

## **Backgrounder Ver. 2 – Updated Sept. 15, 2023**

### **Greater Victoria SD #61 School Police Liaison Officer Program**

#### **Reference: SD #61 motion**

<https://www.sd61.bc.ca/board-of-education/approved-motions/page/2/>

**May 31, 2023**

**Approved Motion:** Add three Community Presentations under A.3. A.3.c. Mark Jenkins A.3.d. Matt Christie A.3.e. Elaine Ho

**Action:** Three Community Presentations were added under A.3. A.3.c. Mark Jenkins A.3.d. Matt Christie A.3.e. Elaine Ho

**Approved Motion:** That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) direct the Superintendent to end the SPLO Program; AND FURTHER the Superintendent will ensure that protocols are established in relation to the following matters: school emergencies, lockdowns, critical incidents, Violent Threat Risk Assessments and ongoing District tracking of all student interactions with Police while in the care of the Board of Education; AND FURTHER The Superintendent will provide the Board of Education with a list of the services no longer provided by SPLOs and suggestions for service provision moving forward.

**Action:** Superintendent to end the SPLO Program; AND FURTHER the Superintendent will ensure that protocols are established in relation to the following matters: school emergencies, lockdowns, critical incidents, Violent Threat Risk Assessments and ongoing District tracking of all student interactions with Police while in the care of the Board of Education; AND FURTHER The Superintendent will provide the Board of Education with a list of the services no longer provided by SPLOs and suggestions for service provision moving forward.

#### **Updated material for Backgrounder Ver. 2.0**

### **1. Letters in support of SPLO have been sent to Westshore RCMP this summer by ...**

- Town Of View Royal
- District of Highlands
- City of Langford
- District of Metchosin

#### **\* Town Of View Royal letter to Westshore RCMP – June 22, 2023**

States that View Royal Council supports and encourages school liaison programs in View Royal schools, including, but not limited to, crime prevention, traffic and personal safety programs.”

See pg. 529

<https://pub-langford.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=6610>

**\* District of Highlands Council Minutes – July 17, 2023**

Correspondence, Town of View Royal, June 22, 2023 (0400.60)

**RE: SCHOOL LIAISON PROGRAMS IN VIEW ROYAL SCHOOLS**

*Moved Councillor McLean, Seconded Councillor Gord Baird* That Council direct staff to send a letter to Supt. Todd Preston, West Shore RCMP along the lines of the handwritten submission by Councillor McLean, attached to and forming part of these minutes as 'Appendix A", regarding the School Police Liaison Officer Program. With copies sent to the Greater Victoria School District 61, 62 and 63, Songhees First Nation, Esquimalt First Nation, City of Victoria Police Chief, District of Saanich Police Chief, District of Central Saanich Police Chief, Ian Lawson, City of Colwood, City of Langford, City of Victoria, District of Metchosin, District of Oak Bay, District of Saanich, District of Central Saanich, District of Sooke.

See Highlands letter sent on Aug. 2, 2023 on pp. 135/36 here:

<https://metchosin.civicweb.net/filepro/document/13751/Council%20Meeting%20-%202014%20Aug%202023%20Agenda.pdf?widget=true>

**\* City of Langford – Council meeting of July 17, 2023**

School Liaison Programs in View Royal Schools

MOVED BY: SZPAK SECONDED: HARDER

Motion CARRIED.

OPPOSED: Councillor Guiry, Councillor Harder, Councillor Yacucha

THAT Council direct staff to send a letter to Superintendent Preston (Westshore RCMP), with a copy to the Chair of School District No. 62 (Sooke) as well as the following organizations: Songhees First Nations; Esquimalt Nation; City of Colwood; City of Victoria; District of Highlands; District of Metchosin; District of Oak Bay; Township of Esquimalt; Inspector Rose Westshore RCMP

Stating that Langford Council wish to support and encourage the ongoing School Liaison Program in School District No. 62 (Sooke) schools with their current approaches.

City of Langford letter sent on July 18. See pg. 133:

<https://metchosin.civicweb.net/filepro/document/13751/Council%20Meeting%20-%202014%20Aug%202023%20Agenda.pdf?widget=true>

**\* District of Metchosin – Meeting of Aug. 14, 2023** Excerpt from minutes, see pg. 12:

<https://metchosin.civicweb.net/filepro/document/14123/Council%20Meeting%20-%202011%20Sep%202023%20Agenda.pdf?widget=true>

**c) City of Langford, School Liaison Programs in Sooke School District No. 62 Schools**

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Epp and Donaldson that Council through the Mayor send a letter to School District No. 62 regarding the School Liaison Programs in Sooke Schools.

