



OFFICE OF THE
POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSIONER

British Columbia, Canada

MEDIA RELEASE

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Annual Report outlines work to address police misconduct in British Columbia

Victoria – The Annual Report of the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, tabled with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly this week, provides an overview of misconduct involving municipal police officers in B.C.

Investigations of police officers for misconduct are highlighted with penalties ranging from verbal warnings to suspension without pay and demotion. Three police officers were dismissed during the period covered by the report. Other areas noted include “service and policy” matters referred to police boards such as the use of “Street Checks”, the treatment of prisoners and the deployment of police officers for private activities.

The Annual Report, including Appendices, is available at: <https://opcc.bc.ca/reports/annual-report/>

Quotes:

“Incidents of misconduct by municipal police officers in British Columbia remain a small fraction of the many interactions between the police and the public every day. However, police officers are provided with extraordinary powers over citizens and our democratic principles demand that they be accountable for the use of those powers to an impartial body fully independent of governments and the police themselves.”

Clayton Pecknold, Police Complaint Commissioner

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Highlights from the Report:

- From April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, there were 1326 files opened by the OPCC involving 14 police agencies. This marks a 15% increase from the 2017/18 reporting period.
- Of 1326 files opened, 403 related to reported injuries to persons as a result of police actions representing 36% increase from the 2017/18 reporting period. A significant number of injuries related to police dog bites and “empty hand” techniques (use of force without the aid of weapons).
- The Commissioner made 79 orders for investigation into police misconduct representing an increase of 65% from the 2017/18 reporting period. Of these, the majority (68%) were made at the request of a police department.
- Overall complaints from the public referred to as “Register Complaints” saw a 7% decrease from the prior year with the OPCC receiving 487 complaints from the public.
- The rate of complaints from the public about municipal police conduct has remained relatively stable the past five years.

Key Facts:

- The Police Complaint Commissioner is the civilian, Officer of the Legislature overseeing complaints, investigations and discipline involving municipal police in British Columbia operating independently of governments and the police themselves.
- The Police Complaint Commissioner may accept complaints from the public or order investigations into allegations of police misconduct.
- The Police Complaint Commissioner may also refer certain decisions to retired judges for adjudication, call public hearings, refer matters to Crown Counsel for consideration of prosecution and make recommendations to Police Boards or to government regarding policies, practices or systemic issues that may contribute to the misconduct.
- The Police Complaint Commissioner is required under the *Police Act* to table a report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly once a year. The Commissioner may also issue information reports and statistical information throughout the year. For more information see: <https://opcc.bc.ca/reports/statistics/>

- 30 -

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