



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES

What We Heard Report: Membership Engagement on Policing

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

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What We Heard Report Overview

This report provides an overview of information that NSFAM has gathered by engaging with members on the matter of policing. NSFAM is dedicated to identifying both common and distinct challenges experienced by the municipalities of Nova Scotia. In response to identified challenges, NSFAM conducts the education, collaboration, and advocacy necessary to ensure that members are equipped to overcome them.

In Nova Scotia, municipalities hold the important responsibility of providing day-to-day policing services. Using a range of policing models, all municipalities work hard to provide a high standard of safety to their residents and visitors. By engaging with members, NSFAM is able to better understand the limitations and opportunities of these different policing models. This report is a contribution to general member awareness and a step toward bringing a municipal vision of policing services into view.

In the attached appendices, members can find materials that explain issues and opportunities of municipal policing in Nova Scotia.

Initial Engagement on Municipal Policing

The **rising cost** and **increased complexity** of policing calls for attention. Whether municipalities receive contract policing from the RCMP or a municipal police force, they seek to ensure that their investment is effective in addressing community needs.

In general, municipalities rely on **central support and specialized services** provided by the RCMP and National Forensic Lab. These services are not always locally available, which causes slow response times. Another general challenge is that police officer **workload often includes duties** (e.g.: court preparation, hospital chaperon) **that take them away from being active in the communities** they serve.

NSFAM identified that **Advisory Boards and Boards of Police Commissioners** often have a provincially-appointed position that has been left vacant for a considerable amount of time.

The **Additional Officer Program (AOP)** was identified as an effective way that the provincial government can increase the capacity of all police forces to attend to both regular and distinct service demands.

Municipalities with a municipal police force have the unique strength of being able to directly set the budget and priorities for their police force through their chief of police and Board of Police Commissioners. Municipal police forces are also able to collaborate with other police forces to address challenges, such as the limited availability of central support and specialized services. However, municipalities with a municipal police force do not necessarily have a cost-share partner and must finance their police budgets independently. Municipal police forces also lack a formalized channel of communication with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Municipalities receiving contract policing services occasionally experienced difficulties obtaining requested information with their Advisory Boards and have limited say in the priorities, objectives, and budget of their police forces. Despite the advantages of pooling costs and receiving backup for special events, contract policing obligates municipalities to pay a large portion of the overall cost without having a proportionate amount of discretion over and information on their police force. The high number of vacant positions resulting from staff shortages and long-term leave is a pressing concern for these municipalities as well.

NSFM staff created a two-page document for members to review at a NSFM Meeting on Policing on July 12th, 2023 (**found in Appendix A**). The first page of this two-page document outlines the abovementioned policing service issues. The second page of this document compares Municipal Policing Service Agreements (MPSAs) and the Provincial Policing Service Agreement (PPSA) from a municipal perspective. This comparison helps to identify how these policing services agreements can be improved for municipalities by ensuring consultation on certain decisions and an ability to influence of the priorities, goals, objectives, and composition of their police force.

Meeting on Policing to Review Initial Research

NSFM held an online discussion on policing that included municipal elected officials and staff. NSFM President, Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, presented the two-page research document and called for discussion and questions. Members that attended confirmed many of the points included in the document and did not request any corrections. Municipalities do not always experience all of the issues stated in this document, but the identified issues and opportunities were characterized as accurate.

Members present provided additional insights into how **new administrative support staff** are being hired to relieve officers from court preparation and other administrative tasks and allow them to remain deployed. Another position that received a lot of attention was that of **the Crisis Navigator and Community Safety Officer**, which is meant to assist in response to calls that require supports for mental health as opposed to traditional approaches to law enforcement.

Members present also raised concern with **current recruitment and retention issues**, which occasionally involve the RCMP recruiting officers from a municipal police force as part of the RCMP's Experienced Officer Program. NSFM was able to share information on how the RCMP is modifying their training and deployment practices, and how the Nova Scotia Department of Justice is working to address recruitment issues felt across all policing models.

NSFM provided written responses and further information on questions discussed in this online meeting (**found in Appendix B**).

NSFM Survey on Policing Services

NSFM invited member units to participate in a survey on policing service on May 23, 2023. With gratitude to the members who responded, NSFM is happy to report a response rate of 43%. Responses to this survey provide a range of current and comparable concerns related to the cost, governance, service demands, and staffing of policing services.

For further details, see the complete survey report and the survey itself (**found in Appendix C and C2**).

Rising Costs

Survey findings confirmed that the cost of policing services occupies a significant and growing portion of municipal budgets across policing models.

Respondents representing municipal police forces were able to provide more information on costs and what their cost drivers are. On the other hand, respondents receiving contract policing services from the RCMP typically state that they are unaware of specific cost drivers, aside from salary.

Governance and Oversight

Advisory Boards are reported to be meeting regularly and to be productive overall, with occasional difficulties obtaining desired information in a timely fashion. Respondents receiving contract policing services expressed a desire for **more information on overtime, budgetary information, vacant positions, and responses to local concerns**.

Boards of Police Commissioners meet more frequently, and respondents representing municipal police forces also mentioned **success in developing strategic plans** around locally-determined priorities.

The most frequent governance-related concern expressed by respondents across policing models was the **long-running absence of a provincial appointee**.

Central Support and Centralized Services

Respondents reportedly make ample use of central support and specialized services. Across policing models, there is a notable utilization of Police Service Dogs, Emergency Response Teams, Identification Services, and Collision Analysis. Respondents across policing models expressed a desire for **more responsive and affordable sources of central support services**.

A few municipal police forces have recently developed formalized approaches to sharing central support and specialized services to address concerns with RCMP and National Forensic Lab provisions.

Service levels

Many municipalities, across policing models, reported **increased demand for both standard services and new services**. These services range from increased officer visibility to nuanced approaches to responding to calls related to mental health. Some respondents receiving contract policing reported difficulty ensuring that RCMP officers are responding to local concerns and by-law enforcement. Respondents affirmed the importance of **Community Policing** and that this approach to policing should be supported and implemented more than it currently is.

There are also a number of **time-consuming responsibilities** that reduce the amount of time that officers spend preventing crime and increasing police visibility. Many respondents indicate that they are expanding this officer complement or administrative support staff to ensure officers can remain active in the communities they serve. **Civilianization** of certain administrative and support tasks was also a commonly supported idea.

Vacancies

Respondents receiving contract policing services frequently mention concerns with vacant positions among their officer complement. Some respondents receiving contract policing services were not able to provide the number of officers working in their jurisdiction. Municipal police forces, on the other hand, are reported to have the capability to detect and fill vacancies.

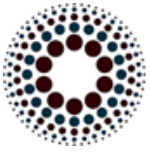
Officer Complements and Capacity

Municipalities of varying sizes experience distinct issues. Officers in counties and districts need to **travel considerable distances** to respond to calls, and officers in towns need to respond to a considerable **increase in the local population** caused by visitors who reside, and pay property taxes, outside of these service centres.

A large majority of respondents affirmed that **the Additional Officer Program (AOP)** is an appreciated and useful source of funding, with resources being assigned to the mandated areas.