**Carried** Councillor Gray opposed the motion

**d) District of Highlands, School Police Liaison Officer Programs in School District No. 61 Schools**

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Epp and Donaldson that Council receive the correspondence from the District of Highlands regarding School Police Liaison Officer Programs in School District No. 61 Schools for information. **Carried**

## **2. From the June 22 VFCYJC Minutes**

### 9.4. SD #61 Termination of School Police Liaison Officer (SPLO) program

J. Bateman prepared a backgrounder on the issue for VFC&YJ Committee meeting.

#### Discussion

- In general, VFC&YJ Committee members considered SPLO programs provided benefits for kids/families and cancelling SPLO programs could have negative unintended or undetermined consequences. Youth cannot be turned away from SPLO programs, as may be the case with other agencies.
- Confidentiality of information makes it difficult to get this empirical data.
- SPLO programs foster building relationships and establishing trust with School Districts.
- Law enforcement, schools and the broader community needs to work together re youth exploitation and the concern re gang recruitment.
- The School Police Liaison Officer program often is the first line of communication to avoid youth entering justice system. If the funding is removed from the police budget, it will be very hard to get it reinstated.
- VFCYJ Committee members are interested in gaining understanding of School District 61 rationale for deciding May 31 to end their SPLO program.

To receive this as information and continue the conversation in September.

## **3. Email from VFCYJC appointee Councillor Zeb King**

On **Thu, Jun 22, 2023** at 3:11 PM Zeb King <[zebking@zebking.ca](mailto:zebking@zebking.ca)> wrote:

Thanks to all for the excellent discussion at [today's](#) Victoria, Family and Youth Justice Committee meeting and particularly regarding SD61. I found the School District 61 Board meeting that lasted over 1.5 hours – on [May 31, 2023](#). The presentations and discussion were fascinating and informative from both sides of this issue and included police boards, police, a psychiatric social worker, parents, teachers, the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA) and others. There were also letters citing some data.

The decision of the nine School Board 61 trustees apparently followed a three-year review and was unanimous on not only one motion but three individual motions. The entire meeting remained on this topic for over 1.5 hours.

I'm sharing this link to assist and I completely recommend listening: <https://www.youtube.com/live/EAAqB0aP9CA?feature=share>

I found the deliberation of trustees to be profoundly considered. I heard them express concerns about safety, gangs, crime and more.

Thanks for educating me on this topic. I wasn't looking to spend more time listening to another jurisdiction's meeting, but I'm glad that I did.

With appreciation,

Zeb King

[SD61 May 31 Agenda](#)

[SD61 May 31 Supplemental Information](#)

## **June 2023**

### **VERSION ONE OF THIS BACKGROUNDER**

Prepared in early June for submission to the June 22, 2023 VFCYJC Committee meeting

## **Backgrounder**

### **Greater Victoria SD #61 School Police Liaison Officer Program**

#### **Timeline**

- **Sept. 2020:** Greater Victoria SD #61 board moves to form a committee to review its School Police Liaison Officer Program

- **Nov. 26, 2020:** First meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, continues monthly meetings through 2022

*The Committee has 21 members, including four student representatives, one representative from the Esquimalt Nations, two representatives from GVTA, two representatives from CUPE, two representatives from VCPAC, one representative from Victoria Police Department and two representatives from Saanich Police Department, two members of the Senior Leadership Team, two School Administrators, one School District Communications staff member, and two Trustees.*

- **Oct. 12, 2021:** Public survey launched - <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/news-events/news/title/greater-victoria-school-district-seeks-input-on-school-police-liaison-officer-program/>

#### **- May 31, 2023: Board of Trustees meeting ...**

- Board agenda: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2023/05/May-31-2023-Special-Open-Board-of-Education-Meeting.pdf>

- **Video replay:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAAqB0aP9CA> (starts at 2:35)

**Two motions: (read and voted on at 1 hour 25 minutes ... both passed unanimously)**

1. *To direct the superintendent to end the SPLO program;*

- and further the superintendent will ensure protocols are established in relation to the following matters: school emergencies, lock-downs, critical incidents, violence threat-risk assessments; and ongoing district tracking of all student interactions with police while in the care of the Board of Education;

- and further that the superintendent will supply the board with a list of the services no longer provided by SPLOs and suggestions for service provision moving forward.

2. Second to advocate with the ministries of Education, Children & Families, and Solicitor General to immediately commission research into impacts of SPLO programs on K-12 students in BC.

