

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORMING THE BC POLICE ACT

On April 28, 2022 the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (the “Committee”) presented the Committee’s [Report](#) titled “Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia” (the “Report”) to the BC Legislative Assembly. The Report outlines 11 recommendations, including transition to a new BC provincial police service that is governed by the new Community Safety and Policing Act.

The Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth issued a [news release](#) on April 28, 2022 stating that the government is determining how to review the Report’s recommendations, and commencing late summer discussions will take place “...with Indigenous partners, community advocacy organizations, health and mental-health groups, police leadership, agencies and police oversight bodies in order to meet the new vision for the Police Act as envisioned by the committee.”

BACKGROUND

The Committee was first appointed on July 8, 2020, to undertake a broad inquiry on policing and public safety in BC. Following the provincial general election in October 2020, a new Committee was appointed to continue this work and submit a report, including any recommendations respecting the results of its review, to the Legislative Assembly by April 28, 2022.

The Committee was appointed to examine, inquire into, and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly that included “a broad inquiry on policing and public safety in BC, including reforms related to: oversight, transparency, governance, structure, service delivery, standards, funding, training and education; examining the role of police with respect to complex social issues; examining the scope of systemic racism within BC’s police agencies; and ensuring consistency of a modernized Police Act with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).” (page 7 of the Report).

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The work of the Committee is outlined on page 13 of the Report and included (1) consultation with various stakeholders such as ministries, police oversight agencies, statutory officers, and various organizations and experts; and (2) additional input through a public consultation and a survey on personal and frontline experiences.



In total, the Committee received submissions and presentations from 411 individuals and organizations, and 1,432 individual responses to the survey.

The Committee identified several key themes and connections across subject areas after having considered the input they received (page 70 of Report). The Committee's discussion included:

1. Building Trust in Public Safety

The Committee highlighted the need for shifting the culture and structure of police services to make it more open, inclusive, and respectful. (page 70 of Report)

2. Consistency of Policing and Public Safety Services

"The Committee recognized the need for consistent policing and public safety services, governance, oversight, and training throughout the province, while ensuring that these services are responsive to the needs of each community served, including rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. The Committee linked ensuring consistency of services to the adoption of minimum staffing levels and quality of service, including having officers who have specialized training in certain subjects, and discussed a standard formula for determining appropriate resource levels." (page 71 of Report)

3. Police Roles and Responsibilities

"[The Committee] discussed the idea of a tiered approach to policing, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, to reduce demand on police officers and enable more proactive policing. The Committee considered enabling other groups such as the Conservation Officer Service, sheriffs or Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement officers to assist with certain police functions, particularly in rural areas." (page 73 of Report)

4. Relationship Building

"[The Committee] discussed ways to increase community consultation and accountability to the community, including using community advisory or engagement committees. The Committee reflected on the importance of police outreach and events that provide opportunities for relationship building." (page 75 of Report)

5. Partnering and Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples

"[T]he need to partner and collaborate with Indigenous leaders and First Nations to improve public safety in Indigenous communities and to challenge the colonial structure of policing." (page 76 of Report)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report outlines 11 recommendations made by the Committee. Page 77 of the Report provides a fulsome explanation of each recommendation. The following is a brief summary of the recommendations.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

1. Implement a new Community Safety and Policing Act to govern the provision of policing and public safety services based on values of decolonization, anti-racism, community, and accountability.
2. Transition to a new BC provincial police service that is governed by the new Community Safety and Policing Act.
3. Ensure all Indigenous communities have direct input into their police service structure and governance, including self-administered services which could provide policing to neighbouring non-Indigenous communities.
4. Create and appropriately fund a continuum of response to mental health, addictions and other complex social issues with a focus on prevention and community-led responses and ensuring appropriate first response.
5. Ensure equitable access to high quality police and public safety services across BC.
6. Create a fair and equitable shared funding model for municipalities.
7. Enhance and standardize initial and ongoing police education and training to reflect key values and competencies in order to shift police culture.
8. Require police services to collect and publicly report disaggregated race-based and other demographic data and conduct comprehensive reviews of and amend policies and procedures to address systemic racism in policing.
9. Establish a single, independent, civilian-led oversight agency responsible for overseeing conduct, complaints, investigations, and disciplinary matters for all police and public safety personnel with powers or authority under the new Community Safety and Policing Act.

The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly:

10. Immediately appoint an all-party parliamentary committee to undertake a broad review of the Mental Health Act with a view to modernizing the Act and ensuring it aligns with the recommendations in this report.
11. Establish an all-party select standing committee on policing and community safety.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any comments or questions about this update, please e-mail RES360@metrovancover.org or call 604-451-6558.

SOURCES

“Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia”, April 28, 2022
[SC-RPA-Report_42-3_2022-04-28.pdf \(leg.bc.ca\)](#)

“Minister’s statement on Police Act report”, April 28, 2022
[Minister's statement on Police Act report | BC Gov News](#)