



ALBERTA
JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-Acadia*

AR50920

JUN 17 2022

Her Worship Cathy Heron
president@abmunis.ca

Dear President Heron:

Thank you for your letter dated March 29, 2022 regarding the Alberta Municipalities Request for Decision (RFD) and your members' position on the Alberta Provincial Police (APP) proposal. I appreciate your feedback about the engagement process and sincerely thank you for raising this issue with me by letter and again when we met on April 8, 2022.

I will certainly acknowledge that our government can do a better job explaining the reasons why we are undertaking a serious review of the APP model as presented in the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report. Our government believes that a provincial police, no longer fettered by bureaucratic management in Ottawa, could be more responsive to the true needs of Albertans and the safety of our communities.

While the Government of Alberta greatly respects the important role that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has as Canada's national police force, Alberta's existing contract for province-wide policing lies with the federal government, not with the RCMP. This is an important distinction, as our concerns are with the federal agreement, which over the years has prevented successive governments from significantly improving policing at a local level. These concerns include:

- Limited civilian oversight and governance structure. Since the RCMP is governed by federal legislation, regulations, and policy, Alberta can only go so far to improve governance in Alberta without the federal government's willingness to listen and act accordingly.
- Recruitment and detachment staffing remains a problem for Alberta, especially in rural areas. Decisions about recruiting, staffing, and transfers are all done at a national level and Alberta's needs take a back seat, when weighed against the needs of other provinces.
- Training is done out-of-province and is not Alberta focused. Alberta is different from other parts of Canada, and the training our provincial police officers receive should reflect this difference.

- The federal government uses a national forensic laboratory system. This system prioritizes processing only the most serious criminal forensic evidence and only rarely processes evidence for offences like property crime. As any homeowner who has been victimized by a break and enter can tell you, Alberta needs its own forensic laboratory so all forensic evidence is processed and these crimes can be prosecuted appropriately.
- The federal government unilaterally signed a multi-year collective agreement that resulted in dramatic increases to costs for municipalities. While Alberta's government supports efforts to compensate RCMP officers fairly, the provincial government and municipalities who contract with the federal government were not allowed to participate at the negotiating table. Alberta needs a model that ensures local control over cost drivers.

It is clear that Albertans greatly value the work of frontline RCMP members and civilian employees and the role that they have in Alberta's communities. Should Alberta decide to adopt a provincial policing model, Alberta's government would welcome as many RCMP members and civilian staff to transfer into a provincial police as is practicable.

Another important aspect of this discussion is that it is well known that federal government has long planned to exit contract policing. In 2021, the federal parliament released a report which found that the RCMP's contract policing role makes it difficult for the RCMP to focus on frontline community policing while at the same time providing national police services. The federal government has also pointed out the escalating cost of RCMP contract policing, and the Prime Minister's recent mandate letter to the minister responsible for the RCMP includes direction to conduct an assessment of RCMP contract policing in consultation with provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities.

That is why there has been a national conversation taking place about the future of contract policing. The provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan have all announced plans to examine provincial policing models. In spring of this year, a British Columbia committee of politicians from all parties, unanimously recommended that BC replace the RCMP with a new provincial police service. At the municipal level, Surrey, BC is in the process of transitioning from the RCMP to their own municipal police and several municipalities in the Maritimes are also considering a change.

I also firmly believe we can develop our own provincial police with no additional costs to our municipalities. Our municipalities will not be expected to pay transition costs. Our municipalities will not be forced to absorb the current subsidy. Although no decision has yet been made, I can assure that any transition to a provincial model would only occur if our municipalities pay the same or less for an APP, compared to what they pay under the federal agreement, where costs continue to escalate.

Alberta has long prided itself as innovative, resourceful province and our municipal partners play a critical role in this. While I am disappointed to hear that your members were not satisfied with their participation in the APP engagement sessions, I would very much like to continue working with Alberta Municipalities to hear your members' thoughts and comments about the APP model and the benefits it could have for Alberta – from increased frontline officers, to embedded mental health professionals, to a system which respects, upholds and works alongside our standalone municipal and First Nations policing services.

However, the ultimate goal of an APP – and I cannot emphasize this strongly enough – is to improve service levels and keep Albertans safe. If the federal government is interested in exiting contract policing as they appear to be, Alberta would like to set its own course and control its own destiny in ensuring we have the safest communities in the country, protected by a responsive, made-in-Alberta, for-Alberta police force. We plan to continue working to engage you and your members over the course of the summer in further discussions about an APP and we hope you will continue providing your thoughts, concerns and feedback with us, as you did in the thoughtful RFD you shared with me.

If Alberta Municipalities would like to have additional discussions with me about an APP, I welcome the opportunity to meet. Please feel free to contact my office at: ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-2339 to set a meeting on this important topic.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and share your thoughts. I look forward to working with you further as we ensure all Albertans feel safe, secure, and protected in their communities, no matter where they live.

Sincerely,



Tyler Shandro, QC
Minister

cc: Honourable Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs