



2026 Budget Exploration

Public Safety Priorities & Considerations

May 2025

Overview

Purpose

The purpose of our meeting at the City of Victoria's Committee of the Whole is to open a two-way dialogue between Mayor and Council and the Victoria Police Department (VicPD) to discuss **public safety priorities**, including municipal and police considerations with respect to these priorities.

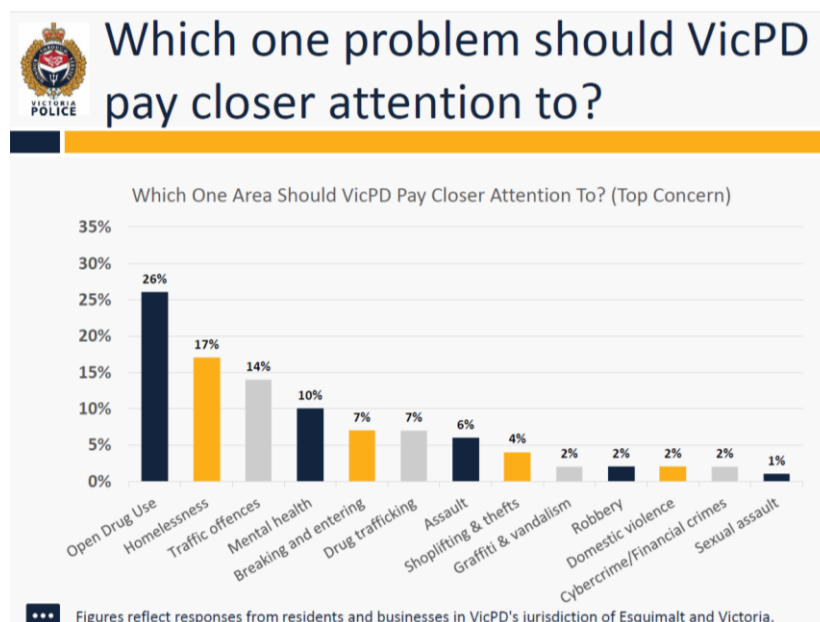
VicPD is represented by Elizabeth Cull (Finance Committee Chair), Chief Cst. Del Manak, and Donna Phillips (Director of Financial Services).

Topics for Exploration

1. Public Safety Priorities
2. Context & Considerations
3. Budget Process

1. Public Safety Priorities

In the 2024 VicPD Community Survey, community public safety priorities were identified as follows:



These concerns are reflected in other public engagement, and have not changed significantly over time, as demonstrated in the chart below detailing changes between 2023-2024.



Top Concern Changes 2023 - 2024

2023

1. Homelessness (20%)
2. Mental Health (14%)
3. Traffic Offences (13%)
4. Open Drug Use (13%)
5. Break & Enter (12%)
6. Physical Assault (9%)
7. Drug Trafficking (6%)
8. Graffiti & Vandalism (5%)
9. Shoplifting & Theft (3%)
10. Sexual Assault (3%)
11. Domestic Violence (2%)
12. Robbery (2%)

2024

1. Open Drug Use (26%)
2. Homelessness (17%)
3. Traffic Offences (14%)
4. Mental Health (10%)
5. Break & Enters (7%)
6. Drug Trafficking (7%)
7. Physical Assault (6%)
8. Shoplifting & Theft (4%)
9. Robbery (2%)
10. Graffiti & Vandalism (2%)
11. Domestic Violence (2%)
12. Sexual Assault (1%)

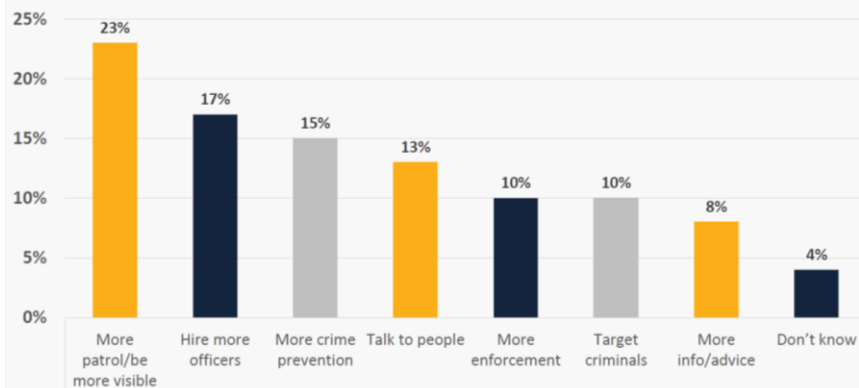
Cybercrime/Financial crimes category not listed as it was newly added in 2024 survey

