



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

FILE: 01-0410-05

June 16, 2023

The Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Via Email: PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Farnworth:

Re: Recent Decision to Reduce the Role of Highway Patrol In Responding to Traffic Collisions on Numbered Provincial Highways

I write today to express concerns on behalf of the City of Mission about the recent decision to reduce the role of Highway Patrol in responding to traffic collisions on numbered provincial highways.

We have three concerns. First, we believe the RCMP has made this decision without adequately consulting Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver municipalities. Second, we believe that this decision will have a negative impact on our community policing capacity, reducing safety, and increasing detachment workloads which are already stressed. Finally, we are concerned that this decision will negatively impact our ability to budget for our policing services.

The decision-making process on this matter did not achieve the standard we expect from the RCMP. Municipalities first heard about this decision via an RCMP-CAO Zoom call in March 2023, with no official recognition in writing until May 16 of this year. According to Chief Superintendent Turton, the decision received support from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General in February of this year, even though nobody at the municipal level had any opportunity to give input. As you have heard from Mission, we believe there should be more collaboration in strategic and capital policing decisions. This decision offered no collaboration whatsoever, despite the fact it will impact our budget and community safety.

In her remarks at the Mayors' Forum on May 23, C/Supt. Turton advised that the RCMP felt it was complying with its responsibility for consultation by giving six months' notice. Her remarks were met with considerable alarm from the Mayors in attendance. Without more time or an opportunity to plan together, local governments are left guessing about the impact on our municipal resources and the best way to adjust to these changes. Many expressed the very real

concern that an incident on a local highway could draw away the members of a detachment for 12 or more hours, leaving no one to respond to public safety matters in their communities.

Mayors and CAOs are still awaiting a fulsome description of how local detachments and BCHP will partner with us. To-date, we have only been assured that BCHP will assist "when we can."

Further, C/Supt. Turton's May 16th letter and May 23rd comments alluded to the recruitment benefits of this policy "re-alignment." She stated that BCHP candidates want to work on proactive traffic enforcement matters, and that collision response is a deterrent to recruitment. Mission believes strongly that this policy change will have the effect of transferring the burden to our local members, worsening detachment morale and making it harder to retain officers. They too need an opportunity to work proactively. They too have concerns about workload.

C/Supt. Turton also indicated that the province's recent decision to add \$230 million for the recruitment of provincial officers would help to offset this realignment. As you know, Mission has been advocating for additional provincial officers since 2008. While we appreciate these dollars for the recruitment of new provincial officers, it is not accurate to describe them as a remedy to any reduced capacity of BCHP.

In the last few years, local governments have struggled to keep their policing budgets at a sustainable level. As we grow, we aim to maintain a ratio of 1 member per 750 citizens, but that has become increasingly difficult given the budgetary pressures caused by the first RCMP collective agreement, body-worn cameras, body armour and costs associated with 9-1-1. Mission has seen RCMP members asked to broaden their scope of work in areas such as Situation Tables, homelessness outreach, and secondment to areas threatened by wildfire. We have been advised to expect a significant increase in the next IHIT budget and to prepare for the next round of collective bargaining. While all these items create budgetary pressures, they can at least be described as "value additions." The realignment of BCHP services stands alone because it will likely cost cities more while reducing levels of service.

According to C/Supt. Turton, the current service delivery model has existed for at least twelve years. Here in Mission, we believe that changing a relationship of that duration deserves careful consideration by all stakeholders. For these reasons, we call upon PSSG to ensure the following:

1. That the effective date of September 1, 2023, be delayed so that local municipalities, local police services, and the RCMP Lower Mainland District can adequately plan for a safe transition.
2. That BCHP and local detachments work together to achieve a clear and mutual understanding of their roles, the conditions for shared work, and a phased schedule for these changes to occur.
3. That a clear method and timeline for assessing the new model is included in our collective planning, with resources for adjusting to any challenges along the way.

Mission has been served well by the RCMP and we remain dedicated to working with them to provide quality policing in our community. To do so, we must ensure that local voices are heard in decisions about policing policy and funding. I fear that this recent decision will have a deleterious effect on our relationship with the RCMP unless you intervene to ensure that there is an equitable and collaborative dialogue involving all parties.

Sincerely,



PAUL HORN
MAYOR

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