NSFM Written Submission to Public Safety Canada

In response to the recent federal consultation on contract policing, facilitated by Public Safety Canada, NSFM members' concerns were conveyed to the federal government (**found in Appendix D**). Because this consultation focused on contract policing from the RCMP, this written submission focuses on a subset of membership issues. This letter draws attention to rising capital and operations costs of policing, the need to consistently ensure a collaborative relationship between municipalities and commanding officers, shortcomings in the quality and timeliness of central support services, the desire for more information costs and backfilling vacancies, the impact that vacancies have on service levels, the need for more support for Community Policing, and the need to apply a municipal lens to equitable decision making.



The letter closes by commending RCMP officers for their important work while also pressing the point that contract policing must be responsive and affordable if it is to continue to be a viable option for NSFM members.

Conclusion

In closing, NSFM thanks members for the time and thought that they have put into their contribution to recent engagements on policing services. This information is a vital part of identifying pressing issues and viable opportunities. NSFM looks forward to engaging further with members and with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice regarding the issues and opportunities that exist in the provincial level for all municipal police models.

Identified Policing Service Strengths and Issues for Discussion

In Nova Scotia, municipalities are responsible for providing policing services. Municipalities fulfill this responsibility by either contracting RCMP services with a policing service agreement (PSA), and/or maintaining their own municipal police forces. NSFM has conducted a review of the different policing models in Nova Scotia to update our understanding of their respective strengths and issues. The points listed below were gathered by staff research and direct engagement with members. These lists help identify what strengths can be built on and what issues should be addressed if municipalities are to provide a high standard of public safety in a way that is financially sustainable. NSFM is now looking to confirm and add to these points with further input from members.

General concerns found across policing models:

- Policing services are becoming increasingly expensive.
- Capacity is stretched by additional responsibilities that take officers away from core duties.
- Frequent and significant delays in provincial government appointing member on Police Boards.
- Some central support and specialized services are not available within the province. Requests from Nova Scotian municipalities must compete with those in the broader region or even entire country, which is a detriment to the timeliness and quality of these services.
- Required payment of fees for Biological Casework Analysis despite suboptimal outcomes that require frequent use of alternative services. A fee for service arrangement would be more appropriate.
- Additional Officer Program should be expanded to address discontinued rollout in 2010.

Issues Experienced by Municipal Police Forces:

- Discretion to locally manage police force comes at the cost of not having a formal cost-share partner.
- Use of national or provincial central support and specialized services may soon be subject to cost-recovery.
- Lack a direct channel of communication with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Strengths of Municipal Police Forces:

- Municipal councils directly decide on priorities, budget, and who to hire as their chief of police.
- Officers on shift 24/7.
- Vacancies are managed directly.
- Collaborate with other police forces to address resource, training, and specialized service challenges.

Issues Experienced by RCMP Contract Partners (MPSAs and PPSAs):

- Occasional difficulty obtaining information through Advisory Boards, despite items listed in PSAs.
- Limited ability to set priorities and objectives of the police force through Advisory Board (Article 6).
- Vacancies not consistently backfilled despite payment for these positions continuing (11.2 g) B)).
- Cost share ratios mismatched with level of discretion over costs (especially for PPSAs).
- Low threshold for technology/Equipment Type A charges without grounds for refusal (11.2 l)).
- Inconsistent attention to Community Policing and the importance of Community Liaison positions.
- Municipalities want to keep better track of how often backfilling and overtime is necessary.

Strengths of RCMP Contracts (MPSAs and PPSAs):

- Pool costs for expenses and resources (e.g.: training, equipment purchasing, payroll taxes, pension).
- Finance the availability of central support and specialized services that can be used by all police forces in Nova Scotia.
- Include backup provisions in the case of a special event.
- Allow contract partners to request reviews on agreed upon matters of interest.

Comparison of Policing Service Agreements

The RCMP provides policing services to municipalities through contract policing. Policing services are contracted by either a Municipal Policing Service Agreement (MPSA) or a Provincial Policing Service Agreement (PPSA). The Government of Nova Scotia is the primary contract holder of the PPSA, and municipalities can become a partner. Currently, thirty-five municipalities in Nova Scotia receive contract policing in this way. Municipalities are also able to sign an MPSA with the federal Department of Public Safety Canada directly. Currently, four municipalities receive contract policing in this way. Both of these contracts include cost-sharing ratios that are subject to certain population thresholds. Comparing the strengths and weaknesses of these different contractual relationships with the RCMP helps to identify how both contracts could be improved in the interest of municipal contract holders and partners.

What MPSAs do not have compared to the Nova Scotia PPSA:

- PPSA Article 5.4 e) includes entitlements to refuse an increase of officers and support staff in the police force or receive a written explanation justifying this increase.
- MPSAs do not guarantee the quality of dialogue established in Article 6.5 e) of the PPSA. MPSA holders could be included in setting priorities and goals as well, even if standards are determined provincially.
- MPSA Article 7.2 could look like PPSA Article 7.2 to increase municipalities discretion as primary contract holder and complement standardized reporting mentioned in Article 8 of the MPSA.
- MPSA Article 7.4 could more closely resemble PPSA Articles 7.4-7.6 to ensure that concerns with commanding officers are responded to sufficiently.
- MPSA holders could be entitled to *quarterly* financial reports, as stated in the PPSA.
- MPSAs could have representation on pension panel, as is stated in the PPSA Article 11.9.
- MPSAs could include Governing Principles that includes “affordability of the program for both parties” as is included in the PPSA Article 12.1 (c).
- Infrastructural plans could be included in the minimum required information in MPSA Article 17.1 (c).

What PPSA partners do not have compared to an MPSA:

- MPSAs are directly credited and reconciled based on officer utilization and vacancies longer than 30 days.
- PPSA partners could have the capability to request community consultation on the appointment of the officer in charge as stated in the MPSA Article 7.3
- PPSA partners could have the capability to request removal of any particular member of their police force as stated in MPSA Article 7.4.
- Municipal PPSA partners do not receive as much budgetary information as the Province or MPSA contract holders. PPSA partners could have access to information arising from quarterly statements received by the Minister under PPSA Article 8.1. MPSA municipalities receive this under Articles 8.1 and 17.1 (c).
- The goal of “achieving greater predictability, efficiency and transparency when budgeting for future policing costs”, which is included in 17.8 of the MPSA and 18.8 of the PPSA, could be extended to PPSA partners as well.
- Article 21 on the Contract Management Committee (CMC) could specify standard information that shall be provided to municipal PPSA partners (similar to 21.10 (g) of the PPSA) and also reflect the updated roles and responsibilities of municipal associate members of the CMC.

July 12th NSFM Meeting on Policing Overview

On July 12th, NSFM held an online discussion on policing that included municipal elected officials and staff. Attendees were asked to review and respond to a two-page overview document that outlined general policing service concerns and specific concerns associated with specific policing models found in Nova Scotia. The two-page document was presented by President Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, and discussion took place following this presentation. There were no requested corrections to the two-page document. Municipalities do not always experience all of the issues, but the two-page document was characterized as accurate.

This overview document below provides a short summary of the discussion that took place on July 12th, accounts for an additional issue of officer recruitment and retention challenges and provides the NSFM response to questions posed during this discussion.