To address these concerns, citizens have primarily requested an increase in police visibility, that we hire more officers, and that we offer more crime prevention programs and services, as seen in the chart below.



How to deal with problems?

Respondents' selections of provided options ("Check all that apply")



VicPD

Figures reflect responses from residents and businesses in VicPD's jurisdiction of Esquimalt and Victoria.

Here are the ways that VicPD works to address these priorities and meet citizen needs:

1. Operational Restructuring
2. Community Resource Officers (increased from six to eight in 2025, under Section 27 Review)
3. Bike & Beat Program (planned reintroduction in the Five-Year Staffing Plan)
4. Civilian Professionalization
5. Increased Community Programs (crime prevention)
6. Implementation of Co-Response Teams (consisting of an officer and a psychiatric nurse)
7. Leveraging Technology (for cost-savings and service efficiencies)

Some of these initiatives also constitute operational efficiencies through resource and cost savings. The operational restructuring, civilian professionalization and leveraging of technology are three major ways that we have been able to keep VicPD's costs down while being able to address priorities.

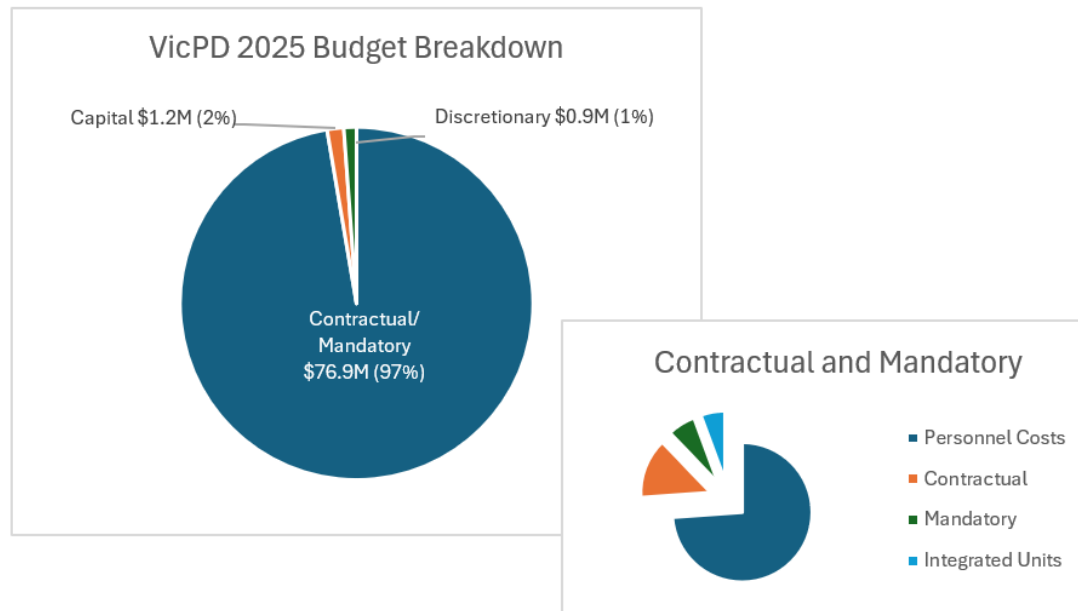
Questions for exploration in this section:

1. What other public safety priorities does Council have?
2. Where do those priorities fall relative to publicly identified priorities?

