

Terms of Reference

Systemic Investigation Regarding Sexualized Conduct in Police Workplaces

1. The Police Complaint Commissioner (“Commissioner”) has determined it is necessary in the public interest to conduct a systemic investigation into how municipal police departments and designated units in British Columbia prevent, investigate, and address workplace related sexualized conduct by police officers.
2. The goals of this systemic investigation are to: (1) examine potential patterns and contributors to sexualized conduct by police officers in workplace or related professional settings, specifically involving other officers, civilian employees, recruits, and potential recruits, and (2) identify meaningful and practical systems-level recommendations to prevent sexualized conduct and improve responses, including processes under Part 11 of the *Police Act*. This contrasts with individual investigations, which review specific incidents of police misconduct and focus on assigning individual officer responsibility.
3. Workplace related sexualized conduct by police officers is a recurring issue in investigations under Part 11 of the *Police Act*. These cases range from inappropriate communications to sexual assault, including situations characterized by significant power imbalances. Some files raise serious concerns regarding predatory behaviours by officers in supervisory roles or positions of authority. Reported incidents are unlikely to reflect true prevalence in light of barriers that can discourage reporting.
4. Available information points to concerns about reprisals for individuals who report sexualized conduct. It also indicates potential problems or gaps respecting supports for affected individuals and pathways for participation in investigations and proceedings. Impacts on affected individuals are serious and include psychological and physical harms, and career-related consequences.
5. Sexualized conduct in the workplace is fundamentally incompatible with the high ethical standards expected of police officers. Such conduct can impact operational effectiveness and perpetuate systemic barriers to gender equality in policing. It also has important implications for public trust. For example, sexualized conduct within police workplaces may reflect attitudes or issues within organizational cultures affecting the way police treat members of the public, specifically survivors of sexual or gender-based violence. While similar issues within the RCMP have been the subject of prior review, including by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, there has been no systemic examination of sexualized conduct in municipal police departments and designated units in British Columbia.

Scope

6. In this systemic investigation, the Commissioner will examine how municipal police departments and designated units prevent, investigate, and address sexualized conduct by police officers in workplace or related professional settings, specifically involving other officers, civilian employees, recruits, and potential recruits.
7. The systemic investigation will include an examination and, where applicable, identification of recommendations in relation to:
 - policies, procedures, and practices for preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to sexualized conduct, including processes under Part 11 of the *Police Act*;
 - access to supports and protections for individuals who experience sexualized conduct;
 - barriers to reporting sexualized conduct;
 - availability of safe, impartial, and effective complaint pathways;
 - perceived or real risks of reprisal for reporting sexualized conduct or other adverse consequences for individuals who report sexualized conduct;
 - training for recruits, members, supervisors, and managers related to sexualized conduct; and
 - impacts of organizational culture on the practical implementation of policies, including any norms or practices that normalize or minimize sexualized conduct, or otherwise create barriers to identifying and addressing it.
8. At the conclusion of the systemic investigation, the Commissioner will prepare a report setting out findings and recommendations. A copy of the report will be made available to the public.
9. “Sexualized conduct” is a broad term, encompassing a range of physical and non-physical behaviours. It includes sexual acts and acts targeting a person’s sex, sexual identity, gender identity or expression. Examples of sexualized conduct include but are not limited to:
 - sexualized comments, jokes, gestures, advances, attention, propositions, or threats;
 - unnecessary physical touching, including sexual assault;
 - insulting or demeaning comments about a person’s gender or sexual identity;

- display or sharing of sexualized material;
- gossip or rumours of a sexual nature;
- implied or explicit offers for job or career related benefits in exchange for sexualized activities; or
- predatory or grooming behaviours by persons in positions of authority.

10. The systemic investigation will include the 15 municipal police departments and designated units in British Columbia, which are:

- Abbotsford Police Department
- Central Saanich Police Service
- Delta Police Department
- Metro Vancouver Transit Police
- Nelson Police Department
- New Westminster Police Department
- Oak Bay Police Department
- Organized Crime Agency of BC
- Port Moody Police Department
- Saanich Police Department
- Stl’atl’imx Tribal Police Service
- Surrey Police Service
- Vancouver Police Department
- Victoria Police Department
- West Vancouver Police Department

What is not in scope?

11. The systemic investigation will **not** make any determination in relation to a specific incident or to specific individual member conduct.

Approach and Methodology

12. During the systemic investigation, the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (“OPCC”) anticipates it will:

- a) Conduct research on workplace related sexualized conduct, including specific challenges and best practices relevant to law enforcement agencies;
- b) Analyse relevant OPCC files to produce aggregated data and identify qualitative patterns;

- c) Review and analyse relevant documents and records from police departments, designated units, police boards, and designated boards, including, for example:
- policies, procedures, and other organizational documents;
 - training curricula and course materials;
 - relevant reports, studies or reviews, where available; and
 - relevant statistical data, where available, including, for example, data respecting recruitment, promotion, and retention;
- d) Meet with and interview personnel responsible for, or involved in, prevention, investigation, or response to sexualized conduct within municipal police departments and designated units, including, for example:
- individuals in supervisory or leadership roles;
 - human resources and Professional Standards Section personnel;
 - police board representatives; and
 - union representatives;
- e) Canvass the experiences and perspectives of current and former police employees on existing policies, procedures, and practices; trust or confidence in existing processes; barriers to reporting sexualized conduct; workplace culture; and opportunities for change or improvement. This input will be voluntary and may be provided anonymously.

13. The OPCC is committed to conducting its work in a trauma-informed way. While the OPCC welcomes and is grateful for input from individuals who have experienced workplace related sexualized conduct, no such individual will be compelled to participate in an interview or provide a statement regarding their experiences.

Final Report

14. Once the investigation is complete, a report containing the Commissioner's findings and recommendations will be delivered to the Director of Policing and Law Enforcement Services ("Director"), municipal police departments, designated units, municipal police boards, and designated boards, as well as any other person, entity or body to whom a recommendation is made under s. 177.01(5) of the *Police Act*. The report will also be made available publicly on the OPCC's website.

15. The OPCC will monitor the implementation of any recommendations and may publish public updates on progress.
16. The OPCC anticipates delivering the final report in fiscal year 2026-2027. If an extension of time is required, the OPCC will inform the Director, the municipal police departments, designated units, municipal police boards, and designated boards in writing.