



VICTORIA & ESQUIMALT POLICE BOARD

MAYOR BARBARA DESJARDINS, LEAD CO-CHAIR

MAYOR LISA HELPS, DEPUTY CO-CHAIR

January 22, 2019

City of Victoria Council
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Via email

Dear Councillors:

RE: Councils Non-Approval of the 2019 Victoria Police Department (VicPD) Budget

On December 13, 2018 Council passed a series of motions with respect to the 2019 VicPD provisional budget. These motions included:

- *That Council does not approve all the items in the 2019 Police budget.*
- *That Council refers the budget back to the Police Board, requesting that a revised budget be submitted for Council's consideration, with the total requested increase accounting for all items in the budget not to exceed the rate of inflation plus 1% tax increase related to the police budget.*

We understand that the discussion on the second motion suggests that Council wished to include the new Employers Health Tax within in the "accounting for all items" portion of the motion.

As a result of the recent Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board meeting, the Board would like to highlight a number of points in our response to your request to review the budget. As background, the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board is responsible under the *Police Act*, and respecting the Framework Agreement, to determine the police resources needed to provide adequate and effective policing for the City of Victoria and the Township of Esquimalt. The Board takes this responsibility very seriously and has exercised a high degree of oversight in the preparation of the 2019 police budget. To summarize, the Police Board's steps included the following:

- April - May 2018: Received input from both City and Esquimalt CAOs/CFOs
- April – June 2018: VicPD Management prepared budget
- July – September 2018: Board Finance Committee reviewed, revised, and recommended a budget to the Board
- September 2018: Board approved the provisional budget and provided it to both City and Esquimalt CAOs/CFOs
- November 2018: Joint Police Board/Council meeting to discuss the provisional budget
- November 2018 – January 2019: Budget presentations to City and Esquimalt Council

Through this process, the Board approved VicPD's 2019 budget request which included increases to resource levels that are necessary to provide adequate and effective policing service to the communities within its service area.

It is important to note that Councils' motions would result in a reduction of \$1.67 million from VicPD's anticipated budget for 2019, and a reduction in the proposed core budget of \$1.12 million. A reduction of this magnitude would translate into a staffing reduction of up to nine unionized officers and civilian employees and would result in service reductions for our citizens that in our opinion would significantly jeopardize public safety.

The Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board views these proposed reductions as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the communities that VicPD serves. Reducing policing services in two communities that are experiencing significant growth would have negative consequences for both our citizens and VicPD employees and does nothing to help address the various complexities associated with delivering police services in 2019.

While the population of both Victoria and Esquimalt continues to grow, VicPD has not experienced a permanent increase in police officers in over eight years. Meanwhile, our jurisdiction within Victoria continues to be the entertainment, government, business, traffic, and event hub for the entire region. VicPD has taken a conservative approach to requests for additional police officer positions for several years in an effort to respect the wishes of previous Councils to control overall municipal costs. We are now in a position that we must begin adding additional police positions in order to meet demands and to compensate for the lack of growth in previous years. We note that over the past few years, VicPD's budget, as a percentage of the City of Victoria's total operating budget, is in fact on the decline and that rarely has Council allocated any new growth revenue toward policing, preferring instead to allocate police budget increases to taxation.

Beyond the impact on police service delivery, the Police Board is very concerned about the effect these reductions would have on VicPD's officers and staff as they have reported that workload is the single greatest source of stress. All staff, particularly the officers, are already operating at capacity as they try to maintain the level of community policing, visible presence, and call response that our citizens expect. Operational stress injuries are on the rise which impacts the number of deployable officers that we require. The addition of resources is essential to help maintain the health and safety of our remaining officers.


VicPD takes pride in being a proactive, prevention focused and progressive police service. If the financial and staffing needs of the police department are not met, VicPD's focus will shift to the most basic and fundamental service functions at the expense of innovative and preventative approaches. We do not believe this is the direction we should go as a community or as a police service.

We recognize that Victoria and Esquimalt bear the costs of policing the region's downtown core area and that the cost of policing is higher than average as a result. However, the Police Board must concern ourselves with how we can ensure adequate policing in the communities of Victoria and Esquimalt until a more efficient approach is identified. While we work on the balance of cost and policing needs, we encourage local communities and the provincial government to discuss options for a more equitable distribution of valuable policing resources across the region.

It is the opinion of the Board that VicPD's 2019 budget request is what is required to police this jurisdiction. As a result, we are advising Council that our 2019 budget recommendation remains as originally submitted.

We will continue to work with communities, Chief Manak, and the Victoria City Police Union on ways to improve efficiencies. In the meantime, we encourage Council to fund the Victoria Police Department 2019 budget as presented.

Yours truly,



Mayor Barbara Desjardins
Lead Co-Chair



Mayor Lisa Helps
Deputy Co-Chair