

# No 'zero tolerance' policy used in Winnipeg: police chief

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Winnipeg police do not practise a "zero-tolerance" policy when it comes to domestic violence calls, according to the force's chief.

Winnipeg city councillors received a report on the police service's policy on domestic violence Monday. Council requested the report after police Chief Jack Ewatski testified in a civil trial earlier this year that his officers do not use a "zero tolerance" approach to domestic calls.

Ewatski told a city committee Monday that officers have very clear guidelines on making arrests in such incidents.

"Reasonable grounds have to exist before they effect an arrest, and I think that's been made abundantly clear through our policy and through various court cases in both the criminal court as well as the civil court," Ewatski said.

"The test ... that has to be met by our police officers [is] that they have to have reasonable grounds to believe that an offence has occurred before they take that action. That is why I testified in a recent civil trial to say that our policy is not in conflict with the Criminal Code of Canada."

In contrast, a "zero tolerance" policy would require police to make arrests whenever an accusation of domestic abuse is made.

Ewatski maintains Manitoba leads the country in combating domestic violence.

Manitoba has one of the highest numbers of people charged in domestic abuse cases and one of the highest rates of conviction for that crime.

In the civil trial, a Winnipeg woman accused police of wrongly arresting her based on false accusations made by her ex-husband. A jury agreed, ordering police and her husband to pay more than \$40,000 in damages.