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From: The Community Relations Council
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Date: November 2006

Issue : Review/renewal of 50:50 and lateral entry provisions.

The Community Relations Council (CRC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the 'review/renewal of 50:50 and lateral entry provisions'. Council is aware the issue of 50:50 was recently debated during the St. Andrew negotiations by the political parties, and understands that this public consultation maybe be superseded by political agreement.

Nevertheless, Council feels it is important to have an input on this issue. CRC is primarily concerned with promoting Community and Good Relations and the development of a shared and peaceful future, and it is within this context that Council feels it is imperative to have a Police Service that is representative of the community it serves. Important progress has been made on increasing the representativeness of the PSNI since the implementation of 50:50 legislation and is on target to reach the goals (30%) set for it under Patten by 2010/11 for new recruits. Furthermore progress has also been made in terms of increasing the representativeness of police support staff. These positive outcomes will continue to increase confidence in the PSNI, and will be viewed as an organisation that recruits from, and offers opportunities for the whole of society.

CRC acknowledges the need for such temporary measures in terms of creating a diverse workforce but we also want to draw attention to Section 75 (2) legislation which requires all public authorities to "have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group." Northern Ireland has become much more diverse - the latest census figures show immigration is at an all time high, with 6,700 people settling in Northern Ireland last year. It is important that our established minority ethnic community and new arrivals are represented within societal structures and this includes involvement within law and order organisations. Council recognises the positive results from 50:50, in terms of addressing the imbalanced catholic representation within the PSNI, but the legislation has had an adverse impact on black minority ethnic faith (bmf) groups recruitment. Council wants to emphasis the need to examine ways of increasing recruitment from the bmf population, therefore delivering a truly representative PSNI for our growing diverse community.

It is also important within this consultation to emphasis the need for this increased representativeness to transpire throughout the various levels of the PSNI - opportunities for promotion to senior positions are applicable and deliverable regardless of community or ethnic background.

CRC looks forward to building its relationship with the PSNI and is willing to assist with the important work of working within and serving a growing diverse society.

Yours sincerely

Duncan Morrow
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