



Statement from the Vancouver Police Board regarding policing reform

For immediate release: June 22, 2020

Vancouver Police Board Chair Kennedy Stewart issued the following statement regarding policing reform:

As chair of the Vancouver Police Board, I acknowledge my own privilege as well as the existence of systemic racism in all our public and private institutions, including police services. But acknowledgement is not enough without action. The Vancouver Police Board continues to be committed to action to eliminate racism and discrimination in all forms.

The Vancouver Police Board is grateful the Province has agreed to review police services in British Columbia and to reform the *Police Act* 45 years after it first came into force as 95 percent of all power to make meaningful change to policing services rests with the Solicitor General. The Board shares the views of the community that it is time to end the racism that exists in all facets of our society, including the justice system and police services. We must collectively mend what is broken and eliminate discrimination and bias.

The Board reaffirms its whole-hearted support and willingness to co-operate with this review in every way and do our utmost to ensure Vancouver's voice is heard during this provincial review which we hope will include considerations of: police service models; bias-free and anti-racism training; police training and use of force; all governance and oversight bodies; cultural competency training; sex worker enforcement guidelines; street checks; and, community engagement.

In addition to participating in this new provincial review, the Board also acknowledges the need to ensure its own policies do not support systemic racism and discrimination.

The Board is proud of the sworn and civilian members of the Vancouver Police Department who compromise their personal well-being to ensure the safety, health, livability and vibrancy of our community. For many years the Vancouver Police Board has worked with the Vancouver Police Department to deliver leading-edge programs such as extensive Indigenous and cultural competency training to increase awareness of Vancouver's diverse population and eliminate discrimination. Through [Project LINK](#) our Board and Department have joined hands with healthcare partners on a variety of initiatives, with the common goal of achieving improved outcomes for those living with mental illness and addiction.

In January of this year, the Board approved major changes to how street checks are conducted by the Vancouver Police Department which have so far resulted in an 89 percent decrease in street checks. The Board based its policy changes on a comprehensive 18-month external review of street practice, which included consultations with representatives from 36 Vancouver community organizations, advocates and activists working with communities of diversity, and those who access these services. We also committed to an annual review of these policy changes.



Despite this progress, we acknowledge still more needs to be done and commit to undertaking the following actions:

1. Direct the VPD to establish a Black and African Diaspora Advisory Committee;
2. Direct the VPD, in conjunction with the new Black and African Diaspora Advisory Committee, to develop and provide historical awareness and cultural sensitivity training for current and future officers regarding the experiences of Black people in Vancouver and Canada;
3. Commit to anti-bias and cultural sensitivity training for Board members;
4. Work with the Department and the existing Indigenous Advisory Committee to improve training for current and future officers regarding Indigenous Peoples cultural sensitivity;
5. Enhance communication between the Vancouver Police Board, Vancouver City Council, and the Musqueam regarding the provision of policing services in Vancouver; and,
6. Within the next six months, review and assess the efficacy of the new street check policy.

Vancouver Police Board Vice-Chair and Finance Committee Chair Barj Dhahan issued the following statement regarding the policing budget:

The Finance Committee diligently oversees all aspects of the Vancouver Police Budget. While we acknowledge that increased demands for service on the Vancouver Police Department have resulted in increased policing costs in recent years, we also acknowledge the significant impacts Covid-19 has had on the City of Vancouver's own budget, prompting Council to request a 1% 2020 VPD budget reduction.

Although a target reduction is not prudent or viable, we are currently reviewing where costs savings might be found. As outlined in our April 27 letter to Council, the Vancouver Police Board has directed the VPD to maximize potential savings through reduced spending on facilities, equipment, fleet replacement, information technology, uniform replacements, and maintenance. Other areas for reduced expenditure include, but are not limited to: salary savings due to temporary closures at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC), savings due to the reduction of travel and training, and decreases to overtime spend due to a decline in major events and entertainment district callouts, as well as court closures. The Vancouver Police Board remains dedicated to maximizing the size of its 2020 budget savings where possible, in support of the City of Vancouver's ongoing budget mitigation measures.