



Special Council

**Monday, October 6, 2025
1:00 p.m.**

**Council Chamber, Second Floor
New Westminster City Hall, 511 Royal Avenue**

Present: Mayor Patrick Johnstone
Councillor Ruby Campbell
Councillor Daniel Fontaine
Councillor Tasha Henderson
Councillor Jaimie McEvoy
Councillor Paul Minhas
Councillor Nadine Nakagawa

Corporate Officer – Hanieh Berg

Police Board: Heather Boersma
Drew Hart
Patrick Lalonde
Mary Trentadue
Kelsi Wall

1. CALL TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

Mayor Johnstone called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Agenda for the October 6, 2025 Special Council meeting be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

3. PRESENTATION & REPORT

3.1 2026 Draft New Westminster Police Department Provisional Budget

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Jacqueline Dairon, Finance Manager, Chief Constable Paul Hyland, and Acting Deputy Chief Constable Andrew Perry, New Westminster Police Department (NWPD), provided an overview of the Draft Police 2026 Provisional Operating Budget, and noted the following information:

- Dr. Lisa Kitt conducted a mental health and workplace culture survey, which aimed to measure anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, burnout and workplace culture;
- survey results indicated rates of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder were currently below industry averages, while staffing shortages and high workload were identified as the primary cause of burnout;
- high workload has the potential to adversely affect staff mental, emotional, and physical well-being;
- key findings of the workload and operations study indicated that (i) patrol units are under resourced, (ii) a 92% officer utilization rate exceeds recommended rate, (iii) longer response times, reduced attendance at low-priority calls, and average time-on-scene has increased over the past five years, and (iv) current minimum staffing levels are too low;
- a final Provisional Operating and Capital Budget will be presented to Council in November 2025;
- NWPD has 129 officers per 100,000 residents; this is significantly below the Canadian average of 178 and the BC municipal police average of 175;
- each NWPD officer is responsible for an average of 48 criminal cases; this is higher than the BC municipal average of 34 cases per officer;
- NWPD ranks fourth highest on the Crime Severity Index (CSI) among comparable municipal police services; however, New Westminster's CSI saw a notable improvement, dropping by nearly 17% from 2023 to 2024;
- the population of New Westminster has grown by 28% between 2015-2025, in contrast, NWPD's authorized staffing level has only increased by 6.5%;
- from 2017 to 2022, annual budget increases averaged 3.7%, reflecting relatively modest growth; however, from 2023 to 2025, the average annual increase rose sharply to 10%;
- approximately 70% of these recent increases are due to non-discretionary costs, such as wages, benefits, and other contractual obligations;
- the 2026 Operating Budget projects an overall increase ranging from \$2.909 million (8.36%) to \$3.515 million (10.09%) over the previous year;

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- of the operating budget increases, discretionary costs account for 27% to 33% of the total, representing a 2.75% rise over 2025 levels, while non-discretionary costs account for the majority—between 67% and 73% of the total increase—reflecting a 5.61% to 7.34% increase over the previous year's budget;
- E-Comm shows a steady rise in dispatch levy costs from 2019 to 2026, with a total estimated budget increase of \$173,000 to \$340,000 for 2026;
- between 2019 and 2025, the E-Comm budget grew by 127% (approximately \$1.549 million);
- E-Comm accounts for 8% of the NRPD's net Operating budget in 2025, doubling from 4% in 2019;
- in 2024, Integrated Teams presented a human resources growth plan to their partner agencies and by June 2025, the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) informed the NRPD of substantial budget increases projected over the next three years;
- IHIT's annual cost to NRPD is expected to reach \$1.06 million by 2029, with a forecasted increase of \$340,000 in 2026 alone;
- the NRPD Board directed that 2026 funding request be limited to positions that can realistically be filled within the year, following the previous rolling three-year average;
- the NRPD's current funded strength includes 127 sworn member Full-Time Employees (FTEs), excluding seconded or grant-funded roles, with 115 positions for authorized strength and 12 FTEs for backfill for vacancies and leaves;
- by December 2025, NRPD is forecasted to have 125 sworn members;
- the 2026 hiring plan includes 15 recruits (five in January, five in May, and five in September) and up to four experienced officers, offset by an expected attrition of 6 members through resignations or retirements, resulting in a net staffing increase of six to eight FTEs in 2026;
- the Patrol Division Workload and Operations Study found that patrol units are generally under-resourced and recommended increasing minimum staffing levels from six to seven constables per shift, raising the authorized strength from 40 to 44 constables in 2026;
- to implement an increase in minimum staffing levels, one additional constable is proposed for each of the four patrol units at an estimated cost of \$680,000;
- the Gang Suppression Unit (GSU), established in 2020 through grant funding to address gang and gun violence, focuses on prevention, intervention, and enforcement;

