

Alberta Provincial Police Service: Principles, Policy Positions, and Recommendations

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About Alberta Municipalities

Established in 1905, Alberta Municipalities (ABMunis) represents the urban municipalities – cities, towns, villages, summer villages, and specialized municipalities – where over 85% of Albertans live. Like our members, we are dynamic and constantly evolving. What remains constant is our commitment to providing solutions and resources for municipal issues and challenges.

ABMunis works with the elected and administrative leaders of Alberta's urban municipalities to advocate for solutions to municipal issues, and to identify and develop opportunities that contribute to key components of community building. Our solutions include developing policies and toolkits, providing education and training, and collaborating with other orders of government to achieve beneficial change.

At ABMunis, we strive to ensure that everyone – at every level of government – understands that municipal governments are accountable to their citizens and are trusted to act in the best interests of their respective communities. Municipal governments are intrinsically involved in the everyday lives of the people they serve. They guide and oversee the issues, programs, and services that most directly impact the day-to-day lives of their citizens, which helps make municipalities the most transparent order of government. ABMunis is proud to share our members' expertise and feedback to achieve the best possible outcomes for Albertans.

Introduction

In November 2019, Premier Jason Kenney established the Fair Deal Panel to assess whether Alberta is being treated equitably compared to other provinces within Canada. The panel conducted public hearings from December 2019 to February 2020 and released its final report in June 2020. The report included a recommendation to create an APPS to replace the RCMP. The province's response to the report indicated that further analysis and work was required before this recommendation could be implemented. The province subsequently awarded \$2 million to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to develop a feasibility study on establishing an APPS.

The PwC feasibility study was officially released on October 29, 2021. The study consists of three separate reports:

- The APPS Transition Study Final Report, which provides an executive overview of the current state of policing in Alberta and the proposed APPS model.
- The APPS Current State Report, which explains the current state of policing in Alberta, including information on costs, deployment, compensation, equipment, shared services, etc.
- The APPS Future State Report, which explains the proposed APPS service delivery model and includes recommendations related to governance, deployment, costing, training, etc.

The PwC feasibility study does not provide a formal stance or recommendation on establishing an independent APPS; instead, it lays out a framework for how such a service could be implemented. Alberta Justice and Solicitor General is further studying the potential transition to an APPS by holding stakeholder engagement and a public survey on this topic in early 2022.

ABMunis appreciates the Government of Alberta's efforts to engage with municipalities on this important issue and we are pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed model for an APPS. This written submission was developed with the assistance of our members and policy committees, and outlines our principles, policy positions, and recommendations for a provincial police service.

Principles for a Provincial Police Service

ABMunis hosted a virtual summit for members on February 17, 2021 to discuss the feasibility of establishing an APPS. At the end of the session, attendees were surveyed about their thoughts on establishing an APPS. The survey results showed a high level of support for retaining the RCMP as Alberta's provincial police service. Although attendees indicated that they favoured improvements to RCMP governance and service levels, the majority disagreed that an independent APPS would better meet their communities' need than the current policing model with respect to service levels, local governance and oversight, and operating costs.

After the summit, the ABMunis Board chose to hold off on announcing a policy position related to an APPS until the PwC feasibility study was made available for review. In preparation for the study's release and subsequent advocacy, the ABMunis Board worked with members to develop a set of principles for a provincial police service. These principles reflect the needs and priorities of municipalities and are applicable to any provincial police service (PPS), regardless of the service provider.

Principle 1: Police Governance and Oversight

- A PPS must ensure that all municipalities have meaningful input into developing local policing priorities.
- Governance and oversight bodies for a PPS must include municipal representation at local, regional, and provincial levels.
- A PPS must provide regular reporting on policing priorities and outcomes to the municipalities it serves.

Principle 2: Police Service Levels

- A PPS must establish and deliver a minimum standard of policing infrastructure, supervision, administration, and front-line services necessary to respond to calls for service and provide adequate proactive policing in all Alberta municipalities.
- This minimum standard must exceed current RCMP performance.
- The Government of Alberta must create, with input from municipalities, metrics to demonstrate that the minimum standard is being met or exceeded in all Alberta municipalities.
- The Government of Alberta must publicly share reporting on PPS performance.

