



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In advance of final deliberations, parents and educators call on the Vancouver School Board to immediately cancel the School Liaison Officer Program.

23 April 2021

Unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations, Vancouver BC

On Monday April 26, the Vancouver School Board (“VSB”) meets again, to discuss the School Liaison Officer (“SLO”) Program and trustees are set to make a final decision on the role of the SLO program. Prior to the VSB Trustee Meeting, the Anti-Oppressive Educators Collective, Cops Out of Schools, Pivot Legal Society, and the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association will be supporting a press conference platforming parents, educators, and community members who are directly impacted by the ongoing presence of police officers in schools.

PRESS CONFERENCE DETAILS

An online press conference has been called for the evening of Monday, April 26.

What: Response to final VSB deliberations regarding SLOs in elementary & secondary schools

When: Monday April 26, 5:30 PM

Where: Zoom

Who: VSB Parents & Educators

On April 26, the VSB is set to make a final decision. Based on previous comments by Chairperson Lois Chan-Pedley, there are 3 possible recommendations that the VSB will be considered based upon the Argyle report and public consultation: (1) Keep the SLO program as is, (2) Reform the SLO program or (3) End the SLO program.

Last month, the VSB released an independent review of the program, completed by Argyle Consulting. The review notes the negative impact of police in schools for Black and Indigenous students, notable as Black and Indigenous youth remain disproportionately criminalized. The call to remove police officers from VSB has been endorsed by the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council, the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association, and the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association. The BC Teachers' Federation, the

professional union representing 45,000 public school teachers, has also passed a resolution calling for “reinvestment of funds, away from systemically racist institutions that criminalize and over-discipline students, into programs that positively support students’ mental and physical welfare.”

“VESTA members have spoken clearly in support of BIPOC students and families calling for the termination of the SLO program in Vancouver schools. We call on the VPD, along with the VSB to commit not only to the ending of the current program, but also to doing the essential anti-racism and decolonizing work within their organizations.”

Jody Polukoshko, VESTA 3rd VP & Elementary School Teacher

On Monday night, the the VSB has the opportunity to improve Black, Indigenous, and racialized students’ safety and equal access to education. Their slow consultation process, critiqued by students, educators, and community members has consistently failed to engage with the impacts of over-policing, the school-to-prison pipeline, and the devastating impacts of criminalization that have been raised by the community.

“I’m a parent of two VSB students, in grade 9 and 11. I advocate for issues of equity in our education system and have been an active PAC parent for many years. I’ve spoken out against police in schools on many occasions. Over the last year, there have been global uprisings regarding police violence, and local calls to defund the VPD. Despite that, Vancouver’s school board trustees have failed to remove police from our schools. There is no good reason for VPD officers to have offices in schools, or routinely show up armed and in uniform. Schools are meant to provide safe, educational environments that meet the needs of students. If the presence of cops in schools prevents even one kid from attending class, the program must end. The School Board needs to stop sidestepping the issue and eliminate the School Liaison Officer program.”

Adrienne Neill, VSB Parent & Advocate

Police have no place in schools, as provincial, regional and community-based organizations have highlighted over the last year. School districts across Canada have taken concrete steps to eliminate police from schools, including in New Westminster, where the Education Committee at the New Westminster School Board recently voted to discontinue the police liaison officer program in their district. On Monday evening, parents and educators will encourage the VSB to take immediate action and demand the removal of VPD officers from VSB schools.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION & DOCUMENTS

VSBC School Liaison Officer: Student and Stakeholder Engagement Program

The call to remove VPD officers from all Vancouver Schools began in the summer of 2020, leveraged by the widely-supported [Police Free Schools are Safer Schools](#) petition, endorsed by over 2800 individuals and organizations. In response, VSBC contracted Argyle Communications Inc. to conduct a third-party review of the SLO program.

<https://www.vsb.bc.ca/News/Documents/SLOProgramReport-March2021.pdf>

About the Anti-Oppressive Educators Collective (“AOEC”)

The Anti-Oppression Educators Collective (AOEC) is a provincial specialist association within the BC Teachers’ Federation, dedicated to challenging systemic oppression in education. AOEC provides educators with critical professional development provided through AOEC events such as the annual October provincial PSA day and digital publications.

<https://aoec.ca/>

About Cops out of Schools

Cops out of Schools is a group of parents, educators, and community members working towards two goals: (1) Immediate end to School Liaison Officer programs, and (2) Community-led programs that take a restorative and trauma-informed approach to creating safety and well-being for all students, particularly Black and Indigenous students. They are primarily based in xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sel̓ilwítulh (Tsleil Waututh), and sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) territories (Vancouver) and support other districts in removing police from schools.

<https://nocopsinschools.wordpress.com/>

About Pivot Legal Society

Pivot Legal Society is a leading Canadian human rights organization that uses the law to address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion in Canada. Pivot’s work includes challenging laws and policies that force people to the margins of society and keep them there. In 2020, Pivot wrote to Vancouver School Board Trustees and Superintendent in [support](#) of the petition “Police Free Schools are Safer Schools: The end of policing in Vancouver schools.”

http://www.pivotlegal.org/our_story

About the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA)

The Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association is a sub-local of the BC Teachers’ Federation (Local No. 39-1). VESTA recognizes that teachers have a role to play in our schools and our lives unlearning racism and developing anti-racist practice and has called for the [suspension](#) of the School Liaison Officer program. VESTA recognizes that incarceration, police violence, racial profiling, and criminalization all impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour disproportionately.

<http://vesta.ca/about-us/>