



**Speaking Notes for Amrik Singh Ahluwalia – Chair, Peel Police Services Board
Black Community Action Network (BCAN)**

December 2nd, 2016

I am delighted to be here to have a conversation about the vision of the Peel Regional Police Board and how it complements the goals of Black Community Action Network. I thank Sophia for giving me this opportunity.

Police Services Board

The Peel Regional Police is regarded nationally as one of the top services in Canada. The Police Services Board governs it – a group comprised of community members tasked with overseeing the Police Service. Their role includes ensuring officers have the tools and support they need to do their job properly -- to best protect and serve the residents of Peel. The Board represents community oversight.

The vision of the Black Community Action Network of Peel is a strong and vibrant Black community in Peel. Peel Police Board wants to be a potent collaborator in you achieving your vision.

Peel Region is one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada -- now with 1.3-million people. In keeping with that growth, the cultural makeup of residents is also changing. More than 60% of people are from a visible minority background.

Peel currently has over 2,000 police officers and 900 civilian employees.

On average, the service is hiring around 100 new police officers every year to meet the growth of the region and attrition. This growth has happened with the full support of Regional Council, which has allowed the Police Services Board to commit the financial resources to provide the best equipment, the best training and the best planning possible.

The police service is lagging behind in its composition Vis a Vis visible minorities and females. For example when visible minorities are over 60%, its population in the Peel

police is 18%..... 15% in case of senior officers. It is a similar story in case of female representation. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE. It is a serious problem and the Board is undertaking to fix it.

One of the first initiatives was last year's resolution to suspend Street Checks -- also known as carding. The Board heard from the community, particularly the black community, how this practice was affecting black males disproportionately. The provincial government acted quickly and drafted a new legislation to replace street checks. Chief Evans and the Board worked collaboratively and Peel police service was the first to implement the new legislation -- eight months before the target date. The new regulations go a long way in protecting civil liberties. The regulations in my view have achieved an excellent balance in addressing your concerns versus making sure that the police has the tools to prevent and solve crime..... Crimes that hurt all of us. For example the police has to give you a reason why you have been questioned, they have to give you in writing this information plus the officer's name, as well as where you can reach to get further information. As for record keeping, most of the collected data will be expunged in 5 years. If any information is to be kept beyond that period, it will be kept in a special reservoir that is accessible only with the approval of the Chief of police. Any officer that violates the stipulated requirements will face misconduct charges, a very stiff and punitive charge.

In this society the police cannot fight and solve crime alone, it needs cooperation of the public. Take the case of a mom who works hard to support her family. She expects that when she is coming from work at night, she has the protection of the police. She also expects that her young son is not harassed while going to school or shooting hoops with his friends. The police must walk this delicate balance of providing safety while respecting the freedom and privacy of individuals. The new regulation is a major step in finding that balance. I believe that a sledge hammer of carding has been replaced with a surgical tool.

The Police Services Board wants to increase transparency of public complaints. So, it has formed a new Board committee with a view of ensuring that public trust is enhanced. This is another first.

Moving Forward Together

There are four pillars of this Board's vision & direction:

1. Enhance Public Trust
2. Police is the Public & Public is the Police
3. Robust Governance
4. Strategic, Forward-Looking Focus

The Board is initiating an independent third-party review of the police services equity and hiring practises with an aim to increasing the number of officers and senior leaders who are women and visible minorities. We are doing this to understand what the service is doing right and what other steps need to be taken to address this gap moving forward. The numbers from the past few years do show the people from ethnic backgrounds being hired has increased. However, it has clearly plateaued. And, we need to overcome that plateau. We are hopeful that a full independent review will help answer this question.

It is critical to enhance trust of the community. The Board is taking several initiatives to this end. For the first time ever - the Board's budget meetings have been opened to the public. It also is in the process of opening up a large portion of committee deliberations to the residents.

Chief Evans has started several community group advisory committees, including one from the Black community.

The Board is encouraging community groups for dialogues with the Board. It has been entertaining comments, positive and not so flattering to truly understand community issues. It believes that if the police service is going to improve and evolve, it must encourage open discussion about our service. We invite you to come share in the conversation of how to make Peel police serve you better.

While the Board is walking this new path to modernising Peel Police service, we cannot do it alone. We need your help if we were to succeed. So, what can you do?

1. Come join the Peel police. By population your community is well short of persons wanting to be police officers. We cannot hire if you don't walk through the door. Increasing your representation in the service is a key step in better serving the black community. So please encourage your friends, relatives to consider a career with police. You can make a difference from within.
2. Help the police do its job by cooperating whenever you have an opportunity.
3. Keep on a dialogue with the Board, with the Chief with a collegial spirit of cooperation.

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts on an area which is very close to my heart. I want you to know that I and the Police Board share your vision. Your success is our success. Let us continue working together to do everything that we can to make the black community **STRONG AND VIBRANT**.

Thank you.