



**Statement from the Vancouver Police Board regarding Mayor Kennedy Stewart's recent comments about the Vancouver Police Board (Board) and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD)**

*June 18, 2021*

Faye Wightman, Vice-Chair and spokesperson, Vancouver Police Board:

As the spokesperson speaks on behalf of the entire Board, it is important that the Board takes the time to discuss our response to ensure that due diligence has been given, that the facts are known and discussed, and that there is consensus in the response. Acting as a buffer from political interference, a police board must not conflate disparate topics such as the important discussion around systemic racism in police services, or the work that is being done at the Board and VPD, with the Mayor's opinions regarding his role as Chair and spokesperson of the Vancouver Police Board, and the need to reform the BC *Police Act* .

The Board agrees with Mayor Stewart in that we all want to listen, learn and do better when it comes to addressing systemic racism, diversity, and inclusivity in police services and other institutions, as well as in our community as whole. Like all police services, the VPD is built on a foundation of structural racism and colonization, and the Board and the VPD have a responsibility to ensure that the essential work of dismantling any systems of inequity within our processes remains on the forefront of our priorities.

The Board wholeheartedly supports the current provincial review on *Police Act* reform, and welcomes positive change through this extensive examination of how systemic racism and implicit bias relate to police services, including our own, and how we can evolve and improve. [\(LINK to VPB media release June 22, 2020\)](#)

These are important discussions to have, but differences should never become the story, or a distraction to the crucial work that is being done and must continue to be done in these areas by all levels of government, including municipalities and police boards. There are many positive actions being taken by the Board and the VPD with respect to anti-racism initiatives, ensuring a diverse workforce, ensuring inclusive policies that do not contribute to any biased or discriminatory practices, and providing relevant cultural sensitivity training, that we will be sharing on a more proactive basis in the coming weeks. The Board remains open to community dialogue and input on how to move forward.

**About the Vancouver Police Board:**

[www.vancouverpoliceboard.ca](http://www.vancouverpoliceboard.ca)

**Contact:** Stephanie Johanssen, Executive Director

[office@vancouverpoliceboard.ca](mailto:office@vancouverpoliceboard.ca)