Meeting Summary: Members in attendance confirmed that RCMP detachment Advisory Boards do not necessarily enable municipalities to have a say in the goals and objectives of their police forces. Some municipalities have developed a collaborative dynamic with their commanding officer and receive informative updates through their Advisory Boards on a regular schedule. Many attendees spoke of the importance of clear lines of communication with the commanding officer and with the Department of Justice to ensure the municipal perspective on pressing issues is accounted for.

Many attendees receiving policing service from the RCMP expressed a widespread concern with longstanding vacant positions, a lack of police visibility, and slow response times to service calls in their communities. Many attendees mentioned the importance of Community Policing and its focus on crime prevention and building strong relationships with community partners. Attendees also frequently mentioned the importance of central support and specialized services being available when necessary.

The most frequently expressed concern was that of the rising costs of policing services. Given the distinct policing models found in Nova Scotia, solutions that address the distinct issues of each must be developed. Efforts to develop creative and evidence-based solutions are necessary to maintain a high standard of policing service and public safety. This effort is required on the part of all orders of government.

Additional Issue: One attendee representing a municipal police force mentioned the newly emerging issue for municipal forces losing officers as a result of a new recruitment push by the RCMP. Recruiting experienced officers creates staff shortage issues for smaller forces and interferes with a municipality's making a return on their investment in training their officers.

Response: NSFM has worked with other municipal associations and members of the RCMP Contract Committee to urge the Department of Public Safety Canada to develop solutions to the RCMP's labour shortage issues. NSFM also recently joined a meeting with commanding officers from across Nova Scotia (both RCMP and municipal police forces) that was convened by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice. The Province recognizes the limitations of RCMP's Experienced Officer Program, which involves the recruitment of officers from other police forces. In this meeting on recruitment, a range of ideas on how to boost recruitment efforts for both municipal police forces and for RCMP detachments were exchanged, including working with community partners, and reducing barriers for new immigrants to become police officers.



Question: Are there any conversations being had at the provincial level for a Provincial Police Force such as Newfoundland, Quebec, and Ontario?

Response: NSFAM has not been engaged in any conversations on this subject. The introduction of provincial police forces is an active conversation in British Columbia and Alberta. Such conversations are, in part, motivated by the Government of Canada's unclear position on the continuance of contract policing. At a recent Council of the Federation meeting, premiers from across Canada requested that the federal government clarify its plan for contract policing. Furthermore, the development of a provincial police force would be subject to the same recruitment challenges that the RCMP and municipal police forces are experiencing currently.

Question: How many police departments have a Community Crisis Navigator? What exactly does a crisis navigator do?

Response: NSFAM is currently unaware of how many police forces or detachments feature this type of position. However, positions like this are certainly becoming more frequent. A Community Crisis Navigator typically assists in filling service delivery gaps within the local police force/detachment and coordinates with government and not-for-profit service providers. In response to service calls that are determined to involve a person in need of assistance, as opposed to law enforcement, the Community Crisis Navigator engages with responding officers and the person needing support. Crisis Community Navigators collaborate with other agencies and community partners to provide needed support and decrease the likelihood of contact with police. One of the typical outcomes of this position is to coordinate the required supports and to increase community safety while supporting the complex needs of vulnerable individuals. These positions are typically supervised by the chief of police or designate.

An attendee representing a municipality with their own police force mentioned that their Community Crisis Navigator position is a non-police response to non-police issues that has diverted over 60 people from the criminal justice system. Another attendee, who also represents a municipality with their own police force, added that their similar staff position works closely with their police service and community stakeholders (like women's shelters, youth outreach, schools, housing, etc).

NSFM Survey on Policing Report

August 17, 2023

NSFM invited member units to participate in a survey on policing service on May 23, 2023. The deadline to respond was a rolling date based on requests for extensions from respondents. The response rate was 43%, or 21 out of 49 municipalities.

After gathering respondent identity information, the survey posed a total of 17 required questions and 6 optional questions. These questions were organized under the headings of Cost-Related Concerns, Governance-Related Concerns, Service-Level Concerns, and Staffing Concerns. Members were also invited to provide anecdotes and recent experiences that added further detail to specific benefits or issues that they are experiencing related to policing. The responses received provide valuable insights to the challenges and opportunities that municipalities in Nova Scotia are engaging with. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix C2.

As Nova Scotia features two distinct policing models (i.e.: contract policing services provided by the RCMP and local municipal police forces), attention was paid to what policing model each respondent represents. Of the total 21 respondents, 5 (23%) came from municipal police forces and 16 (77%) came from municipalities receiving contract policing services from the RCMP. Among those receiving contract policing services, 1 respondent (6% of this subgroup), holds a Municipal Policing Service Agreement (MPSA) and the remaining 15 (94%) are partners to the Provincial Policing Service Agreement (PPSA). This is a fairly proportionate representation of the policing models across the total NSFM membership, which features 10 municipalities (20%) with their own police force, and 39 (79%) receiving contract policing services. Of those municipalities receiving contract policing services, 4 (11%) hold an MPSA and the remaining 35 (89%) are partners to the PPSA. Therefore, survey respondents provide a representative sample of the membership as a whole, with a slightly lower representation of the MPSA subgroup.

Despite the high response rate, one significant limitation of this survey report is that the two largest police forces (Halifax Regional Police and Cape Breton Regional Police Service) were not among the respondents. These large police forces (engaging in a dual force model with the RCMP in the case of Halifax Regional Police) feature unique strengths and challenges that require specific attention and should be engaged with to complement these survey findings.

The following report provides an analysis of all responses that identifies general trends as well as specific concerns. References to specific municipalities are not included in this report to avoid the attribution of certain statements.

NSFM thanks those municipalities that contributed to this survey.

Cost-Related Concerns (Questions # 3-5)

Based on information gained from publicly available municipal budgets, policing service costs make up between 6% to 23% of total 2023/24 operational expenditures across all respondents. Municipalities with municipal police forces tend to be at the higher point of this range, but respondents receiving contract policing services indicate that their costs reach as high as 18% of their operating budget.

Municipal police forces were able to provide more detailed budget information in comparison to municipalities receiving contract policing services.

Comparing survey responses to 2021 municipal financial statistics available through the NS Open Data Portal demonstrates that costs are rising. However, these figures are not necessarily comparable as survey responses may contain additional costs not accounted for in Policing Protection figures included in the 2021 municipal financial statistics.

Across all policing models, respondents report that costs are rising.

Cost Drivers

Respondents receiving contract policing services from the RCMP express a feeling of being in the dark about costs and cost drivers. This lack of financial oversight is itself a general concern among PPSAs.

Some illustrative response excerpts from respondents receiving contract policing services are:

“The Province does not share budget and invoice detail with municipalities.” – PPSA Partner

“[Our municipality] does not have a Multi-Year Financial Plan.” – PPSA Partner

One commonly mentioned cost driver, other than salary increases, is overtime pay. Some respondents state that all costs categories are rising.

Respondents representing municipal police forces mention technology upgrades (e.g.: computer software and hardware), training, the cost of fuel and vehicle maintenance, and increased social challenges of homelessness and addiction as being cost drivers. These respondents also mention that mandatory contributions to the National Forensic Lab (Biological Casework Analysis) are growing, and private sector labs are being utilized to make up for the slow response time of the National Forensic Lab.

