



OFFICE OF THE  
POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSIONER

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British Columbia, Canada

## NEWS RELEASE

April 4, 2024

### **Proposed *Police Act* Amendments**

**Victoria** – Changes to the legislation governing the complaint and disciplinary process for municipal police were introduced today to the Legislative Assembly.

The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General issued a news release today advising of proposed amendments to the *Police Act*. The OPCC has been actively engaged with government on these changes and several of these amendments relate to recommendations made by the OPCC over the years seeking improvement to the complaints process.

These proposed amendments include:

- **The Commissioner’s ability to self-initiate a systemic investigation.** The OPCC will be able to examine and review systemic concerns about policing that align with our general oversight responsibilities. This new mandate will allow the OPCC to act proactively to investigate systemic issues arising from police complaints or problems identified with the complaints process, provide meaningful recommendations aimed at preventing police misconduct and report on these publicly.
- **The Commissioner’s ability to call a Public Hearing sooner in the process.** Public Hearings are an important tool to enhance accountability and transparency in serious matters where the public interest compels a timely and public airing of the facts and circumstances. These hearings occur before a retired judge, appointed by the OPCC, operating at arm’s length from our office to make decisions about whether police committed misconduct, the discipline to be imposed, and to issue any recommendations for change to policies or practices to prevent the recurrence of misconduct.

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- **The Commissioner’s ability to make binding procedures to improve timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the complaints process.** The OPCC will be able to issue procedural guidelines that police must follow when carrying out their responsibilities in investigating allegations of police misconduct or the disciplinary processes. This includes police duties to report concerns of possible misconduct to the OPCC, duties to cooperate, and the processes that must be followed at discipline proceedings.

If passed by the legislature, the amendments introduced today will be an important step forward in improving the oversight of municipal policing and the complaints process for British Columbians. The OPCC looks forward to continued consultation with the Ministry on broader reforms to the landscape of civilian oversight of police in BC.

### About the OPCC

- The Police Complaint Commissioner is a civilian, independent Officer of the Legislature overseeing complaints, investigations and discipline involving municipal police in British Columbia. For more on the OPCC, visit <https://opcc.bc.ca/about-us/>
- The Police Complaint Commissioner may accept complaints from the public or independently order investigations into allegations of police misconduct.
- The role of the OPCC is a “gatekeeper” or “supervisor” of the municipal police complaints process in BC. The OPCC does not decide complaints on their merits but instead ensures that misconduct on the part of the police is appropriately dealt with in the public interest and in accordance with the *Police Act*.
- The Police Complaint Commissioner may also refer certain matters to retired judges for adjudication, call public hearings, and make recommendations to police boards or to government regarding policies, practices or systemic issues that may contribute to misconduct.

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