
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Attorney General

Changes to support capacity at Independent Investigation Office

VICTORIA – Two proposed amendments to the Police Act respond to concerns from British Columbia’s Independent Investigation Office (IIO).

Challenges in hiring and retaining sufficient numbers of trained civilian investigators have hampered timely resolution of investigations into officer-involved incidents of death and serious harm, and other technical provisions created unnecessary work for B.C.’s independent prosecution service.

The first proposed amendment will allow the IIO to build its investigative capacity by temporarily reducing the hiring restrictions for IIO investigators for two years, while the IIO civilian oversight investigator training program continues through its development and implementation. The IIO training and certification program will be the first of its kind in Canada.

Current hiring limitations in the Police Act prevent the IIO from hiring an investigator who has been a member of a B.C. police force at any time within five years prior to appointment. Former police officers from outside of B.C. can be hired immediately.

The new hiring policy will ensure the IIO maintains a balance of investigators with civilian and policing backgrounds during the two-year period when hiring restrictions are reduced.

“Our goal is to preserve the long-term civilianization of oversight of police in B.C., while recognizing that the IIO has had difficulty identifying a sufficient pool of adequately trained and experienced candidates to hire as investigators,” said David Eby, Attorney General. “Once fully implemented, the planned training program for civilian investigators will help solve this problem down the road. However, British Columbians immediately need the IIO to complete timely, comprehensive and high-quality investigations on extremely sensitive matters.”

The other proposed amendment will raise the IIO’s referral standard to Crown counsel, bringing it in line with the standard used by police in B.C. and clarifying that only cases with a reasonable likelihood of charge approval will be referred to Crown. This change will facilitate the timely completion of IIO investigations and will eliminate what the IIO has indicated are unnecessary reviews by B.C.’s independent prosecution service.

The IIO is a civilian-led body that conducts investigations into incidents of death or serious harm involving on- and off-duty police officers and special constables in British Columbia.

Learn More:

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Contact:

Media Relations
Ministry of Attorney General
778 678-1572

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