

**HALIFAX**

# **Two-Year Wortley Report Summary**

Halifax Board of Police Commissioners

Board of Police Commissioners  
September 20, 2021

**Slide 1**

# Background

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In 2017, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (NSHRC) announced that it would collaborate with the community and police to study the issue of street checks. The NSHRC selected Professor Scot Wortley, University of Toronto, to review all available data, consult stakeholders and to provide a report with recommendations.

12 years of data from Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Halifax District (RCMP, Halifax District) were reviewed to inform the report, consultative meetings, interviews with police and community representatives, and an online survey where also conducted.

# Background

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March 2019 Professor Wortley released the final report titled “Halifax Nova Scotia: Street Checks Report”

Findings included:

- Within the Halifax region, Black people are grossly over-represented in police street check statistics.
- Generally, Black people are six times more likely to be street checked by police, and among those with no criminal history, the street check rate for Black individuals is twice as high as the street check rate for White individuals.
- Community members were in favor of improving relations between community and police, but without government commitment we will not see meaningful reform.

# Background

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At the April 15, 2019 meeting the Board adopted the following motion:

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners:

1. Recommend that the Chief of the Halifax Regional Police and the Chief Superintendent of the RCMP, Halifax District, suspend street checks pending the receipt and adoption of policy from the report requested September 18, 2017, to establish a street checks policy after receipt of the Halifax Street Checks Report;
2. Formally recognize that the practices of police checks has disproportionately affected the African Nova Scotian community and prepare a joint statement with the Chief of Police and Chief Superintendent to formally apologize to the African Nova Scotian community; and
3. Direct the Chair of the Board of Police Commissioners to prepare and send a letter to the Nova Scotia Minister of Justice outlining the Board's position on street checks, as well as its recommendation to the Halifax Regional Police, and the RCMP, Halifax District.

# Two-Year Update

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April 2021 the Commission decided that it would like to prepare a two-year update summarizing the progress of the Wortley Report recommendations.

The report was to include:

- Timeline of events from the issuance of the Wortley Report
- What recommendations have been completed, which are outstanding, and which are on-going
- Detail the initiatives regarding race-based data collection
- Letters from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (NSHRC), African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent, and an update from the Department of Justice (DOJ)

# Timeline

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Some of the key events since the release of the Wortley Report:

- March 27, 2019 – NSHRC publicly released the Halifax, Nova Scotia: Street Checks Report Commonly known as the Wortley Report
- March 28, 2019 - Attorney General and Minister of Justice Mark Furey directed police across the province to immediately cease using street checks as part of a quota system or performance measurement tool.
- April 15, 2019 Board of Police Commissioners meeting – Discussion of the options set out in the Wortley report relating to street checks and a motion to suspend street checks was put forward and adopted.
- May 13, 2019 Board of Police Commissioners meeting – Motion passed regarding the legality of street checks:

# Timeline cont.

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- October 18, 2019 – NSHRC releases the independent legal opinion on the legality of street checks.
- October 18, 2019 - Justice Minister Mark Furey announced that street checks are permanently banned in Nova Scotia.
- November 2019 - HRP Chief Dan Kinsella issued a formal apology to the African Nova Scotian Community.

# Status of Wortley Report recommendations

- The Wortley Recommendations Report Tracking Document provides the status of the accomplishment of the Wortley Report recommendations.
- Greater detail regarding the accomplishment of specific Wortley Report recommendations by HRP, RCMP, Halifax District and the DOJ are found in their reports.



# Initiatives Regarding Race-based Data Collection

- The DOJ coordinated the establishment of the Wortley Report Research Committee (WRRC). The WRRC is composed of representatives from African Nova Scotian community organizations, African Nova Scotian community representatives from the Northern Region, Cape Breton Region, and Southwest Region, police, African Nova Scotian Affairs, the NSHRC, and DOJ.
- The WRRC mandate includes reviewing race-based data collection models on police stops and the establishment of permanent data collection system to record information on all civilian stops. Since this work is on-going and under the coordination of the DOJ, the DOJ will update the Commission through the chair as this work moves forward.

# Letters from NSHRC and ANSDPAD

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- The board asked that letters from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission and African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent be included in this update.
- NSHRC letter highlights:
  - Background including their involvement in commissioning the Wortley Report
  - Their continued involvement including:
    - Sitting on the Wortley Report Research Committee (WRRC)
    - Department of Justice’s “Know Your Rights” initiative
- ANSDPAD letter highlights:
  - That Nova Scotia’s current criminal justice system disproportionately targets (racial profiles), criminalizes and incarcerates the African Nova Scotian (ANS) Community
  - Recommendations from the Justice Strategy Working Group of the DPAD Coalition. (Outstanding issues have been placed at the top of this list.)

# Letters from NSHRC and ANSDPAD cont.

- Some of ANSDPAD recommendations include:
  - Commit to the timely release of the traffic stop data from HRP. It has been 18 years since the Kirk Johnson decision (Halifax Regional Police Service v. Johnson (No.1) (2003), was released, and no traffic stop data has ever been released publicly.
  - Actively engage with the ANS community, ANS organizations and all levels of government to make sure that all recommendations in the Wortley Report are implemented in a timely manner and to ensure accountability provide regular updates to community
  - The Halifax Police Commission Board must support and actively engage with the Department of Justice to amend Ministers Directive that allows for “police activity” or a street check under the guise of “suspicious activity”.
  - The Police Commission Board, Halifax Regional Police, and the government of Nova Scotia should work together to notify and send data to all persons in Nova Scotia who have been street checked their data instead of placing the onus on the community to request their data.

# Letters from NSHRC and ANSDPAD cont.

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- ANSDPAD recommendations cont.:
  - Halifax Police Commission Board needs to work with HRP to review the hiring and training practices for discriminatory policies and training techniques (such as lack of de-escalation).
  - Halifax Police Commission Board needs to work with DOJ and the ANS community to create a mechanism to track police complaints, police behavior and make this information public for accountability.
  - While the Halifax Police Commission Board is currently gathering information on what defund the police means, they ask that the Board considers:
    - What formal policing needs to continue?
    - What do we do with the funds to ensure public safety?

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## Questions/Comments