

# Time for regional policing discussion is now, says Bond as paper on justice, public safety released

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B.C. needs to have a long-overdue chat about regional policing in Metro Vancouver and Greater Victoria, says Justice Minister Shirley Bond.

Bond said her government will research the facts, figures and costs associated with regional police forces over the next year in conjunction with the second part of its justice reform plan. The paper, A Timely, Balanced Justice System, was released Tuesday.

[www.justicebc.ca/shared/pdfs/WhitePaperTwo.pdf](http://www.justicebc.ca/shared/pdfs/WhitePaperTwo.pdf)

"For far too long there's been talk about regionalization of policing and very little homework, very little detail, very little analysis of the pros and cons of that model," Bond told reporters.

The Opposition NDP scoffed at the announcement, coming ahead of the May provincial election.

The Liberals have had more than 11 years in government to research the issue, but have avoided taking a stand, said NDP justice critic Leonard Krog.

"Basically what you have here is a floated campaign balloon," he said. "It gives them an out, and gives the appearance of industrious interest when none existed prior to the campaign."

Metro Vancouver and the Victoria capital region are policed by numerous municipal departments and RCMP detachments.

The government's second white paper considered conclusions by Missing Women Inquiry commissioner Wally Oppal, who said in December that regional police departments would likely have caught serial killer Robert Pickton much earlier.

Although it's a good sign the government is looking at the issue, it needs to be done by an independent group or else its research will lack credibility, said Rob Gordon, director of the school of criminology at Simon Fraser University.

"It really is a pity that government doesn't take its role as a producer of sound social policy more seriously, instead of trotting stuff out strategically at important times for government, obviously weighted with an eye to being re-elected," said Gordon.

The paper presents 33 "commitments" to address public safety and access to justice, including supporting the Legal Services Society to expand criminal and family legal aid service and expanding restorative justice approaches to crime through community programs.

The justice ministry said it will also create standards and protocols for missing persons and other complex investigations to ensure co-operation and co-ordination among police agencies.