



VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

REPORT TO THE VANCOUVER POLICE BOARD

REPORT DATE: January 14, 2020
BOARD MEETING DATE: January 23, 2020
BOARD REPORT # 2001C01

Regular

TO: Vancouver Police Board Service and Policy Complaint Review Committee
FROM: Drazen Manojlovic, Director, Planning, Research and Audit Section
SUBJECT: Service or Policy Complaint #2019-13 Regarding the Selection and Training of Officers in the Downtown Eastside

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Vancouver Police Board Service and Policy Complaint Review Committee (“Committee”) concludes its review of the complaint based on the information outlined in the report

SUMMARY:

On July 24, 2019, Pivot Legal Society (“Pivot”) submitted a Service or Policy Complaint about the Vancouver Police Department’s (VPD) selection and training of officers who are assigned to the Downtown Eastside (DTES). As a result, the VPD met with Pivot and provided materials that describe the training provided to VPD members who work in the DTES, and generally discussed the attributes of officers assigned to serve this community.

Following this meeting, the VPD and Pivot has had additional dialogue about the specific training and course materials provided to officers who work in the DTES. Pivot subsequently requested 21 items of follow-up information, much of which is outside of the scope of the complaint and some of which is the property of third parties and requires their consent prior to being disseminated.

The VPD is open to continuing in on-going dialogue with Pivot, and any individuals from the DTES or any other community in Vancouver, in an effort to explore how VPD training or practices can potentially be enhanced or expanded. However, as the two main points in the original complaint have been discussed – the training provided to officers working in the DTES and criteria used to assign officers to the DTES – it is recommended that the Committee concludes its review of the complaint based on the information outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND:

Staff Sergeant Richard Rabinovitch of the Beat Enforcement Team was assigned to work with Pivot and consult with them regarding the two main points raised in the complaint – the training provided to officers working in the DTES and criteria used to assign officers to the DTES. Director Drazen Manojlovic of the VPD's Planning, Research and Audit Section assisted Staff Sergeant Rabinovitch in gathering descriptions of the training provided to officers working in the DTES and in meeting with Pivot.

Staff Sergeant Rabinovitch met with a representative of Pivot on August 19, 2019, in order to establish the degree of involvement that the representative prefers. Since that first meeting date, some meetings had to be re-scheduled due to scheduling conflicts. Nevertheless, the VPD continued to gather material relevant to the discussion of the received complaint.

On November 7, 2019, Staff Sergeant Rabinovitch and Director Manojlovic met with Pivot and provided summaries of numerous training courses and modules that are provided to officers working in the DTES. These training materials included topics that are especially relevant for officers to understand when serving the DTES community – topics including Sex Work and Sex Workers Awareness, Homelessness Awareness, and Indigenous Cultural Competency Training.

Pivot's representative requested time to review the provided materials and to discuss these materials with individuals from the DTES community. On December 4, 2019, Pivot provided written correspondence that requested that the VPD provide additional information and materials on 21 different points. Thirteen of the points were based on the material provided at the November 7th, 2019, meeting. Five of the points are requests for documentation on new topics. The remaining three points relate to conduct and accountability mechanisms.

Many of the follow-up items requested are outside of the scope of the received complaint, which specifically pertained to the training provided to officers working in the DTES and criteria used to assign officers to the DTES.

DISCUSSION:

The selection of VPD officers to serve in the DTES is based on a combination of factors that include: their experience and knowledge as police officers; their life experience including previous employment or volunteerism working with at-risk or marginalized persons that would be beneficial to serving the DTES community; their operational skill sets and training; and, their having demonstrated excellent interpersonal skills. In addition to these factors, consideration is also given to the operational needs of each team, the demographic composition of teams (e.g., gender, ethnicity, language skills, etc.), and the team fit that would result from placing a given officer in a team.

All of these factors are considered when deciding to assign an officer, whether they are an experienced police officer or a recruit, to the DTES. While the VPD is transparent in its use of the above criteria when considering officers to be assigned to the DTES, the discretion to select a specific officer(s) to work in the DTES is an operational decision that is the exclusive purview of the VPD.

With regard to training, VPD recruits receive the most training of any officers in British Columbia. In addition to the training officers receive as recruits at the Justice Institute of British Columbia, the VPD provides several additional weeks of training to recruits, quarterly classroom and applied

training on a multitude of issues, and numerous on-line courses and training modules. This training ranges from, but is not limited to: mandatory requalification or recertification; updates regarding changes to legislation, case law, or policies, and; training on emerging cultural or social issues that are relevant to policing. In brief, officers are trained to communicate and behave professionally with all citizens that they engage with as this is foundational to policing, police-community relations, and public trust of the officers that serve their community.

CONCLUSION:

The VPD is committed to the on-going dialogue with Pivot, and people from the DTES that they represent, that this complaint has fostered. The discussions that are continuing to occur with Pivot have moved on to topics not addressed in the initial complaint and to materials that are not exclusively the property of the VPD. The VPD is open to hearing from the communities and people it serves to learn how its training can be enhanced.

While this dialogue will continue moving forward, answers have been afforded regarding the two main points raised in the original complaint – the training provided to officers working in the DTES and the criteria used to assign officers. As such, it is recommended that the Committee conclude its review of the complaint based on the information outlined in this report.

Author: Dir. Drazen Manojlovic Telephone: 604-717-2682 Date: 2020-01-14

Submitting Executive Member:

DCC Howard Chow Date: January 14, 2020