Other cost concerns include continuing uncertainty about retroactive pay for PPSA partners, paying for vacant positions, and new service demands (which are further discussed under Service-Level Concerns).



Governance-Related Concerns (Questions # 6-9)

Respondents with RCMP Advisory Boards typically report that they meet quarterly, while respondents representing municipal police forces report that their Board of Police Commissioners typically meets monthly. Some municipalities have been approved to use a modified Advisory Board model that includes more positions, all council members, or joint council meetings. Occasionally, respondents mention that they are still setting up their Advisory Board or are currently evaluating this decision.

Most respondents report that their Advisory Boards meetings take place regularly and function well. However, 37.5% of respondents receiving contract policing services from the RCMP and 60% of respondents representing municipal police forces report that the provincially-appointed seat on their Board is vacant. Some respondents state that this has been the case since 2019 despite their efforts to raise this concern with the Department of Justice. Some RCMP Advisory Boards have all positions filled but, even in these cases, respondents tend to raise concern with the RCMP's response to requests and concerns brought up by members of the Advisory Board.

Respondents representing municipal police forces discuss how their Board of Police Commissioners is a productive forum for discussing goals, priorities, and challenges. Respondents receiving contract policing services are much more divided in their assessment of how well Advisory Boards function.

Some illustrative response excerpts are:

“The Board has developed a Strategic Plan that sets out the policing priorities for the Board and Police Services.” – Municipal Police Force

“Board has an open and strong relationship with the Chief and the Board is kept up to date on budget, HR, and policy issues.” – Municipal Police Force

“Ability to change focus or priorities of the RCMP is cumbersome. They typically have their national and provincial priorities and try to fit local concerns into those categories.” – PPSA Partner

“Implementing strategic plans can be a challenge.” – PPSA Partner

Limited Access to Information

Advisory Boards are reported to be effective in getting statistics on service calls and ongoing projects. Only one RCMP service recipient responded that “yes” their Advisory Board has trouble obtaining requested information. However, many other respondents express that it is difficult to get information on the number of vacancies, budgetary information, clearance rates, or get such information in a timely manner. Respondents receiving contract policing services express a desire for clearer explanations of budgetary information including rising costs and overtime pay, vacant positions, responses to local concerns, and an organizational chart of RCMP governance.

In terms of other governance-related concerns, respondents receiving contract policing services also mention that officers can be redeployed or seconded to another jurisdiction without the notification to the Advisory Board.

Service-Level Concerns (Questions # 10-21)

Centralized Support and Specialized Services Utilization

The table below indicates the percentage of survey respondents that utilize the listed central support or specialized services over the past five years. Contract policing services recipients and municipal police forces are separated to indicate the varying levels of utilization between these two groups and which specific services are utilized by municipal police forces. A final column provides an overall percentage of 15 respondents. The total number of 15 was used to remove the 6 respondents receiving contract policing services who were not able to say what central support or specialized services have been used in their jurisdiction.

Row #	Support or Specialized Service	Contract Policing	Municipal Police Force	Combined
1	Operational Communication Centre	40%	20%	33%
2	Risk Manager Program	40%	20%	33%
3	Emergency Management	50%	40%	47%
4	Division Emergency Operations Centre	40%	40%	40%
5	Ground Search and Rescue	70%	20%	53%
6	Police Service Dogs	90%	40%	73%
7	Critical Incident Program	70%	20%	53%
8	Emergency Response Team	70%	80%	73%
9	Emergency Medical Response Team	30%	0%	20%
10	Underwater Recovery Team	40%	20%	33%
11	Special Tactical Operation	40%	0%	27%
12	Major Crime	70%	0%	47%
13	Proceeds of Crime	55%	0%	33%
14	Commercial Crime	30%	0%	20%
15	Human Trafficking	50%	40%	47%
16	Internet Child Exploitation	50%	40%	47%
17	Synthetic Drugs	40%	0%	27%
18	Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System	40%	80%	53%
19	Cybercrime Coordinator	40%	40%	40%
20	Polygraph Services	40%	60%	47%
21	Interview Assistance	50%	40%	47%
22	Forensic Analysis	70%	40%	60%
23	Finger Printing	60%	0%	40%
24	Identification Services	70%	60%	67%
25	Collision analysis	80%	40%	67%
26	Traffic Services	90%	0%	60%
27	Community Policing Service	80%	20%	60%
28	Source Witness Protection	20%	0%	13%
29	Bomb disposal	30%	0%	20%
30	Victim Services	60%	20%	47%
31	Information Commissioner	30%	0%	20%
32	Other	10%	0%	6.6%

Across policing models, there is a notable utilization of Police Service Dogs (73%), the Emergency Response Team (73%), Identification Services (67%), and Collision Analysis (67%).

Respondents receiving contract policing services make frequent use of Traffic Services (90%), Community Policing (80%), Collision Analysis (80%), and Police Service Dogs (90%) provided by the RCMP. To a lesser extent, these respondents also frequently rely on Identification Services (70%), Forensic Analysis (70%), Major Crime Investigations (70%), Emergency Response Team (70%), and the Critical Incident Program (70%).

Municipal police forces have made notable use of Violent Crime Linkage Analysis (80%) and Emergency Response Team (80%). To a lesser extent, municipal police forces have also made use of Identification Services (60%), and Polygraph Services (60%).

Based on these survey results, municipalities receiving contract policing services have used between 23% to 100% of the available central support and specialized services over the past five years. Municipal police forces, on the other hand, are reported to have used between 6% to 45% of the available central support and specialized services over the past five years.

Concerns with Turnaround Time and Identification of Alternative Sources

Only two respondents report slow response times when requesting central support services, but another two respondents representing municipal police forces state that they do not use these services specifically because response times are typically slow. Municipal police forces also mention high costs of shipping and slow turnaround time on time-sensitive investigations.

Municipal police forces have reportedly sought alternative sources of central support services and additional training. In some cases, larger municipal police forces have been able to develop their own internal resources for all central support and specialized services. In other cases, these alternative sources are gained from other municipal police forces. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cost-sharing some central support and specialized services (i.e.: Police Service Dogs, Major Crime Investigations, and Forensic Identification Services) has been signed by a number of these municipal police forces. A municipal police force has also gained support for their Identification Section by signing an MOU with Public Safety Canada.

New Demands on Policing Services

Out of all 21 respondents, 8 (38%) report that their residents have demanded new services or that certain standard services are being demanded at a higher than usual rate. These increased service demands are related to the following:

- speeding enforcement
- investigating hate crimes
- drug-related crimes
- mental health crises that are typically responded to by Emergency Health Services
- officer visibility
- quicker response times
- more engagement with residents and their community

Some respondents also mention a slight increase in thefts and break-ins and fire-arm-related offences. One respondent representing a small municipal police force indicates that they are seeing an increase in serious incidents that entail time-consuming work.

