



## **VANDU Education & Action Group opposes VPD Police Training Academy and District 5 headquarters**

**April 20, 2026** – The VANDU Education & Action Group opposes the establishment of a Vancouver Police Department Training Academy in the Downtown Eastside. The Academy has been approved by the City and Province as a 2-year "pilot program" and is set to occupy the former London Drugs space. The Academy, along with the new VPD District 5 headquarters and the VPD-linked community policing centre, would all be stationed at Woodward's.

These plans mark a tactical escalation and continued attack on the Downtown Eastside community by interests that seek to enlarge the police and profit off the neighbourhood's land value. The vision for the Woodward's building, imagined by the community, was one of community care, social inclusion, and dignity. The community fought with blood, sweat, and occupation, but state and capital interests regained the upper hand.

With the creation of this Academy, the VPD – in tandem with the City and the Province – are once again trampling our community vision and clawing back our basic resources. The Woodward's building is being transformed into a police compound through a process of carceral stacking. By housing the Training Academy, new District 5 headquarters, and community policing centre all in one mega-complex, the City is creating a triple-layered police presence that effectively turns what could be a community beacon into an epicentre of surveillance.

This concentration of force is a direct attack on the neighbourhood, turning our streets into training grounds for police tactics and ensuring that residents of the DTES are subjected to even higher levels of targeting, harassment, and violence. The DTES is one of the most surveilled and over-policed neighbourhoods in "Canada." This is particularly egregious at a time when vital harm reduction and healthcare services are being scaled back by all levels of government, leaving the most marginalized members of our community to die from a toxic drug supply crisis and lack of basic infrastructure.

The province of British Columbia already maintains the Justice Institute of BC, which trains hundreds of police recruits every year. Starting in May 2026, the JIBC is set to train 432 police recruits annually – an increase from last year’s 288, according to reporting by Mike Howell. A minimum of 120 of those recruits have preemptively been promised to the VPD. In addition to the bloated and constantly increasing VPD budget, which now costs the city nearly \$500 million per year, the VPD is being handed yet another means to increase its power and reach.

We reject the narrative that our neighbourhood is unsafe and therefore requires more police recruits. Safety and stability do not come from the uniformed presence of hundreds of trainees, they come from genuine measures to meet the basic needs of our community.

When London Drugs closed, the DTES lost a pharmacy, a post office, and an increasingly rare place to access essential goods. Instead of filling the void with police recruits, that space should be returned to the community to provide life-saving and essential services. Training grounds for the VPD address none of the things the community has lost or needs.

We – as community members and our supporters – must do everything to ensure that this space be used to meet community needs and address the ongoing health crisis, including overdose prevention sites, drug testing facilities, and wound care centres. The neighbourhood is also in desperate need of 24/7 public bathrooms, affordable food options, and peer-led violence support services that provide tangible safety rather than carceral punishment.

The Province, City of Vancouver, and the VPD must stop prioritizing the expansion of policing over our survival.

We do not need a police super-complex in the heart of our neighbourhood. The City must immediately halt the development of this Academy and reinvest in housing, healthcare, and dignified services, as the people of the Downtown Eastside have been demanding for decades.

Signed,  
VANDU Education & Action Group