

# RCMP the Line of First Defence and Resource of Last Resort

## Issues

It is a fact that RCMP costs are the highest line item cost in most municipal budgets across the northern half of the provinces and the territories. These costs have become onerous on small communities and at the same time the members in small town detachments are overwhelmed and overworked, resulting in RCMP detachments that can no longer provide a safe community that allows businesses to operate without threat.

In order to seek a solution as to how we can support RCMP detachments we need to examine a number of factors contributing to the stresses on the RCMP today.

## Financial Resources

Putting more money into the system would help but cannot be sustained by the municipalities given the funding system that exists in the country today.

Communities are expected to make the following contributions to the overall cost of the RCMP services.

Rural and unincorporated areas pay less than 50% of the cost, small towns (5,000 to 15,000) have to pay 70% of their costs and communities over 15,000 have to pay 90%. The remainder is paid for by the provincial/territorial and federal governments.<sup>1</sup>

Weaknesses in this formula include:

- Municipalities support the RCMP by taxing property. These taxes become a huge drain on property owners and businesses, especially in towns where there is no industrial base. This is not sustainable.
- This formula does not address the actual policing capacity needed in a community.
- There is no equality in who pays how much. Unincorporated areas only have to pay 50% of their policing costs. There is no desire for rural areas to amalgamate with adjacent larger communities as the tax hike for policing is so high.
- An integrated detachment then has to track costs for three different agencies.
- The RCMP has seen a growing protest across the country amidst calls for fair compensation, with officers speaking out against the pay discrepancies between the RCMP and municipal forces.

In northwest British Columbia where 40% of the population is First Nations, there is only one RCMP member assigned as a liaison person to address First Nations issues. The federal government needs to ensure that our First Nations have the support they require. When your region's population is 40% First Nations, having members specifically focused on First Nations issues and relationships is important.

## Productivity

Enforcing the rule of law is fundamental to sustaining the safety of our communities. Rising costs have to be examined to determine that delivery of the service that is expected of the RCMP today is done in a productive manner. Examination of in-house bureaucratic requirements needs to take place and the interaction of the RCMP and social services needs to be more closely harmonized and streamlined.

While staffing levels have not changed for many years, demands on staff time have increased exponentially; more paperwork, more training to meet new standards, but particularly more time spent to fulfill the social needs of our changing communities.

Examining the productivity of the force is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ccaps-spcca/contract-eng.htm>

This productivity is eroded by a myriad of forces, such as the tangled contractual system amongst federal, provincial/territorial, municipal and rural models of delivery and funding.

### **Role of the RCMP in communities today**

What was in the past a role to be played of enforcing the law has now expanded to support the social needs of a community. There is an expectation today that the RCMP is to be there for those in our society who desperately need support but have fallen through the cracks of the myriad of unintegrated social service agencies.

Due to a lack of resources devoted to the social sector, in particular social services targeting mental health, the RCMP has become the resource of last resort when people cannot find support from social services, medical systems, or the courts. The RCMP is there to deal with the cases that no one wants. To do this they require increased funding and staffing.

This departure from the intended purpose of the RCMP, which was enforcing the law, has put stress on the members and has demanded time away from the job they were meant to do. It has reduced productivity and, at the same time, overwhelmed the already limited resources they have at hand.

The two responsible agencies are the corporate RCMP themselves (in that they have not supported the men and women on the street who live through these struggles on a daily basis) and the provincial/territorial governments which have not recognized that such a crucial service to the health of our communities needs their continued and urgent support.

Without adequate funding, productivity gains, support for the members as they do their jobs, how can we expect the RCMP to meet such demanding challenges today such as the opioid crisis?

Many reports, as posted on the RCMP website, have been written about this situation. It is time that concrete steps are taken to correct it.

### **Recommendations**

That the federal government:

1. Conduct a thorough analysis to ensure that funding of the RCMP is adequate, fair and equitable for rural, municipal and Indigenous communities;
2. Together with the RCMP and the provincial/territorial governments, work diligently and with urgency to examine and alleviate those issues that have an impact on the productivity of the Force as well as the wellbeing of their members; and
3. Collaborate with the provinces managing provincial forces – Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario – on addressing operational issues within the RCMP, Sûreté du Québec, Ontario Provincial Police and Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.