



What We Heard Summary

Police Review Commission Engagement



Contents

Introduction	1
Common Themes Raised During Engagement	2
1. Improve access and remove barriers to participation	2
2. Continuous engagement is vital for building trust	2
3. Ensure timely resolutions and frequent communication	3
4. Improve transparency and demonstrate accountability	3
5. Representation, trauma-informed training and continuous learning	4



Introduction

This report aims to inform the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services about Albertans' perspectives on the Police Review Commission, gathered during a community and stakeholder engagement held from mid-2024 to early 2025.

The engagement sought a wide range of views, aimed at informing the organizational design, policies and procedures of the Police Review Commission, as well as any legislative or regulatory changes needed to implement those measures. Engagement efforts, summarized below, involved virtual and in-person meetings, surveys, and written submissions.

The engagement began in June 2024, with a series of six topical discussion sessions open to a wide range of groups and community organizations, held online. The PRC sent invitations to approximately 700 recipients, including municipal elected officials, Indigenous communities and organizations, police commissions, police associations, health and social services agencies, ethno-cultural organizations and equity-seeking groups advocating for LGBTQ2S+ communities and people with disabilities. The sessions sought participants' perspectives on a range of topics, such as accessibility and awareness, recruitment and training, and the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and restorative practices.

Throughout Summer and Fall 2024, the PRC Implementation Team held standalone meetings with police commissions across the province, as well as representatives of the legal profession and ADR and restorative justice practitioners. The PRC Implementation Team also met with elected officials from First Nations and Metis Settlements that requested standalone meetings in response to an invitation from the minister.

The PRC Implementation Team also designed a survey for police officers, gauging their awareness and support of the PRC, as well as asking their perspectives on specific processes for notifications, timelines, resolutions, and transparency. The survey was distributed to all municipal and First Nations police services in Fall 2024 and received nearly 1,100 responses – approximately 22 per cent of sworn officers working for those organizations.

The PRC Implementation Team also surveyed community groups and organizations on several topics, including: awareness and support of the PRC, notification processes, timelines, resolutions and transparency. The community survey, which was available in English and French, was distributed to the 700 recipients on the PRC Implementation Team's contact list in March 2025. Recipients were free to forward the questionnaire to other members of their organization, resulting in nearly 1,300 responses.

This report highlights common themes raised during the PRC's formal engagement process and outlines areas where the PRC's Implementation Team is acting on suggestions and areas of concern raised by participants.

The engagement process provided a range of perspectives in a number of areas; in addition to providing the key takeaways contained in this report, the discussions underscore the importance of ongoing dialogue to ensure the PRC reflects the diverse needs and expectations of communities in Alberta.

Common Themes Raised During Engagement

1. Improve access and remove barriers to participation

What we heard: People identified potential barriers to filing a complaint and participating in subsequent investigation and/or resolution processes, including: geographic barriers for residents of rural or remote communities, language barriers for non-English speakers and systemic barriers for people with disabilities.

Even though virtual/remote meetings can help overcome geographic barriers and assistive technology can help people with disabilities, a lack of access to technology is also a barrier. There was support for exploring the use of Government of Alberta facilities and spaces belonging to community organizations as an alternative to travel and/or as a neutral setting for parties to meet; however, police associations representing rank-and-file officers stressed that safety and security measures need to be considered for in-person meetings at alternative sites.

What we're doing:

- Amendments to the *Police Amendment Act* in Spring 2025 will allow complaints to be made in ways other than in writing, as deemed appropriate by the PRC's CEO.
- Data from the community survey will inform plans to translate website content and written materials.
- PRC staff will be surveyed on their knowledge of languages other than English, to build an internal roster of people capable of providing interpretation and translation when needed.

Concepts to study further:

- Once the PRC is operational, analyze complaint data to determine feasibility of satellite offices and potential locations.
- Develop a list of Government of Alberta facilities and community groups that could offer meeting spaces.
- Assess how law enforcement organizations and other oversight agencies are using AI technology to provide real-time English translation.

2. Continuous engagement is vital for building trust

What we heard: The existing system of “police investigating themselves” has led to skepticism over whether processes for investigating complaints and administering discipline will hold officers properly accountable for misconduct. Harmful and discriminatory policies and practices employed by police and other government institutions in the past have made Indigenous Peoples, members of racialized communities and other vulnerable populations hesitant to come forward with complaints. People in small and remote communities are concerned a central agency like the PRC will weaken connections between citizens, police and local oversight bodies.