(Transcribed; no text version of these motions was found.)

**See agenda pp. 62-71** for recommendations from the Greater Victoria School District's SPLO Program Review Ad Hoc Committee.

**See pp. 72-77** for Chair Duncan's reports re: Ad Hoc Committee meetings in 2020/21

**See pp. 86-102** for final report on the SPLO Program Survey

**See pp. 102-105** for Nov. 24, 2022 letter from BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender, which concludes: "*Out of respect for the rights of our students, I strongly recommend that all school districts end the use of School Liaison Officers until the impact of these programs can be established empirically.*"

**See pp. 147-173** for *Overview of School Police Liaison Officer Job Descriptions* prepared by Jennifer Chambers, GVSD District Counsellor)

**Agenda's correspondence package (pp. 4-61) includes letters ...**

**- In support of ending the program and seeking alternatives:**

1. Greater Victoria Teachers' Association
2. Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour

**- Against ending the program:**

1. Victoria PD Chief Constable Del Manak
  2. Tillicum Elementary School PAC
  3. Tillicum Community School
  4. Saanich Police Department Chief Constable
  5. Saanich Police Community Engagement Division
  6. Victoria Principals and Vice-Principals Association
  7. Tillicum Elementary teachers
  8. West Shore RCMP Officer-In-Charge Todd Preston
  9. Saanich Police Community Engagement (Jody Pavesic)
  10. Greater Victoria SD Secondary District Counsellor Jennifer Chambers
  11. Oak Bay Police Department
- Plus: citizen correspondence

- May 31 board supplemental agenda: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2023/05/C.3.a.-Nicole-Duncan-Memo-SPLO-Ad-Hoc-Memo-Spring-2023.pdf>

June 2023 statement by Chair Duncan: <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/news-events/news/title/statement-from-board-chair-duncan-regarding-the-school-police-liaison-officer-program/>

## **Related News Clippings**

**June 7, 2023:** Victoria Now:

[https://www.victorianow.com/watercooler/news/news/Victoria/Greater\\_Victoria\\_School\\_District\\_board\\_votes\\_to\\_end\\_police\\_liaison\\_program/#fs\\_125896](https://www.victorianow.com/watercooler/news/news/Victoria/Greater_Victoria_School_District_board_votes_to_end_police_liaison_program/#fs_125896)

<clip> “Police are being asked to fill in gaps in student support and to take on roles that should be filled by individuals with specialized expertise, such as youth and family counsellors and social workers,” explained Duncan. “Further funding is required for this specialized support, and the board has committed to advocating for this funding from the provincial government.”

**June 2, 2023:** <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/greater-victoria-school-board-votes-to-end-police-school-liaison-program-7084904>

<clip> “**Saanich Police Chief Dean Duthie** called the school board decision “very disappointing,” noting that it ends decades of participation in the program by his department.

The decision effectively means the six officers who work full-time in the program will be immediately leaving their roles at 25 schools, Duthie said. “I met with our team [Thursday] morning and our officers are emotionally taken aback,” he said. “They’re upset at a deep level because they’re so committed and so passionate about their work with students, making a difference in their lives.”

Positive relationships that have developed are being lost, Duthie said. “It’ll essentially be removing police officers from schools on a daily basis, with the educational presentations they give, the informal engagements that happen, the drop-ins, the one-on-one discussion, the prevention talks about bullying, about online safety, about drug and alcohol awareness.”

<clip> “**School board chair Nicole Duncan** said trustees had to consider the “trauma and harm” that police presence can mean for some students, including those who are Black and Indigenous. The Greater Victoria School District said in a statement that the program has seen “many positive interactions,” but the board is committed to providing “trauma-informed support and inclusive spaces for all students.”

While the board is looking to end the program, Duncan said, it has directed the district’s superintendent to develop protocols “to ensure that, where it’s appropriate and necessary to have police involved in the goings-on at our schools, that we do so in a clear fashion.”

That can involve having police at schools for such things as emergencies, lockdowns or the assessment of threats, Duncan said. “We really want to continue to have a good and strong relationship with police when it’s appropriate to do so,” she said. “The police will -continue to be our partners in raising awareness and providing the public with information around the risks of gang recruitment.”