An illustrative response excerpt is:

“The challenge is always to balance the prioritization of proactive and reactive policing activities against the number of human resources available. Police cannot attend 100% to the wide spectrum of public expectations. Some expectations are not appropriate giving the role of police, and some may be outside of our capability due to resource and or funding restrictions.” – PPSA Partner

Community Policing

For the purposes of this survey, Community Policing was defined as “policing strategies that proactively address conditions that give rise to public safety issues by engaging in partnerships with community members and problem-solving techniques”. In response, 52% of respondents state that their police force engages in Community Policing. This overall percentage is composed of 100% of respondents representing municipal police forces, and 37.5% of respondents receiving contract policing services. 31% of respondents receiving contract policing services state that their police force does not engage in Community Policing. The remaining 31.5% of respondents receiving contract policing service were not able to respond to this question.

Other Service Level Concerns

Respondents receiving contract policing services frequently mention that the goals of police visibility and quick response times are challenged by the size of their jurisdiction. These respondents also occasionally mention that RCMP officers do not always accept by-law enforcement as their responsibility.

There are also a number of time-consuming responsibilities that reduce the amount of time that officers spend addressing crimes and increasing police visibility. Examples of these additional responsibilities include required time to remain at a crime scene involving a death, chaperoning patients in need of medical attention before they are admitted for care and engaging with court. Respondents express that, in conjunction with the increased cost of policing services across all policing models, these additional responsibilities negatively impact the ability of their police force to effectively reduce and prevent crime. This challenge is even greater in the case of RCMP complements with a high number of vacant positions.

In terms of possible solutions, respondents agree that another organization may be better suited to address events involving people who require mental health support. Similarly, respondents occasionally mention that incidents involving people who are homeless or dealing with substance addiction are not always best responded to by a fully-armed officer.

One respondent representing a municipal police force stated:

“The establishment of a provincial standard and the provision of a certain level of provincial funding to meet that standard could produce a visible and significant improvement in policing in Nova Scotia.” – Municipal Police Force

Staffing Concerns (Questions # 22-27)

Additional Officer Program

Respondents were asked how they utilize the resources allocated to their police force as part of the Additional Officer Program (AOP). Some respondents representing contract policing service were not able to answer this question, while one respondent state that they no longer have this position due to a decrease in their overall officer complement. Respondents that were able to answer this question confirm that AOP resources are being used for the mandated purposes of this program, including School Safety Resource Office, School Liaison, Street Crime Enforcement Officer, and Investigative Services.

One respondent representing a municipal police force states that the AOP is a helpful source of funding, and another mentions that the AOP helps to supplement capacity when working major crime files and long-term drug investigations.

Civilianization of Positions

Respondents were asked if their police force features civilianized positions and what types of services these positions provide. Not all respondents receiving contract policing services were able to answer this question. Based on responses from those who could answer this question, civilianization is most frequently found in administrative work. Only 19% of respondents stated that “no” their police force does not feature civilianized positions. Civilianized positions help provide the following services:

- Dispatch
- Public Relations
- Information Technology Support
- Senior Safety
- Criminal Records Checks
- Court Liaisons/Evidence Disclosure
- By-law Enforcement
- Lock Up
- Other administrative work, Senior Safety,

The position of Court Liaison was mentioned by 5 respondents (3 receiving contract policing services and 2 representing municipal police forces).

Approved Officer and Support Staff Complement

Respondents were asked about fluctuations in their approved officer and support staff complement in recent history. Some respondents report that their police force has grown slightly as a result of dissolution of a town within their district/county boundaries, new services being provided (Traffic Services), the AOP, or the addition of support staff. Some respondents representing towns report that their police force is shrinking as a result of turnover, vacancies, and changes in their approved officer complement. One respondent representing a municipal police force reports that a provincially funded Senior Safety Coordinator has been added to their complement.

One respondent receiving contract policing services states that they are currently undergoing a significant expansion of their officer complement by seven positions over the next three years. This expansion is intended to increase the number of corporals, constables, and civilian-member assistants that will help with court-related responsibilities.

Respondents were asked to provide their number of approved officers. The reported officer numbers varied significantly due to the varying sizes and populations of municipalities represented by respondents. Some respondents receiving contract policing services were not able to provide the number of officers working in their jurisdiction.

To provide context to these varying officer numbers, the approved officer numbers reported by respondents were compared to the population and size of the municipality. Note that these numbers provide some comparable figures but only portions of the overall police complement are on shift at any given time. For a more specific figure, information on how many officers are on shift at a time is required.

Using the most recent 2021 census data, the number of residents per officer ranges from 278.6 to 1372.1 residents per officer. Municipal police forces average 303 residents per officer, and municipalities receiving contract policing services average 841 residents per officer.

Using data from the Nova Scotia Open Data Portal, the number of square kilometers per officer in municipalities represented by respondents ranges from 0.5 to 264. In terms of physical distance that officers must travel to respond to calls, counties, districts, and regional municipalities are a concern. Among survey respondents, counties and districts range from 586 to 4,248 square kilometers in size.

The table below indicates how the average number of square kilometers per officer and average number of residents per officer vary by municipal type.

Geographic Area Average and Population Size ratios by municipal unit type

Municipal Type	Avg. Square Kms per Officer	Avg. Residents per Officer (2021 census)
Counties/Districts/Regions	144.3	944
Towns	1.4	376

The optimal coverage in the towns category is largely contributed to by municipal police forces, as shown in the following table. The table below indicates how the average number of square kilometers per officer and average number of residents per officer vary by policing model.

Geographic Area Average and Population Size ratios by policing model

Police Model	Avg. Square Kms per Officer	Avg. Residents per Officer (2021 census)
RCMP contract policing	111.5	841
Municipal Police Force	.85	303

Evidently, towns are able to focus their police forces on a concentrated geographic area. However, towns are often service centres for the broader region, which means that they attract more of the provincial population than reside (and pays taxes) within their boundaries. This puts municipalities, specifically those with their own police forces, under significant financial pressure to provide services to an outsized population.

Vacancies

Again, some respondents receiving contract policing services were not able to provide the number of officers working in their jurisdiction. It appears that it was even more difficult for respondents to state how many vacancies are regularly in their approved officer complement with certainty.

Respondents receiving contract policing services report that vacancies range from 10% to 50%. The average vacancy rate among all respondents receiving contract policing services is 26%. These respondents express concern about the length of time it takes to fill these vacant positions.

These vacancies are especially concerning for large municipalities (in terms of either geographic size or level of population).

Municipal police forces also feature vacant positions at times, but these vacant positions are few and are addressed directly. One respondent representing a municipal police force reports that, due to the increased cost of policing, their police force operates with less than an optimum number of officers on certain days of the week.

Other staffing concerns

Respondents report the following additional staffing concerns:

- Transfer of RCMP officers without replacement member being identified
- Secondment of RCMP officers without notification to council or Advisory Board
- Impact of high amounts of vacancies or overtime on officers' mental health
- Impact on municipal finance and service levels resulting from high amounts of overtime pay
- Recruitment and Retention challenges for all police forces
- Lack of return on investment when officers are trained by their municipal police force and then recruited by the RCMP or another police force
- Availability of female officers for situations where a female officer is requested or required
- Desire to establish the minimum number of needed officers as a basis for identifying municipalities with staffing issues of heightened concern

Additional Concerns and Anecdotes (Questions # 28-29)

Respondents provide the following comments when invited to mention additional concerns or illustrative anecdotes:

- Many municipalities are experiencing increased incident reports and incidents like theft do not always get a response from RCMP officers.
- RCMP costs for services provided for in the PSA, such as special events, should be readily available and fair.
- Regular financial information should more broken down and communicated to councils paying into RCMP policing services.
- Towns are service centres that attract far more of the provincial population than that which resides within their boundaries. This puts municipalities, specifically those with their own police forces, under financial pressure to maintain high standards without being able to raise revenue from those who receive the service.