What we're doing:

- The PRC will have two community liaisons. The liaisons will build relationships with communities and local organizations with the aim of fostering trust and addressing any potential gaps in service.
- One liaison will work specifically with Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations, as well as groups serving urban Indigenous populations.
- The PRC is working with municipal and First Nations police commissions to establish regular “touch points,” when the liaisons and/or other PRC officials will attend commission meetings to hear local perspectives and discuss topics of mutual interest.

3. Ensure timely resolutions and frequent communication

What we heard: Specified timelines for resolving complaints and meaningful updates on the status of a complaint are important to all parties involved. Participants felt setting realistic timelines – and meeting them – will be vital to establishing trust in the PRC. Police associations recommended strong mechanisms for dealing with frivolous/vexatious complaints, on the basis that doing so will reduce unnecessary stress on officers and also help promote timely resolutions by keeping PRC investigators focused on cases that warrant investigation.

What we're doing:

- The PRC website will have a portal that allows parties to check on the status of their case.
- The PRC CEO will publicly report when the current 180-day timeline for completing an investigation is not met and provide reasons.

4. Improve transparency and demonstrate accountability

What we heard: There was widespread support for reporting data that will allow the public to see the nature of complaints received by the PRC, which police services are involved and the time to resolve cases. There was qualified support for publishing anonymized case summaries online: there was some opposition to that concept from rank-and-file members who completed the police officer survey, contrasted with strong support among community survey respondents.

Representatives of the legal profession were concerned that current legislation allows officers accused of Police Service Regulation offences to resign or retire to avoid investigation and potential disciplinary proceedings.

Police commissions said timely access to complaint data is necessary for “taking the pulse” of their communities and for helping them ensure that police services are addressing any identified trends.

What we're doing:

- The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) will continue to identify officers charged with criminal offences (except for cases subject to court-ordered publication bans) and issue public reports on the outcomes of concluded investigations.
- Continued engagement with the Alberta Association of Police Governance to develop standards and processes for sharing complaint data with police commissions.
- Spring 2025 amendments to the *Police Amendment Act* give the PRC CEO the authority to initiate systemic reviews related to police conduct and identified trends, without the need for a public complaint.

Next steps:

- Measures for addressing loss of jurisdiction over officers who resign or retire in the face of discipline to be developed via the Police Service Regulation.
- Determine requirements for publishing anonymized case summaries on the PRC website.

5. The PRC should reflect the communities it serves, be trauma-informed and have a culture of continuous learning

What we heard: The importance of diversity in the PRC workforce was a common theme, both in terms of recognizing Alberta's ethnic, cultural and geographic diversity, as well as striking a balance between staff with policing experience and those with no prior experience in law enforcement. People from community groups and organizations stressed a need for civilians with no policing background to be involved in investigations for the PRC to truly move away from the current state of "police investigating themselves." However, people also recognized that it took time for oversight agencies in other provinces to build this capacity, and that cases of death and serious injury can require a high level of investigative expertise. Police officers are opposed to civilians without law enforcement experience investigating PRC cases at any level: nearly two-thirds of respondents to the police officer survey disagreed with civilians investigating Level 3 misconduct complaints, which are non-criminal offences that fall under the Police Service Regulation.

There was consensus that PRC staff should be trained in trauma-informed approaches – particularly intake staff – so people who have been involved in difficult and possibly traumatic incidents feel comfortable coming forward and confident they'll be treated fairly. Indigenous communities stressed that training about Indigenous Peoples is necessary for PRC staff. Many Indigenous participants stressed that Indigenous cultural training must reflect the diversity of Alberta's Indigenous communities, and follow the principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) so Indigenous Peoples retain ownership of their traditional knowledge.

What we're doing:

- Job postings are open to external candidates, and sent to the approximately 700 community groups and organizations that participated in the PRC's formal engagement.
- Level 3 (code of conduct) investigator positions will be open to civilians with experience and training in various fields, i.e. regulatory investigations, alternative dispute resolution/mediation, law, social work, etc.
- All PRC employees will be required to complete courses on cultural competency and using emotional intelligence. This training will teach staff to use trauma-informed approaches when dealing with people and help ensure complainants receive fair and unbiased treatment.
- All PRC employees will be required to complete courses on the history of policing and governance in Canada. These courses will give staff a grounding in the present-day operating environment for police and oversight agencies, as well as an understanding of systemic injustices and mistreatment that have created distrust of government institutions, including the police.

Next steps:

- Partner with Indigenous communities and organizations to develop and deliver cultural training specific to Indigenous Peoples in Alberta.

Concepts to study further:

- Explore pathways for civilian investigators to progress to criminal investigations, through additional law enforcement training, mentoring from ASIRT investigators and studying best practices used by established oversight agencies.