**May 3, 2023:** <https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/greater-victoria-trustees-mull-future-of-school-liaison-officer-program-6942960>

**March 22, 2023:** <https://www.vicnews.com/news/funding-remains-amid-calls-to-end-victoria-polices-paused-school-liaison-program/>

**Sept. 2021:** <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/greater-victoria-school-board-seeks-input-police-liaisons-1.6219953>

*Depending on who you ask, police liaisons make students feel more or less safe in schools. It's a question the Greater Victoria School District (SD61) is currently grappling with. School police liaisons are officers that spend time in schools, making safety presentations and assisting in any way the school asks.*

*But in June 2020, after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, a school trustee in Victoria, B.C., put forward a motion to suspend the program in his district. He was outvoted, but the board did agree to review the program — to see if there are improvements to be made, or if the program should be scrapped entirely.*

*<clip> Dominique Jacobs of the Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Color ... has been advocating for an end to the program since the motion to suspend it was introduced last year. "We've told SD61 over, and over, and over, that BIPOC families do not want police liaison officers in the schools. So it seems a little bit redundant, and also insulting, when you are constantly feeling like you're being dismissed."*

*<clip> Mia Golden, a counsellor, says she sees in her work how valuable liaison officers can be. Golden works with schools and police on initiatives to prevent child exploitation. She says she's seen the positive relationships liaison officers can build with students, and that those relationships can pay off in tough situations — for example, if a student has to report a sexual assault. "If they have to provide a statement to a complete stranger, that only compounds that distress and that traumatic event," she said. Instead, liaison officers can provide comfort to students, she says.*

- **June 23, 2020:** "Vancouver, Victoria School Trustees vote to review police school liaison program" (Vancouver Sun) <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/vancouver-victoria-school-trustees-vote-to-review-police-school-liaison-program>

## **Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee (past advocacy)**

Sept. 5, 2018 - Cynthia Day letter to Victoria-Esquimalt Police Board re: loss of school liaison officers in Victoria and Esquimalt ... see pg. 15 of the 2018 Annual Report

<https://www.victoriafamilycourt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2018-VFCYJC-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>

### **September 5, 2018 VICTORIA-ESQUIMALT POLICE BOARD**

Dear Co-Chairs Mayor Lisa Helps and Mayor Barb Desjardins,

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee have great concern about the loss of School Liaison Officers in Victoria and Esquimalt. I understand that the Police Board will be meeting on September 18 and would appreciate your consideration of our input at that time.

From your last meeting in July, it is clear that "digital technologies are producing unprecedented levels of online child abuse material and incidents of exploitation and trafficking. From 2012 to 2014, the number of webpages dedicated to the sale and trafficking, as well as the sharing of sexual abuse materials of children, increased by 147%, with children 10 years and under portrayed in 80% of incidents" and that "355 offenders were identified as actively engaging in the trade of child exploitation material on Vancouver Island, with almost half (149) of the offenders associated to Internet Protocol (IP) Addresses located in Victoria and the surrounding area."

Our committee includes the Capital Region Action Team for Sexually Exploited Youth (CRAT) and we are doing our very best to educate youth about the risks of online exploitation. The lack of Police Liaison Officers in our schools will not help to address this major issue and represents a considerable loss to our youth police relationships. Relationships are the greatest defense for our youth.

In February of 2019 we will again be bringing TC02 presentations free of charge to local schools, put on by Children of the Street Society and facilitated by CRAT and MYST. This major undertaking of the Family Court Committee has been accomplished annually for more than 10 years and represents our continued commitment to preventing child exploitation and increasing youth safety through education, which will now be even harder for us to do without partners like our school liaison officers. (Please feel free to share the attached poster.)

Sincerely, Cynthia Day, Chair

Cc: Del Manak, Victoria Police Chief, Victoria City Council, Esquimalt Council

## **Miscellaneous**

- Saanich Police Department Community Liaison Section: <https://saanichpolice.ca/community-programs/community-liaison-section/>
- "Keeping Police Out of Victoria and Esquimalt Schools" (blog post, Nov. 2019) <https://www.needsmorespikes.com/blog/2019/11/keeping-police-out-of-victoria-and-esquimalt-schools>
  
- New BC Provincial Policing Standards (effective July 30, 2023)
- \* Promotion of Unbiased Policing <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/police/standards/6-1-1-promote-unbiased.pdf>
- \* Community Partnerships and Equitable Policing <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/police/standards/6-1-2-community-engagement.pdf>
  
- Vancouver** – "New Vancouver School Board Trustees Moving to Reinstate School Liaison Officers (Globe & Mail, Nov. 22, 2022) <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-new-vancouver-school-board-trustees-moving-to-reinstate-school-liaison/>
- "Despite Claims, School Liaison Officers Received No Special Training" (The Tyee, Jan. 13, 2023) <https://thetyee.ca/News/2023/01/13/School-Liaison-Officers-No-Special-Training/>