the Hallways*, Kathleen Nolan (2011) uncovered that the presence of law enforcement in schools made constructive and in-school solutions more difficult as policing became the de-facto response to issues faced by youth. Gita Madan (2016) has researched this phenomenon extensively, covering an astonishingly broad array of sources, and concluded that: “a framework for school discipline that is rooted in equity and justice would require the complete removal of police officers from school spaces”.

It is unconscionable that after the historic protests of the summer and the renewed societal commitments to *make Black lives Matter*, here in Canada, that we continue to see delays toward this basic necessity. The time to ensure safe schools for *all* is now. In the US, 25 cities have made the forward-thinking choice to cancel contracts
with police departments and removed SRO’s from schools, and more continue to move in this direction. In Canada, cities including Toronto, Hamilton, and Peel have made the historic shift toward prioritizing the safety of Black and racialized students.

I urge those of you with the power to do so to use it toward the broader social good. By immediately ending the presence of SLO’s in schools and diverting this money toward Black, Indigenous and marginalized learners, you are standing on the right side of history and doing your part in the struggle against anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in this country.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information, you may reach me at robyn.maynard@mail.utoronto.ca

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