2. Context & Considerations

Financial

Only a very small percentage of the VicPD budget is discretionary (1%). Most of the budget consists of contractual obligations and mandatory costs, including personnel costs, E-Comm, PRIME police database, officer equipment, training and recruitment, jail supplies, investigative and legal costs, and regional operations.



We are heavily impacted by inflation, tariffs on specialized police equipment, increased provincial training requirements and limitations on recruit training spaces provided by the province.

We know the City and Township are impacted in many of the same ways. In 2026, we anticipate further increases for salaries and benefits as collective bargaining gets underway for the Victoria City Police Union and CUPE Local 50.

Demand For Services

VicPD uniquely shoulders extraordinary policing responsibilities as the capital of British Columbia and home to the BC Legislative Assembly. Victoria is a major urban district on Vancouver Island with a large port, a vibrant central business district, an entertainment district with a high concentration of licensed liquor seats (bars and nightclubs), and many major tourist attractions. Victoria is a main hub for cultural events, demonstrations, protests, and other regional or magnet events within the Greater Victoria region. VicPD also supports an expanding number of supportive housing facilities, with approximately 25 facilities in Victoria and more planned.

As with any city or region, the bulk of officers are concentrated where the need is highest: the downtown core. This inevitably equates to a higher call volume, a higher officer ratio and an overall higher cost of policing per person than you might see in other communities of a similar size, or with a regional model. Growth in the City, the region, and the tourist industry all continue to increase need for service, but we are at or below capacity for our ability to adequately address current need, based on our deployability.

Operating under the provincially mandated Framework Agreement, both Victoria and Esquimalt contribute to the costs associated with these demands for service within the system as a whole,

based on their proportional share. Each year, we dispatch more than 38,000 calls for service and more than 12,000 additional investigative files are created each year. This equates to approximately one file for every two of the citizens we serve based on population.

Deployability

Although we are at or above capacity for officer strength, most of our divisions are operating under-staffed, due to officers in training or on other forms of leave, such as physical and occupational stress injury, or parental leave.

Prioritizing the mental health and wellbeing of staff is an ongoing initiative. Most recently, the emphasis has been on being proactive and focusing on prevention and early intervention. In 2024, several previous initiatives were continued, and new ones undertaken to support this. They included the addition of two in-house psychologists, annual wellness checks for all staff, as well as the enhancement of the Peer Support Team and the tools they use. In 2025, a pilot project will focus on sleep optimization, and a mental health survey called “Our Minds Matter” has been administered by our in-house psychologists of which the results will better inform them on areas for prioritization. A Reintegration Sergeant position was introduced in 2024 to lead the reintegration programs and co-lead the Peer Support and Critical Incident Stress Management teams. The combined initiatives above have reduced duration and impact of time off work, maximizing deployability while ensuring the use of trauma-informed best practices and a holistic and preventative approach to employee wellness.

The current model for authorized strength related to the number of calls and investigations was created when few officers were in training each year. Now, we are hiring and training 20+ officers per year to meet our retirement and attrition rate, which means fewer officers on the road or investigating files, and delays to timely investigations. The cost of training officers is significant, and training requirements increase each year. There has been a three-fold increase in VicPD’s hiring activities for replacement and new sworn members in the last 10 years:



Questions for exploration in this section:

1. How can Victoria maintain adequate policing levels in the face of continued growth?
2. How do we meet increased demand with decreased officer availability?
3. How do we balance regional responsibility with local cost?

3. Budget Process

The following chart outlines the timeline and process for development of the 2026 budget:

Date	Description
May 31, 2025	Community consultation completed by Finance Committee
May & June 2025	Consultation with City and Township Councils and staff on budget priorities
July 8, 2025	First draft of budget to Finance Committee for information and input
July (TBC)	Draft budget to Police Board for information and input
September 2, 2025	Final provisional budget to Finance Committee for recommendation to the Police Board
September 30, 2025	Special Police Board meeting to approve the provisional budget
October 15, 2025	Provisional budget sent to Council members in advance of JBCM
October 22, 2025	Joint Board/Council Meeting (JBCM) – Victoria Conference Centre
November 2025	Presentation of provisional budget to Councils
January 2026	Follow-up presentations (optional)