



Statement from Vancouver Police Board regarding the 2021 budget ask

December 7, 2020

Discussions are occurring locally and globally, around social issues and the role of policing in the community. This has given us an opportunity for a dialogue in our City with the Council, and with our Province. The Vancouver Police Board (Board) is committed to engaging in this essential conversation in a way that is productive, collaborative and meets the needs of the people of Vancouver.

As a Board, we would like to put forward key points that we believe are relevant to the larger conversation and to the upcoming police budget discussion at the City. They are:

- The proposed budget that was unanimously recommended by the Board (2 per cent increase year-over-year) will ensure that the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) can maintain existing staffing levels, and increase funding to support the 11 Community Policing Centers and their volunteers;
- VPD staffing levels have not kept pace with the population increase of Vancouver over the past decade. At the same time, the complexity and severity of calls have increased staff workload. The budget currently supported by City staff includes a city-staff imposed 1% reduction of \$3.1m related to vacancy savings to address the City's financial challenges. Any reduction to the VPD budget will see staffing levels return back to pre-2009 levels by delaying the recruitment of 34 hires needed to replace retiring officers. This would result in longer response times and officer burnout, and could mean the scaling back of proactive VPD outreach programs that foster community safety.
- The VPD is under a legal obligation to maintain public safety by ensuring the safety of all people, preventing crime, and apprehending offenders. The VPD is an essential and core service that operates 24/7, and has been unable to cease or curtail its operations during this pandemic. Along with the people of Vancouver, as a Board we are deeply concerned by the increase in hate crimes, homicides, serious assaults, and B&Es to businesses.

The Board recognizes that there are complex social issues and financial pressures which have created competing priorities for the City of Vancouver. We also acknowledge and agree with so many who have put it forward, that mental health, addiction, and homelessness issues need long term and sustainable solutions. A comprehensive plan involving the appropriate stakeholders (all levels of government, health authorities, community organizations, and the judicial justice system) is necessary, in order to support City's most vulnerable people.

This is such an integral part of the fabric of Vancouver as a safe and welcoming world class city. As we look at the best way to address these important issues together, to ensure safety and security for the people of Vancouver, we must be strategic and thoughtful in what we do. It should not be done in haste, even as we need to move quickly in finding long-term solutions.



For over a decade, the Board and the VPD have been highlighting growing social issues and their impact on police services, while developing innovative, collaborative partnerships to reduce harm in the community. The Board is committed to working with the City of Vancouver on its priorities, goals and objectives for policing while fulfilling our mandated role to ensure public safety.

- 30 -

Quick Facts:

- Proposed 2021 VPD budget approved by the Board totals \$322m. The City staff proposal includes a reduction of \$3.1m related to vacancy savings which would delay the replacing of 34 retiring officers.
- Since 2019, Vancouver has experienced an increase in hate crimes, homicides, serious assaults and B&Es to businesses.
- A recent survey has indicated reduced perception of public safety.
[Link: VPD Crime Perception Survey](#)

About the Vancouver Police Board: www.vancouverpoliceboard.ca

Board spokesperson regarding the VPD Budget:

Board member Frank Chong, Finance Committee Chair

Contact:

Stephanie Johanssen, Executive Director
office@vancouverpoliceboard.ca