



Statement from Vancouver Police Board regarding its request for a *Police Act* Section 27(3) Director's review of Council's decision on the VPD's 2021 Operating Budget

March 9, 2021

Barj Dhahan, Vice-Chair, Vancouver Police Board:

The Vancouver Police Board (Board) has unanimously decided to apply for a Director's review under Section 27(3) of the *Police Act*, of Vancouver City Council's (Council) \$5.7 million cut to the Vancouver Police Department's 2021 Operating Budget.

The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to exercise the highest level of 'duty of care' for the safety of the people of Vancouver, the VPD, and its employees. On November 30, 2020, the Board submitted a budget to Council that was developed through careful consideration and analysis. The Board's budget balanced the City's needs with respect to public safety, while taking into account the financial impact from the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to support the City's financial challenges, the Board opted to delay year four of the five-year Board and Council approved staffing plan under the Operational Review by not including in its budget the 20 sworn and 10 civilian positions that were slated to be filled in 2021, in addition to existing 2020 staffing levels.

The subsequent decision by Council, which was framed by Council as maintaining the 2020 budget, is in fact a \$5.7 million cut, as it fails to account for the Board's contractual legal obligations for collective agreement provisions, or inflationary increases. This decision was made without any analysis or risk assessment regarding public safety impacts. The cut was larger than recommended by City staff, exceeding the cuts imposed on other City departments. It appears the VPD is the only municipal police department in British Columbia to have been subject to a budget cut for 2021.

The VPD must mitigate this shortfall through hiring delays. As \$5.7 million is the monetary equivalent of 61 new recruits, the Department will effectively fall 61 officers below current staffing levels as members leave and retire. This will bring staffing levels below those of 2009, resulting in negative impacts to police response, proactive policing initiatives and community based programs, diversity through hiring, and the health and wellbeing of our members.

After extensive review and consideration of areas that will be directly affected by the cut, and information relevant to the current policing climate, the Board has unanimously determined that at minimum the current staffing and service levels must be maintained. Council's budget cut undermines the Board's independent governance role, and will negatively impact public safety, public confidence in policing, and member wellness for years to come.

The Board supports the Vancouver Police Department for the integral part it plays in ensuring the safety, health, livability and vibrancy of our community. The Board and Council must work together to ensure Vancouver preserves its world-recognized degree of safety and livability.

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