



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

Police Chiefs and BCCLA agree that police accountability system broken, call on Solicitor General for action

Vancouver, B.C. – In a surprising about face yesterday, B.C.'s municipal police chiefs along with representatives from the RCMP joined in a press conference to declare that the current system for investigating criminal allegations against police officers, and in custody deaths, is broken and needs provincial intervention to restore public confidence in the police.

"We are pleased to see that the police chiefs now agree with us that something must be done to reform our police accountability system and take it out of the hands of police," says Jason Gratl, Vice-President of the BCCLA. "Now we need to decide how to reform the system. Do we move to police investigating themselves with civilians watching from the sidelines, or do we introduce a civilian investigator model like Ontario and Manitoba?"

Under the current system, in custody deaths and criminal investigations of police officers are conducted by police, under the supervision of police, often, but not always, from the same force. The Chief's proposal would maintain that system of police investigating themselves, but would introduce a new civilian body that would oversee the investigations.

"The system of police investigating themselves, both with and without civilian oversight, has been discredited in B.C. in many different audits and investigations," said Gratl. "We need a system that is completely independent from police. We hope the Solicitor General, when examining the chiefs' proposal, also takes note of the very clear, unambiguous recommendations of the Frank Paul Inquiry that we end the system of police investigating themselves."

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Jason Gratl, Vice-President, (604) 317-1919
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997

Backgrounder: Police accountability

When a police-involved death or serious injury occurs, two types of investigations typically result: A criminal investigation, to determine whether the officer's action or inaction constitutes a criminal offence; and, a professional standards investigation to determine whether a police officer's action or inaction constituted a breach of professional duty. The Chiefs' proposal focuses on the criminal investigation side.

Current system	Criminal investigations of police (all forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (Municipal forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (RCMP)
Oversight	Police, reporting to police	Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) (civilian)	Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP (CPC) (civilian)
Investigators	Police – Either same or outside force	Police – same force	RCMP
Decision on charges or discipline	Police – Either same or outside force	Police – same force	RCMP
Critiques	Frank Paul Inquiry (2008) “wholesale restructuring” required, where civilians investigate	Josiah Wood, Q.C. audit (2007), “lack of complete acceptance by the police of the concept of . . . civilian oversight.”	Paul Kennedy, CPC (2009), found serious flaws in 68% of 28 RCMP investigations audited.

Proposed system – B.C. Chiefs of Police	Criminal investigations of police (all forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (Municipal forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (RCMP)
Oversight	New civilian agency	OPCC (civilian)	CPC (civilian)
Investigators	Police – Outside force	Police – Outside force for police involved deaths	Police – Outside force for deaths where available
Decision on charges or discipline	Unclear	Police – same force	RCMP

Proposed system – Frank Paul Inquiry	Criminal investigations of police (all forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (Municipal forces)	Prof. Standards Investigation (RCMP)
Oversight	Civilian agency, reporting to government	OPCC (civilian)	OPCC (civilian)
Investigators	Civilian	Civilian (for serious complaints)	Civilian (for serious complaints)
Decision on charges or discipline	Civilian agency	Police with civilian review	Police with civilian review