

January 5, 2025



Institute for
Public Education/British Columbia

The Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Education and Child Care
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC

Dear Minister Beare,

The [Institute for Public Education](#) (IPE/BC) is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization dedicated to providing high-quality information and leadership to support and advance public education in British Columbia. We believe a robust and accessible public school system is vital for fostering democratic institutions and ensuring every child receives a welcoming, inclusive, and high-quality education.

The BC Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender recently wrote an Op-Ed in the Times Colonist (January 3, 2025) titled: [Setting the record straight on police in schools](#). We write in support of her call for a pause on School Police Liaison Officer (SPLO) programs in British Columbia. This pause is essential to address long-standing concerns raised by Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities, ensure evidence-based decision-making, and prioritize equity and inclusion in our schools.

The absence of robust evidence supporting SPLO programs' effectiveness is concerning. Reports, including Equity is Safer and findings by the BC Human Rights Commissioner, highlight that SPLO programs may contribute to feelings of criminalization and unease, especially among marginalized students. These findings align with experiences shared during consultations in school districts like Greater Victoria, Vancouver, and Toronto, many of which have ended or significantly restructured their SPLO programs.

A recent IPE/BC guest post, [The Role of School Police Liaison Officers: Do We Really Need Them](#), emphasized the lack of measurable goals, transparency, and clear oversight in SPLO programs. Former school staff have raised concerns about unclear roles and the potential for profiling, further underscoring the need for reevaluation.

We must ensure that schools remain safe, inclusive spaces for all students. To achieve this, IPE/BC strongly recommends the following:

1. Temporarily suspend SPLO programs to allow for a comprehensive, independent evaluation of their impact on student safety, equity, and well-being.
2. Engage Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities in shaping future policies to ensure their lived experiences are centered.
3. Prioritize funding for professionals such as counselors, social workers, and restorative justice practitioners to address students' needs without reliance on police presence.

We recognize the important role police play in emergencies and critical incidents. However, as the BC Human Rights Commissioner has stated, SPLO programs must not continue without clear, independent evidence demonstrating their necessity and benefit.

The Greater Victoria School Board's recent decision to end its SPLO program exemplifies a commitment to trauma-informed, equitable education. We urge your Ministry to support similar efforts across the province by fostering policies that respect community voices and prioritize the well-being of all students.

IPE/BC stands ready to collaborate with your office to ensure that British Columbia's public education system reflects the highest standards of inclusivity, equity, and evidence-based practice.

Warm regards,



Dr. Steve Cardwell

Chairperson

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It is with deep gratitude and respect, that I am learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the hə́nqəmí́nə́m speaking people of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and sə́lilwə́tə́ł (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.