

Difference: In several other jurisdictions, periodic in-service training is carried out by university personnel, race relations officers, or civilian visible minority community liaison officers for members of those police forces in general. Indications point to an improvement of police-visible minority community relations in some cities as reflected in the situation reports on Williams Lake, British Columbia and Calgary and these training programs are seen to be a contributing factor.

The Minister of State for Multiculturalism has sponsored another variant of police training through the International Briefing Associates. A two-city pilot in-service program will be running beginning in 1984 in Ottawa and Vancouver. Input was received from senior police officials, the city race-relations police sub-committees and the umbrella organizations for city-wide minority groups. This led to specific content and implementation approaches in each city within the common overall program goals.

Evaluation: The Committee is especially encouraged that formal, independent evaluation will take place to indicate if, in fact, attitude and behavioural change is manifested among both police and visible minority communities as a result of the programs. It would be most regrettable if the training made the situation worse and a waste of human resources if they were found to be ineffective.

Sikhs: In the testimony heard by the Committee, a few references were made to accommodating the cultural diversity and cultural differences of visible minorities within the justice system. The Sikh community took particular exception to the use by the courts of the Sikhs' holy scriptures for swearing in of witnesses and requested the return of these sacraments to them. Sikhs are not permitted to swear on a holy book but they are permitted to affirm in the conventional manner.

Language: Although rarely mentioned by witnesses, the Committee was concerned about the way judges might be influenced by the culturally-determined behavior and body-language of defendants. In certain cases, looking down or directing one's gaze is the appropriately respectful behaviour when being addressed by authority as in a court situation. This may be construed as rudeness by a judge or as an admission of complicity or guilt.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Solicitor General of Canada and his provincial and territorial counterparts should provide cross-cultural training for police, corrections administration, prison staff and judicial system personnel.