

Summer Village of Grandview

Position Paper on the proposed Alberta Provincial Police Service

On behalf of the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, the accounting firm of Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) has prepared a Transition Study report to assess the operational requirements, processes, and costs of the proposed creation of an Alberta Provincial Police Service to take over the policing duties currently handled by the RCMP in rural Alberta and many municipalities. The Summer Village Council has reviewed the publications and attended presentations made by both Alberta Justice and the National Police Federation. The following is Grandview's position paper on the proposed Alberta Provincial Police Service.

Background

An Alberta Provincial Police Service was one of 15 recommendations by the "Fair Deal Panel" created after the last provincial election. It was ranked 14th out of the 15, with Separation from Canada being the only initiative with less support. A survey conducted by the National Police Federation indicated that only 9% of Albertans favor this initiative while 84% favor keeping the RCMP. At the Mayors' Caucus of Alberta Municipalities, the majority of municipalities indicated that they were not in favor of this proposal.

PwC suggested two models with slightly different emphases on qualifications. Both models had essentially the same cost, within the accuracy of the estimates. PwC was not asked to comment on the practicality of the models presented or to make a recommendation on whether or not this transition was advisable, which seemed unusual; they just presented policing models as requested.

Rationale Presented by the Government of Alberta (GoA)

Enhanced Community Input and Accountability to Citizens

- Stronger governance measures to give communities more input on service delivery

Improved Service Levels

Comparison of Staffing Levels

	Current RCMP
Officers	3097
Civilian Members	190
Public Serv. Employees	743
Subtotal	4030

Note 1: The numbers above are slated to increase with Alberta's new police funding model.

Note 2: Public Service staff includes support staff, ALERT staff, nurses, and social workers.

Note 3: The RCMP also has 931 sheriffs with 94 support staff.

	APPS Model A	APPS Model B
Level 1 Officers	1613	3153
Level 2 Officers	1540	0
Public Serv. Employees	1036	1036
Total	4189	4189

Note 4: APPS proposes to employ 269 sheriffs.

- Increase in frontline members from 3097 to 3153

- The modeling assumes 15% of the new APPS force will consist of RCMP officers who choose to transfer to the new service. This would mean that in the beginning years 85% of the force would be inexperienced.
- APPS Model A would have 1613 fully trained officers (assuming 465 RCMP members join up and 1148 new hires are successfully recruited and trained).
- APPS Model B (projected to cost an addition \$5.5 million) would have 3153 fully trained officers (assuming 465 RCMP members join up and 2688 new hires are successfully recruited and trained).
- Finding 2688 eligible candidates could be difficult. Edmonton and Calgary city police services trained 97 and 150 new recruits last year respectively, and had to search in the UK and Australia to meet those numbers. The City of Victoria is currently offering \$20,000 signing bonuses to bolster its efforts to recruit 20 experienced officers.
- In addition, the RCMP has 20,000 volunteers in Alberta who participate in programs such as Rural Crime Watch and Victim Services. The APPS proposal assumes that these volunteers will simply align with the new service, but that assumption discounts the value of the many years of relationship building that have gone into these partnerships.
- With 56 additional officers in service, the province may be able to deploy a little more effectively in some remote areas, but the service level in the summer Village of Grandview is unlikely to change.
- With a one-time transitional cost of \$360 million and an added annual cost of \$200 million, the additional cost to the province will be about \$6.4 million per officer initially and then almost \$3.5 million per officer for each following year.

Improved Efficiency, Integration, and Value for Money

- Integrate operations with existing HR, procurement, etc.
 - Alberta has already contributed 70% of the cost of much of the infrastructure used by the RCMP in this province. The Province would need to pay up the remaining 30% to take over these assets.
 - The RCMP train officers in Regina. APPS is proposing to handle training in existing facilities in Edmonton, Calgary, and a few other cities in the province until a new training facility can be built. The cost of that facility is not included in the model presented.
 - Coordination with the federal RCMP, CSIS, and foreign police services will require time and money. The RCMP, an internationally respected service, already has integrated systems to handle litigation, claims, external review, emergency response, major crimes, drugs, and gangs.

Fit-for-Alberta Innovations

- New force will be able to reflect local priorities in Alberta communities
 - Recent complaints about rural crime spurred the RCMP to review its procedures and to devise improvements, which though not perfect, have so far reduced rural crime by 10%.
 - Apart from increasing the number of front-line officers from 3097 to 3153 (most of them inexperienced), the APPS has proposed no strategy to address this problem.

Costs

- PwC estimates a transition cost of \$360- to \$371.5-million over six years (\$60- to \$62-million per year) and an ongoing cost of \$200 million per year more than we currently pay. (Among other costs, this number includes an annual forfeiture of approximately \$180 million per year in federal funds.)
 - As a comparison, the city of Surrey, BC, is currently transitioning from policing by the RCMP to policing by a municipal police force. The transition was projected to take four years and cost \$19 million. After four years, it is still incomplete, and the bill is now at \$80 million (a 421% overrun).
 - Even if the GoA avoids passing these costs on to municipalities directly, municipalities will still pay indirectly if the funding decisions lead to decreases in MRI and/or infrastructure grants.

Comments and Conclusions

The initiative to create an Alberta Provincial Police Service appears to be a solution looking for a problem. Although many voices have expressed frustration with Alberta's justice system, which has suffered recently from a shortage of judges, crown prosecutors, and public defenders, there has been no outcry for a different police force. The financial analysis done by Price Waterhouse Cooper suggests that changing police models in Alberta would add considerable costs and many unknown challenges without proportionate benefits.

Many concerns have been identified in the creation of a new force: recruitment, infrastructure including forensic laboratories and equipment, loss of expertise and depth of knowledge, accuracy of cost estimates, and risk of failure. The basic question that we can't seem to find an answer to is Why? Alberta is a vast province, and police presence is sparse in much of its rural areas. Changing the number of officers fractionally will do little to change this fact. Examining the root cause of the need for an improved policing model clearly points to social issues and problems in our justice system, which has been described as a revolving door.

Another factor that has largely gone unaddressed is the strife and turmoil that will be caused by replacing the RCMP. This storied institution is respected worldwide as Canada's police force. It is cherished by many, and the suggestion that it will be replaced by an undertrained and costly group of new recruits raises an air of skepticism and criticism.

For all of the reasons above, the Summer Village of Grandview is opposed to the creation of a new Provincial Police Service to replace the RCMP. We believe better outcomes could be achieved by directing an equivalent level of funding towards improvements in the justice system, mental health support, and improved social programs, and by working in collaboration with the RCMP to improve that force where there are identified weaknesses.