

Backgrounder: Rural Municipalities of Alberta Opposition to Alberta Provincial Police Service Transition

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) membership recently presented and approved a resolution for the [Continued Support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta](#). Subsequently the RMA issued a [press release](#) and a [formal submission](#) to Alberta Justice and Solicitor General opposing the proposed Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS) transition. This document is intended to provide background on RMA's concerns.

Costs

- ♦ The current cost of policing in Alberta borne by the provincial and federal governments is \$783M, which includes both RCMP and provincial sheriffs. This does not include municipal costs for municipal police services such as the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) or Calgary Police Service (CPS).
- ♦ The transition study proposes two models: Model A would see two levels of officers created, with level 1 officers trained to respond to all calls and level 2 officers trained to respond to lower severity calls; Model B would see all officers trained to the same standard (level 1).
- ♦ The transition study shows that creating an APPS could save \$24 million annually for a force with all level 1 officers (Model B) or \$49 million for a force with approximately half level 1 officers and half lesser trained level 2 officers (Model A). These savings, however, do not tell the complete story as it would cost Alberta more than \$188.3 million per year in lost federal cost sharing for the RCMP with an additional transition cost of \$366 million.
- ♦ Therefore, the net cost of transitioning is between \$139 million and \$164 million per year, depending on which staffing model is selected, plus \$366 million in transition costs.
- ♦ Statements that municipalities will not pay more means that the province and Alberta taxpayers will be picking up these large additional costs as opposed to municipalities. There is only one taxpayer.

Lack of Cost/Benefit Analysis

- ♦ The province went directly to preparing an APPS transition study to answer the question of “how” to form a provincial police force and “how much” it would cost to facilitate. The transition study, however, does not include a benefit versus risk analysis for making the change – no “why” or “what” improved policing service objectives were required to justify a change. As well there was no analysis or comparison considering what it would take to improve the existing RCMP arrangement to meet new policing objectives.
- ♦ The only justification provided was from the Fair Deal Panel report that stated a provincial police service “would send a message to Ottawa that Alberta was in charge of its destiny, and that it would rather spend its own money on its own men and women, rather than paying for a bloated Ottawa bureaucracy.”
- ♦ The transition study, however, does not identify significant net financial savings or detail how police services will be improved. Instead, there are more costs.
- ♦ The motivation, therefore, appears to be political as opposed to being based on the cost/benefit of providing essential policing service to the citizens of Alberta.

Red Herring Argument of Ottawa Control of RCMP Policing in Alberta

- ♦ The provincial Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has the responsibility, through the federal-provincial RCMP policing agreement, to set the objectives, priorities and goals of the provincial police service.
- ♦ Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and RCMP “K” Division collaborate to develop an annual business plan to set the strategic objectives for policing in the province.
- ♦ Separately, municipalities with a RCMP contract set priorities locally via local policing plans.
- ♦ The result is that the federal government in Ottawa has no involvement in determining policing priorities and activities in Alberta.

Staffing Plan is Not Feasible

- ♦ The transition study advises of the replacement of the RCMP as a force would require the hiring of over 3,000 officers and 1,500 support personnel over a one-to-two-year period. The officers alone would be the largest recruitment of public service workers in Canadian history at a time of tremendous workforce shortages everywhere, including policing.
- ♦ As the transition study was an implementation plan, not a feasibility analysis, the report was silent on the impracticality of hiring thousands of trained police officers.

Risk to Essential Service

- ♦ There is no evidence that replacing the RCMP with an APPS will result in better policing as this would mean replacing an experienced force with one with no experience or tested organizational structure.
- ♦ Rural municipalities are all too familiar with the degradation of another essential service, EMS or ambulance services, when it shifted from municipal to provincial responsibility.
- ♦ The result is a risk to the quality of police protection to Albertans by bringing in an unknown and unproven service. This is compounded by the risk of not being able to hire and train thousands of officers from all over Canada at once. The resulting uncertainty of service delivery and disruption to communities in order “to send a message to Ottawa” is not deemed a responsible action to take for such a large essential service.

Lack of Municipal Support

- ♦ Municipalities fund police services and plan policing priorities for their communities – they have a vested responsibility for providing this service to their citizens. After nearly a year of engagement and six months of reviewing the findings in the transition study, the membership of both Alberta municipal associations passed resolutions or motions at their March 2022 conventions opposing the formation of the Alberta Provincial Police Service.
- ♦ The result is that the municipal sector opposes the concept of creating an Alberta Provincial Police Service as proposed.

Lack of Citizen Support

- ♦ From the only public polling completed, the October 2020 Pollara Strategic Insights poll:
 - ◇ When respondents from all over Alberta were asked the specific question “Do you support the Fair Deal recommendation to create an Alberta police service to replace the RCMP” only 29% indicated support. This respondent group, however, included the over half of Alberta’s population not served by RCMP (i.e., Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat).
 - ◇ Among all respondents in communities actually served by RCMP, just 6% of respondents supported replacing the RCMP with a provincial police service with 36% supported maintaining RCMP service with “significant improvements.”

- ◆ Originally there was a belief that the province would add the question of replacing the RCMP service with an Alberta Provincial Police Service as a referendum question, along with other Fair Deal Report recommendations. However, only the question on equalization was added to the municipal ballot in October 2021. There is an opportunity to add to the May 2022 provincial election as a referendum question.

Ottawa's Review of Contract Policing

- ◆ The federal Minister of Public Safety will be consulting with provinces and territories on the pros and cons of discontinuing RCMP contract policing with provinces as per his mandate letter. RMA encourages this consultation and analysis be undertaken as a Canada-wide discussion, and result in the ultimate Canada-wide decision regarding the future of RCMP contract provincial policing. If the federal government actually discontinued RCMP contract policing with provinces this would be better than Alberta acting alone for two reasons:
 - ◇ It would mean existing RCMP officers would be open to being hired by provincial forces and feasibly transitioned.
 - ◇ There would probably be federal transition cost dollars available.