

April 14, 2009

PROPOSED NEW POLICE SERVICES ACT INTRODUCED IN LEGISLATURE

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Civilian Oversight, Independent Investigation Would be Key Elements of Long-overdue Changes: Chomiak

A new Police Services Act introduced today by Attorney General Dave Chomiak would modernize police governance in the province including how major incidents involving police officers are investigated.

“The police play a crucial role in enforcing the law and protecting the public and we all have a stake in how they do that job,” said Chomiak. “By replacing antiquated legislation with a new Police Services Act, we’ll increase public confidence in the police with provincewide standards and more transparency, public input and a balance that protects everyone.”

The new Police Services Act was drafted following the recommendations of the Taman Inquiry, extensive consultations on key issues with police services, other direct stakeholders and the public and an exhaustive review of best practices in other jurisdictions.

Consultations included public meetings in Winnipeg, Thompson, Brandon and Morden, online and written submissions and 46 meetings with 120 representatives of Aboriginal and community groups, municipal leaders, police services and police associations.

Highlights of the proposed new act include:

- **An independent investigation unit**

The act would create the most comprehensive independent investigation model in Canada. All major incidents involving police, both on and off duty, would have to be reported to the unit by police. Investigations by the unit would be mandatory when fatal force or serious injury incidents occur. The unit would be able to monitor or take over the investigation of any other alleged criminal

incident. The unit would be led by a civilian director, use civilian monitors and independent legal counsel, and would employ qualified investigators, potentially including former and seconded police officers and civilians.

- **Mandatory police boards**

The bill would require every municipality and First Nation with its own police service to establish a police board. Local councils would make the majority of appointments but the province would make two appointments to the Winnipeg board and one appointment to the other boards. Police boards would hire police chiefs, administer police budgets and set the general direction of police services. Boards could not get involved in specific investigations.

- **A provincial police commission**

A provincial police commission with diverse membership including First Nations and other Aboriginal people would be established to provide input into how policing services are delivered across the province. It would provide advice on regulations required under the act including training and equipment, train local police boards, create a roster of civilian monitors and do special studies on emerging policing issues.

- **A cadet program**

The act would create a legislative foundation for a new cadet program that would enhance the ability of underrepresented groups such as Aboriginals and newcomers to work in policing and obtain additional training and education.

“Expanded public oversight and new procedures for investigating incidents involving the police are important measures that will modernize policing for the benefit of all Manitobans,” said Chomiak. “Provisions such as the new cadet program will allow us to meet the challenges of the future. This bill builds on our consultations with Manitobans and best practices across the country and gives us a made-in-Manitoba replacement for a statute that is almost 80 years old.”