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- as provincial funding was reduced for the GSU in 2023/24, the Department is gradually assuming financial responsibility for it and without this transition, remaining grant funding for the last two provincial cycles would be lost; therefore, to support this, a \$170,000 budget request is included for 2026;
- in 2020, the BC Prosecution Service and police agencies signed a memorandum of understanding establishing new electronic disclosure standards for Reports to Crown Counsel;
- the new electronic disclosure standards for Reports to Crown Counsel significantly increased the complexity and workload for patrol members preparing disclosure packages; therefore, to address this, a Patrol-based Evidence Disclosure Specialist was added in 2025;
- the Department plans to create a dedicated disclosure team to provide cross-divisional assistance, with a 2026 budget request of \$105,000;
- municipal recruitment costs have increased from \$22,000 per recruit in 2022 to \$32,000 per recruit in 2025;
- the Department currently supports the annual recruitment of 12 members and is requesting additional funding to support three more recruits each year; therefore, the total budget request for 2026 is \$102,000;
- the Firearms budget has come under increased pressure due to higher range training demands, including ammunition costs, range rentals, and additional required training days;
- overall costs for the general firearms budget have risen, and the average annual increase of 5% since 2020 has not kept pace with inflation, and thus, an additional \$75,000 is being requested to address these increased costs;
- it is challenging to forecast budget needs for legal fees, however, the Department has consistently been over budget in this area due to increased complexity and demand related to disciplinary matters, arbitration, policy development, and access to legal counsel; as such, \$50,000 is being requested; and
- a one-time consulting fee of \$50,000 is also requested to fund the Strategic Plan update and the triennial IposPoll; this one-time expense is recommended to be funded through reserves and is not included in the overall proposed Operating budget.

In reply to queries from Council, J. Dairon, Chief Constable Hyland, and A/Deputy Chief Constable Perry, noted the following:

- a 0% police budget increase would result in (i) no additional officers (either general or for specialized roles like suppression or patrol), (ii) significant challenges meeting the forecasted service needs, particularly with rising call volumes and complex cases (e.g., missing persons, mental health), and (iii) significant strain on current staffing, and likely have a negative effect in response times and service quality;
- the approximate cost per officer (salary, benefits, JIBC training) is \$150,000 per year;

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- over the past year, an average of 25 members per month have been absent due to various types of leave, including medical and parental leave;
- increased calls involving social and/or mental health issues contribute to over 50% of the Department's call volume;
- the CSI is trending down, but the complexity and time required to investigate crimes are increasing;
- there are ongoing discussions with the Board of Education for New Westminister regarding the School Liaison Program;
- a comparison of officer to population ratio does not accurately illustrate need due to integrated policing teams, special mandates, and local crime complexity; and
- call related to mental health are re-directed to community-based teams (e.g., Circle Team), however, there remains limitations as under the *Mental Health Act* only a police member is authorized to act on involuntary hospitalization.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the 2026 Draft Provision Budget report from the New Westminister Police Department, included as Attachment 1 to the staff report titled "2026 Draft New Westminister Police Department Provisional Budget" dated October 6, 2025, from the Director, Finance, be received for information.

CARRIED

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the meeting adjourn (2:39 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Special meeting of Council of the City of New Westminister held on October 6, 2025.

Patrick Johnstone
MAYOR

Hanieh Berg
CORPORATE OFFICER