Principle 3: Policing Costs

- Municipalities must not bear any of the costs associated with implementing and transitioning to a provincial police service.
- Police funding must be based on the principles of fairness, transparency, and predictability.
- The Government of Alberta must fill the funding gap associated with the loss of federal funding for using RCMP services.
- Municipal policing costs for a PPS must be at minimum 5% below current RCMP policing costs.
- All municipalities must pay an equitable share of policing costs for the minimum standard of policing.
- Municipalities must retain the ability to negotiate contracts with a PPS. Municipalities requesting contract enhancements, e.g. additional dedicated officers or staff, would be responsible for paying the additional cost of providing these.

Policy Positions on the Proposed Alberta Provincial Police Service

Policing is a long-standing issue for Alberta municipalities and ABMunis has called repeatedly on the province to address municipal concerns around police governance and oversight, inequities in the police funding model, prolific offenders, and emergency response times. While the APPS model described in the PwC study could potentially mitigate some of these long-standing issues, there are critical information gaps in the study that make it difficult to provide meaningful feedback. ABMunis has also heard concerns from members related the provincial engagement process, and the Government of Alberta's inability to answer questions about funding, service levels, and municipal policing costs.

Accordingly, while ABMunis is not fully opposed to the idea of establishing an APPS, we do not support the current government's proposal. Our policy positions are as follows:

1. Any provincial police service transition must be done in collaboration with stakeholders and other levels of government. We strongly oppose the Government of Alberta leading this initiative without full support and meaningful collaboration from municipal governments.
2. If the Government of Alberta continues to pursue this initiative without municipal support and collaboration, then a provincial referendum on this question must be put to **all** Albertans.
3. Any provincial police service transition must be appropriately planned and executed along a reasonable timeline.
4. All parties participating in a provincial police service transition must demonstrate the ability to provide police service levels that meet or exceed provincial standards. This principle aligns with current practices around changes in municipal policing arrangements: under the Alberta Police Act, municipalities with populations over 5,000 are responsible for providing local police services, but any changes in municipal policing arrangements require the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General's approval to ensure that policing will continue to meet provincial standards.

Recommendations for Provincial Policing

The PwC feasibility study identifies several policing innovations that should be explored regardless of who provides provincial police services. These innovations relate to enhanced community input and accountability to citizens, improved service levels and responsiveness, and improved efficiency, integration and value for money. ABMunis generally supports the organization values and guiding principles described in the PwC future state report, and specifically supports the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Use an integrated model sharing resources, data, and intelligence across all police services and non-policing partner organizations.
- Recommendation 2: Create an arm's length PPS agency governed by an independent, diverse, and representative Provincial Police Commission of Alberta.
- Recommendation 3: Include civilian oversight, drive accountability to local communities, and steer a PPS to achieve public safety outcomes.
- Recommendation 5: Conduct independent financial reviews and audits to ensure accountability of a PPS in providing appropriate value for the public funds.
- Recommendation 6: Appoint a police commission with a varied professional skill set and a diversity of representation from rural, urban, and Indigenous communities.
- Recommendation 7: Build area police commissions into a PPS governance structure to give local voices a strong mechanism and ensure local priorities are heard.
- Recommendation 9: Develop an evidence-based Continuous Improvement and Organizational Learning Branch to drive innovation and efficiency.
- Recommendation 10: Build PPS operations and workforce around community policing, problem solving, and customer service.
- Recommendation 15: Report on community policing activities completed by PPS members should be reported and use these as the metrics for year-end performance reviews.

- Recommendation 17: Collaborate to implement and expand the use of Hub Tables that can be accessed in person or virtually as a core community policing service.
- Recommendation 18: Implement dedicated mental health and addiction response teams to tailor response to the needs of Albertans.
- Recommendation 29: Develop a comprehensive mental health and well-being program to support PPS members and their families in identifying, mitigating, and managing the impacts of police service.

Based on member feedback, ABMunis has developed additional recommendations that the Government of Alberta should implement to support effective provincial policing:

1. Provide adequate funding for police, health, housing, family, and social services. Funding should support minimum service standards and reflect demand and population growth.
2. Provide adequate funding to Alberta's judicial system and services.
3. Integrate policing with health, housing, family, and social services.
4. Fully investigate a hub and spoke detachment model for the provincial police service.
5. Fully investigate the feasibility of creating an Alberta Forensic and Biology Laboratory.

Ultimately, at this time ABMunis believes that the Government of Alberta should focus more on how to invest resources to improve existing police services and address the root causes of crime, and less on who is providing police services.