

Notes for remarks by Tom Stamatakis
President, British Columbia Police Association

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Honoured guests, colleagues, members of the news media...

Welcome to the launch of the British Columbia Police Association.

My name is Tom Stamatakis, and I'm proud to serve as the first President of our new Association.

Starting today, this new, province-wide organization will provide a united voice for front-line municipal policing in British Columbia.

Our 2,500-member B.C. Police Association is made up the members of the province's 11 municipal police services and the members of the South Coast BC Transit police.

I would also like our colleagues serving in the RCMP in this province to know that they will be welcome as non-voting associate members of the BCPA during the time they serve in British Columbia.

The British Columbia Police Association will provide a united voice on issues of concern and interest to our members all across British Columbia.

We have formed the B.C. Police Association because we believe that there is strength in unity: and we believe that unity is important, particularly in the times in which we live and work.

The police profession faces many challenges: economic, political and social challenges, some of which didn't exist or weren't as difficult a few years ago.

The formation of the BC Police Association is, in part, a response to those challenges.

Our main aim is to encourage improvements in the working conditions, equipment, training and compensation of our members, and, by so doing, improve policing service and public safety.

While our member police associations will continue to negotiate their contracts individually with the municipalities they serve, the BCPA will facilitate information sharing and improve bargaining positions.

We have another purpose in uniting, too: We recognize, just as many other groups and organizations recognize, that we need to make our case effectively in the public forum, to tell the positive stories about the work of our members in B.C., and to advocate for our members.

That's what we will be doing. Our advocacy role is reflected in our motto and our mission statement which is, "To Protect Those Who Protect Others".

Our goal is to strengthen the solid relationships that many of our members already have with the public, with local municipalities, with the provincial government and with all members of the legislature.

We will also advocate for positive change on behalf of our members on matters of legislation, governance and civilian oversight of policing.

Here are examples of three issues in which the B.C. Police Association will make its voice heard:

One: we will be making our constructive views known on the ongoing Police Act Review being carried out by the province.

We support a number of the recommendations for changes in the Police Act, and we look forward to the eventual introduction of the new legislation.

Two: We want to see harmonization of the rules and regulations governing civilian oversight of policing.

For historical reasons, members of the RCMP, carrying out their provincial policing function, are subject to different oversight rules than those of us serving municipal police forces.

We believe harmonization will be better, and fairer, for both the public and police officers.

And Three: We need to examine the effectiveness of integrated policing units from both an economic and a social perspective.

Integrated policing, in which officers from different jurisdictions combine their investigative and policing skills, should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

This will ensure that communities taking part are getting full value for their tax dollar and that our members who work in these units are doing so under appropriate conditions.

In closing, let me note that while our province is vast, and policing in our larger cities is different in some ways than in our smaller municipalities, our shared experiences, concerns and issues as police officers outweigh our differences.

That's why we are launching the British Columbia Police Association.

I look forward to your questions.