- Municipal police forces express pride in stepping up to the challenge of maintaining a professional police service, but want to receive further financial support, in pursuit of provincial standards, in doing so.
- Respondents often express gratitude to the responsive services of officers but also express that local concerns are not always treated as a priority.
- Trained officers with a connection or affinity for Nova Scotia could be deployed here to nurture a long-term posting and better awareness of the area.
- Respondents expressed further support for different models of policing, including expanded municipal forces, regionalization of support services, tiered policing and community policing, and use of technology when possible (e.g.: traffic infractions).

Some illustrative quotes include:

There is a disconnect between the RCMP and the community. The community wants police to be responsive to their needs; however, the police force seems to miss simple opportunities to connect with residents. – PPSA Partner

RCMP is responsible for By-Law enforcement per the contract, but this is something that is low on their priority list so rarely get finished and quite frequently they try to use the line “that is the Town's responsibility”. – MPSA Holder

Would be great to share services with surrounding municipalities/towns to make it more cost efficient for both the police and the units [rather than] working in silos. – Municipal Police Force

How Municipal Police Forces are funded should be considered. The Town provides police services to a regional population count as it is a regional service centre. Town residents bear the tax burden of this, and at the same time contribute through their income tax to provincial policing contract costs. – Municipal Police Force

Conclusion

The high response rate to this survey provides a range of current and comparable concerns related to the cost, governance, service demands, and staffing of policing services. Survey respondents provided valuable insights on the state of both municipal-level policing models in Nova Scotia. The foundation of knowledge established by this survey can be made more representative of the NSFM membership with increased input from regional municipalities, and MPSA contract holders. On each of the questions posed in this survey, there is still more to learn.

These survey findings confirm that the cost of policing services occupies a significant and growing portion of municipal consolidated budgets across policing models. Respondents representing municipal police forces are able to provide more information on costs and what the cost drivers are. On the other hand, respondents receiving contract policing services from the RCMP express a feeling of being in the dark about costs. This is especially the case for PPSA partners, who do not receive a Multi-Year Financial Plans like MPSAs do.

Using the available forms of oversight, municipalities want to make sure that their constituents are receiving value for their investment in policing services. Advisory Boards are reported to be meeting

regularly and to be productive overall, with occasional difficulties obtaining desired information in a timely fashion. Respondents receiving contract policing services express a desire for more information on overtime, budgetary information, vacant positions, and responses to local concerns. Some respondents receiving contract police services utilize a modified Advisory Board model to help council members remain engaged and informed. Boards of Police Commissioners meet more frequently, and respondents representing municipal police forces also mentioned success in developing strategic plans around locally determined priorities. The most frequent governance-related concern expressed by respondents across policing models is the long-running absence of a provincial appointee.

Respondents make ample use of central support and specialized services. Utilization is much more consistent among contract policing service recipients, but municipal police forces utilize these services as well. Across policing models, there is a notable utilization of Police Service Dogs, Emergency Response Team, Identification Services, and Collision Analysis. In addition, contract policing service recipients utilize traffic services with notable frequency, and municipal police forces utilize Violent Crime Linkage Analysis with notable frequency. Respondents across policing models expressed a desire for more responsive and affordable sources of central support services, especially in the case of time-sensitive investigations involving biological casework analysis. In some cases, municipal police forces have been able to develop their own internal resources for all central support and specialized services or have formalized approaches to sharing these services with other municipal police forces.

Many municipalities, across policing models, are experiencing increased demand for both standard services and new services. These services range from increased officer visibility to nuanced approaches to responding the calls related to mental health. Respondents also affirmed the importance of Community Policing and that this approach to policing should be supported and implemented more than it currently is. There are also a number of time-consuming responsibilities that reduce the amount of time that officers spend addressing crimes and increasing police visibility. Many respondents indicate that they are expanding this officer complement or administrative support staff to ensure officers can remain active in the communities they serve. Civilianization of certain support tasks was a commonly supported idea.

Police complements were often found to be in transition due to municipal dissolution, vacant positions, regular turnover, and the addition of administrative positions. Respondents receiving contract policing services frequently mention concerns with vacant positions among their officer complement. Some respondents receiving contract policing services were not able to provide the number of officers working in their jurisdiction. Municipal police forces, on the other hand, report having the capability to detect and fill vacant positions. A large majority of respondents affirmed that the Additional Officer Program (AOP) is an appreciated and useful source of funding, with resources being assigned to the mandated areas. Municipalities of varying sizes experience distinct issues. Officers in counties and districts need to travel considerable distances to respond to calls, and officers in towns need to respond to a considerable increase in local population caused by visitors from outside of these service centres. Responses to this survey indicate a common effort to deal with cost issues, service demands, and staffing challenges in different ways, from modifying shift schedules to hiring support positions to maintain a high standard of public safety for all Nova Scotians.

This important foundation of knowledge now stands to inform further discussion and be supplemented by further engagement with NSFM members.

NSFM Membership Survey: Policing

This survey is meant to deepen NSFM’s understanding of membership concerns with policing services and assist in the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the different policing models found in Nova Scotia.

Individual responses will be kept confidential and reviewed internally. Reports on the results and findings of this survey will not attribute particular responses to any municipality or police force.

NSFM is looking for one (1) response per municipality. Responding Mayors, Wardens, or CAOs, may wish to respond in collaboration with elected officials on your Police Commission or Advisory Board, the Commanding Officer of your police force, and perhaps council as a whole.

After gathering respondent information, this survey includes 13-17 required questions, and 6 optional questions. These questions (with the exception of Question #17) are meant to be apply to all policing models (i.e.: RCMP policing service and local police forces) and are categorized as cost concerns, governance concerns, service-levels concerns, and staffing concerns.

If you are unable to answer any of the following questions on the timeline provided, simply state “Unknown” or “Requires Additional Time”.

We request that responses be submitted by June 20, 2023.

1. Name of Responding Municipality

2. Who was involved in responding to this survey?

- Mayor/Warden
- Police Commissioners/Advisory Board members
- Police Chief
- municipal council
- Other (please specify)

Cost-Related Concerns

3. Please use the comment box below to state the total cost of policing service for your municipality in 2023/24. To assist NSFM in our analysis, please provide costs by category if possible (i.e.: operational costs, capital costs, indirect costs, forensic laboratory services, etc.).

If practical, please send the following to wpetite@nsfm.ca. These documents will be kept confidential and internal to NSFM.

- i. MPSAs: please provide your Multi-Year Financial Plan.
- ii. PPSAs: please provide the budget provided by the RCMP.
- iii. Municipally owned police departments: please provide a breakdown of your policing budget and related costs.

4. What expenses, other than regular salary, are causing notable budgetary pressure? (e.g.: forensic laboratory services, technology upgrades, training, overtime, mandatory municipal contributions to corrections, fuel, etc.). If your council does not have insight on specific cost drivers, please state “Unknown”.

