



## **Statement from Vancouver Police Board regarding the Council's decision on the VPD's 2021 Operating Budget**

*December 9, 2020*

Barj Dhahan, Vice-Chair, Vancouver Police Board:

The Vancouver Police Board (the Board) has serious concerns regarding the decision yesterday by Vancouver City Council to cut the Vancouver Police Department's (VPD) 2021 operating budget.

Council's decision was framed as maintaining the 2020 budget, which is not the case, and actually results in a \$5.7 million shortfall. This decision did not account for any fixed cost obligations in the budget, and this cut means that the VPD will lose an equivalent of 61 officers (through positions not being filled, including the replacement of retiring officers). A shortfall of this magnitude is extremely challenging, in particular during a global pandemic, where the police department is facing unprecedented stress in ensuring public safety in Vancouver.

The Board understands the financial pressures that the City is facing, and the complexity in navigating competing priorities, and we hope for a continued collaborative dialogue. The primary responsibility of the Police Board is to ensure public safety for all of those who live, visit, and work in Vancouver and Council's budget cut makes this difficult to achieve.

The Board recommended budget was developed relative to the needs of the people of Vancouver regarding public safety, with Council priorities in mind. It was necessary to maintain the current staffing and service levels. As a result of this budget cut, VPD staffing levels will decline to a level experienced over a decade ago, at a time when there has been a double-digit increase in population, growing crime severity, and added complexity of investigations. The Board has grave concerns over the resulting impact of this cut, and what it will mean for the people of Vancouver.

The Board, as the independent governing authority of the VPD, and a separate legal entity from the City, will be reviewing what Council's decision means to policing as an essential and core service. At this time, the Board is carefully considering the implications of this cut and addressing possible next steps.

VPD members both on the streets and behind the scenes, compromise their wellbeing every day to protect public safety, and the livability of Vancouver for people and businesses. The Board supports the VPD leadership and its sworn and civilian staff, and appreciates their dedication to serving this City, particularly during these uncertain and challenging times.

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