

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

3. Rejecting the Increase to the 2021 Police Budget

Submitted by: Councillor Swanson

WHEREAS

1. The Director of Police Services, a former RCMP officer, has said that the City of Vancouver has to pay \$5.7M to the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) for their 2021 budget after the City, facing COVID financial pressure, decided to freeze the budget for that year;
2. In July 2020, with a unanimously passed motion (<https://council.vancouver.ca/20200722/documents/pspc20200722min.pdf>) about decriminalizing poverty Council asked the police board to “itemize the work they do that is related to mental health, homelessness, drug use, sex work, and the amount of money spent on it...” and this was never fully done;
3. Instead the Vancouver Police Board produced a fancy report titled “Our Community in Need” that says they spent \$283 on homelessness in 2019, when they clearly spent more;
4. Vancouver City Council has no idea how much the VPD really spends in the above categories;
5. *The Police Act* Section 26 (4.1) (b) requires the Police Board to take into account the priorities of the municipal council;
6. In July 2020, the City told the Vancouver Police Board that “it is this Council’s priority to respond to mental health, sex work, homelessness, and substance use with initiatives led by community, health agencies, social service providers and non-profit societies rather than policing;”
7. City Council is elected by the people to oversee budgets and operate the city but is unable to oversee the police budget because it is controlled by the police board and the province;
8. Other City departments had to face cuts because of COVID;
9. COV’s submission to the province on the Police Services Act (<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/04-30-2021-final-police-act-review-submission.pdf>) states: “Safety is important to all of us, however there are equity denied groups in society that are at greater risk of harm due to the lack of investment and/or insufficient or inequitable systems that fail to address the root causes of crime”;
10. The submission also states: “At the same time, it is also important to recognize and acknowledge the lived experiences of the community

members who experience marginalization, including those who engaged with Council during the public discussion of the motion and with staff during diverse community engagement activities on work such as poverty reduction, sex worker safety, Murdered and Missing Women and Girls Inquiry Calls for Justice review, overdose crisis, and other social development initiatives. These experiences point to room for evolution of approaches with policing's interactions with community members and potential changes to legislative frameworks such as the Police Act, as well as significant gaps in senior government services and supports that increase inequities and marginalization;"

11. The submission also states: "In addition, it is important to recognize that true police reform requires fundamental structural change at all levels of government, long-term capacity and financial investment by the Province in social programs and accountability measures, and a commitment to establish new minimum standards based on the principles of equity, fundamental human rights, and accountability between all levels of government;"
12. The BC Human Rights Commission, in their report, Equity is safer: https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHRC_Nov2021_SCORPA_Equity-is-safer.pdf [bchumanrights.ca] says, "De-tasking the police in key areas would improve community safety and particularly the safety of Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities who are disproportionately impacted by biased policing by investing in evidence-based services that reflect community needs. Improving community safety requires a shift in focus from the police as default responders to other community safety strategies. Key steps include de-tasking police as first responders to mental health crises, substance use crises and homelessness, and reallocating funding towards health-based services and housing supports;"
13. It sets a precedent that the police, the VPD board, and a former RCMP officer are the only authorities on the City's priorities around policing, budget and public safety, with no democratic oversight and no ability to respond to emergencies of national or global proportions. This undermines municipal democracy as well as attempts to ensure that police are more accountable to the communities they serve; and
14. The whole undemocratic process undermines the ability of the elected council to be accountable to the residents who elected them.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council disagrees with the Director of Police Service's decision that the City pay \$5.7M for a retroactive increase to the police budget.
- B. THAT Council request the Mayor write a letter to Minister Farnworth seeking clarification about whether municipalities have any role in overseeing police budgets that they pay for, or whether they are simply a

rubber stamp, and if they are not a rubber stamp, how municipalities can have input into police budgets.

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