5. (Optional) What other cost concerns does your municipality have?

Governance-Related Concerns

6. How would you describe the state of your Board of Police Commissioners/Advisory Board (i.e.: are all positions filled, are meetings regularly occurring, are these meetings productive and responsive to issue that your municipal council is concerned about)?

7. Does your council or Board of Police Commissioners/Advisory Board experience difficulties obtaining requested information on your police force?

8. What sort of information have you had difficulty obtaining (e.g.: vacancies, budgetary information, etc.)?

9. (Optional) What other governance-related concerns does your municipality have?

Service-Level Concerns

Using the checklist below, please indicate which central support or specialized services provided by the RCMP your police department utilized over the last five years.

These services are organized under the headings of Operational Communications and Emergency Operational Coordination, Tactical and Specialized Operations, Investigative Service Units, and Other Support Services.

Operational Communications and Emergency Operational Coordination

- Division Emergency Operations Centre
- Risk Manager Program
- Provincial Ground Search and Rescue
- Provincial Operational Communication Centre
- Emergency Management

Tactical and Specialized Operations

- Police Service Dogs
- Critical Incident Program
- Emergency Response Team
- Emergency Medical Response Team
- Underwater Recovery Team
- Special Tactical Operation

Investigative Service Units

- Major Crime
- Proceeds of Crime
- Commercial Crime
- Human Trafficking
- Internet Child Exploitation
- Synthetic Drugs
- Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System
- Cybercrime Coordinator
- Truth Verification/Polygraph services
- Interview Assistance

Other Support Services

- Forensic Analysis
- Finger Printing
- Identification Services
- Collision analysis
- Traffic Services
- Community Policing Service
- Source Witness Protection
- Bomb disposal
- Victim Services
- Information Commissioner Criminal Investigations

14. Other?

15. Has your police force experienced slow responses or additional costs when accessing central support services over the last five years?

16. In which cases of central support or specialized services has this occurred?

17. **For Municipal Police Forces:** Has your police force found alternative sources or developed independent resources that provide the supports and specialized services mention above? If so, which ones? Please indicate the source of support or independent resources.

18. Has the public demanded additional services or reforms of your police force (e.g.: increased attention to equity, reallocation of resources, etc.)?

19. Please list these additional services and briefly explain the challenge this presents to your police force.

20. Does your police force engage in Community Policing strategies? For clarity, Community Policing is defined as policing strategies that proactively address conditions that give rise to public safety issues by engaging in partnerships with community members and problem-solving techniques.

21. (Optional) What other service-level concerns does your municipality have?

Staffing Concerns

22. How has your police force utilized the Additional Officer Program?

23. When was the last time your staffing complement of armed officers and support staff increased? What positions were added?

24. Does your police force support or feature civilianization of certain positions? In what areas of policing do you find civilianization to be most feasible?

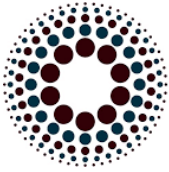
25. What is your approved number of officer positions?

26. How many vacancies, on average, are there among your police force?

27. (Optional) What other staffing concerns does your municipality have?

28. (Optional) Please share any stories or anecdotes that you believe illustrate the state of policing in your municipality. Responses to this question will be kept confidential and NSFM staff will ensure that responses quoted in reports are not attributable to a specific municipality or police force.

29. (Optional) Is there anything else that you would like to add about your police force and how your municipal policing model can be improved or better supported?



**NOVA SCOTIA
FEDERATION OF
MUNICIPALITIES**

PRESIDENT: September 19, 2023

Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton
Town of Port Hawkesbury

Public Safety Canada Contract Policing Consultation Team
Department of Public Safety Canada
12th floor, 269 Laurier Ave West
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0P8

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson
Municipality of the District of
Lunenburg

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT:

Mayor Amanda McDougall
Cape Breton Regional Municipality

Delivered via Email

Dear Public Safety Canada Contract Policing Consultation Team,

REGIONAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Councillor Paul Russell
Halifax Regional Municipality

Re: Consultation on Contract Policing

RURAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Warden Bruce Morrison
Victoria County

TOWN CAUCUS CHAIR:

Mayor Lennie White
Town of Westville

This letter is a submission to the mandated assessment of contract policing in Canada on behalf of the municipalities of Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) is the collective voice of municipalities in the province. We are a non-profit organization that represents all 375 municipally elected officials and all 49 municipalities. Since 1906, our organization has fostered collaboration between all orders of government in Nova Scotia to ensure that municipalities are equipped to provide a high standard of service to their residents.

We commend the efforts of the Government of Canada to gather important feedback on the RCMP contract policing program in pursuit of a more sustainable and accountable contract policing model. NSFM members often comment on the high-quality of service provided by RCMP officers. However, the overarching relationship created by the Policing Service Agreements (PSAs) and the state of the RCMP labour force present a number of challenges that we would like to bring to your attention.

As you will see below, we have organized our submission around the key themes of this consultation as listed in the Discussion Guide for Contract Policing Engagement. The points below are derived from direct engagement with our members receiving contract policing services from the RCMP, and from comments made during our meeting with the consultation team on August 30, 2023.

Governance and Accountability

As stated in the Discussion Guide for this consultation, “governance can be defined as local and national decision-making, management, administration, and accountability structures and practices of the contract policing program.” In Nova Scotia, municipalities receiving policing services from the RCMP liaise with their police forces through an Advisory Board. While the requirement and composition of these Advisory Boards is established in provincial legislation, the implications they have for an RCMP Member in Charge is determined by the Policing Service Agreements. Therefore, improvements to the PSAs could support more effective governance, oversight, transparency, and accountability from the perspective of municipalities.

In the current context, Advisory Boards *can be* effective forums to discuss incident rates, vacancy rates, and progress on priority projects. Some municipalities have succeeded in developing an informative and collaborative dynamic with their respective Member in Charge. However, in other cases, municipalities experience difficulties 1) developing this dynamic with their Member in Charge, 2) contributing to the objectives, priorities, and goals of police officers in their jurisdiction, and 3) receiving important information. A strong relationship between contract partners and commanding officers is an asset for providing high standards of public safety and responsiveness. Therefore, PSAs should, as much as possible, ensure a strong and responsive relationship in all cases.

Municipal Policing Service Agreement (MPSA) holders should have more discretion to set objectives, priorities, and goals for officers working in their jurisdiction. Policing standards are appropriately determined federally and provincially, but enabling municipalities to determine objectives, priorities, and goals in collaboration with their Member in Charge will lead to more responsive service delivery. Objectives, priorities, and goals could be determined jointly by municipalities in the case of a district policing model. MPSA section 7.2 should include an annual report on the implementation of objectives, priorities, and goals to complement the standard items listed in section 8.1 and 17.1 c) of the MPSA. Infrastructural plans should also be included in the minimum required information in MPSA section 17.1 (c). To ensure municipalities are sufficiently informed, they should be entitled to quarterly Resources and Organization reports, as is provided in section 8 of the Provincial Policing Service Agreement (PPSA), rather than annual reports of this nature. Our members often mention that they have difficulty obtaining information about staffing levels, costs, and clearance rates. Standardizing reporting on these items will lead to significant improvements in terms of governance and accountability.

Finally, to improve the PSAs in terms of management and accountability, municipalities should have more control over who is leading and working in their respective detachments if concerns with a specific RCMP member arise. MPSA section 7.4 should more closely resemble PPSA sections 7.4-7.6 to ensure that concerns with commanding officers are responded to sufficiently. Municipalities should also be able to refuse an increase of officers and support staff in the police force or receive a written explanation

justifying this increase, as is provided in PPSA Article 5.4 e). These changes will improve the governance and accountability provisions of contract policing.

Program Sustainability and Cost

As is acknowledged in the Engagement Guide, policing costs are rising across Canada. These rising costs are especially pressing for the order of government with the least access to tax revenue. Further, in terms of contract policing, municipalities are responsible for paying a large portion of a rising, overall cost. This leads to an inverse relationship between the amount that municipalities pay into contract policing and the amount of discretion they have over these costs. This inverse relationship can be addressed by increasing municipal discretion or revising the allocation of financial responsibilities.

While the cost of policing service is largely composed of operational costs, there are also capital costs for Equipment–Type A that create challenges of affordability and sustainability. The \$150,000 threshold for Equipment–Type A purchases to be financed through the PSAs is too low and municipalities lack the ability to decline the costs of this type of equipment. The option to amortize these costs is useful but not sufficient to ensure financial sustainability. In terms of MPSAs, approval of Equipment–Type A purchases should be required for all municipalities, not just those with a population of 15,000 or higher. In terms of the PPSA, as municipalities pay for a large portion of the overall cost of the PPSA in Nova Scotia, municipalities should be consulted about upcoming Equipment–Type A purchases that will impact their budgets before the decision to purchase this equipment is made.

The principles of achieving greater predictability, efficiency, and transparency when budgeting for future policing costs is already embedded in the MPSAs and PPSA in Nova Scotia. However, these principles are not always fulfilled in practice. MPSAs should include Governing Principles of “affordability of the program for both parties” as is included in the PPSA section 12.1 (c). Enacting these values in timely and well-planned consultations on upcoming expenses is called for to ensure the sustainability of contract policing.

In order to pay appropriate attention to the impacts that rising costs have on municipalities, the additional principle of **equity** should be included as a principle in future discussions. In recognition of the substantial amount that municipalities pay into contract policing, the principle of **municipal recognition and inclusion** should also be included as a principle for future discussions. In the spirit of municipal inclusion, an MPSA position on the pension panel, referenced in PPSA section 11.9, could be created. More importantly, municipal inclusion in both the short-term and long-term discussions on cost sharing across jurisdictions should be reflected in the PSAs and overall conduct of contract policing.

As mentioned at the outset of this section, the rising cost of policing, in conjunction with the sheer number of items included in Article 11 of the PSAs, calls for a rearrangement. This rearrangement could include a revised cost-share formula, or a reduced list of

Appendix D – NSFM Written Submission to Public Safety Canada’s Consultation on Contract Policing

expenses included in Article 11. Contract policing is a collective effort by all orders of government and the RCMP to ensure a high standard of public safety in all provinces in which the RCMP is employed. Municipalities are ready to use their advantageous local focus to help accomplish this goal. At the same time, municipalities look to the orders of government with a more advantageous set of revenue generating tools to take on a larger share of the total costs of policing. This revision of cost-share responsibilities will substantially increase the sustainability of the contract policing program.

Service Delivery

Elected municipal officials often specify that they are grateful for the hard work of RCMP officers and support staff. Collaborative Members in Charge and rank and file officers exemplify what works in contract policing. The support and resources provided by the RCMP in response to major crimes is another point of common approval regarding contract policing. However, responses to certain types of crime, such as cybercrime have been disappointing, described as a “reporting exercise” as opposed to actual investigations.

As is well known, labour shortages and the various demands on the time and attention of officers create areas of significant concern. The current amount of hard and soft vacancies among RCMP detachments is a barrier to ensuring a high standard of service delivery. As a percentage of the total officer positions funded by contract policing, Nova Scotia features one of the largest amounts of combined hard and soft vacancies in Canada. These vacancies must be filled, or backfilled, with qualified and well-trained officers in order to provide the services that municipalities, and their taxpayers, are paying for. The impact of vacancies is most concerning in the case of small complements of officers being assigned to large geographic areas, as is the case in many of Nova Scotia’s rural counties and districts. Due to this high level of vacancies, it is all the more important to identify the minimum number of officers necessary to maintain sufficient service standards for contract partners. This minimum number could be determined by using a formula similar to the General Duty Policing Resource Model and referencing this formula in PSAs. As Public Safety Canada is surely aware, insufficient police complements present serious risks to officers themselves and the broader public. To allow contract partners to keep better track of how often positions need to be backfilled and how often backfilling involves overtime, the RCMP should begin collecting and sharing such data with contract partners or at the Contract Management Committee.

Officers are often required to fulfill duties that could be fulfilled by a non-officer position. Responsibilities, such as preparing court documents and chaperoning individuals brought to a hospital for being admitted for care, draw officers away from important investigative and other frontline responsibilities. In the interest of using officer time wisely and increasing visibility in the community in the process, the RCMP should devise plans for detachment assistants and civilian members to help police officers complete these and other additional responsibilities. Further, alternative service models should be developed

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in order to bolster policing service with staff that specialize in mental health needs, de-escalation, and community-level resources.

Streamlining the cadet training program will help to get officers deployed sooner, but standards of training must be maintained, and even increased, in order to ensure that officers are able to properly understand the public safety needs that they may encounter. Therefore, we call for the development of a training, recruitment and retention plan that will reduce the high numbers of vacancies, stabilize the number of active-duty officers, and sustainably support a high standard of public safety.

Again, as stated above, enabling municipalities to determine objectives, priorities, and goals of their police force in collaboration with their Member in Charge will lead to more responsive service delivery. This level of collaboration will ensure that locally specific concerns are tended to and stronger relationships between local communities and the RCMP are developed. Community policing is another important way to build relationships with community members and prevent crime. RCMP Officers, specifically Members in Charge, should be mandated to work with municipal councils as part of their community policing efforts. In order to support this effort, the RCMP should be more diligent in filling Community Liaison Officer positions in a timely manner.

Along with highly trained officers, one of the most valuable assets offered by contract policing is access to national support and specialized services. If the number of officers allocated to contract policing is to be reduced, maintaining access to central support and specialized services is recommended.

Long-term Vision (present to 2032 and beyond)

Municipalities play an important role overseeing local development and the provision of necessary services. The abovementioned issues and recommendations shape a path forward to a more sustainable and responsive approach to providing policing services. Each municipality seeks strong, trusting relationships with the diverse groups that make up their communities, the prevention of crime when possible, and enforcement of the law when necessary. Police forces, such as the RCMP, are an indispensable partner in this effort.

Municipalities work hard to deliver a high standard of service to their residents; policing services is among the most important and most expensive. As part of this hard work, municipal elected officials and staff balance budgets with the revenue streams they have access to. Policing is an indispensable service but one that must be financially feasible. If municipalities are not able to secure value for their communities in return for the investment that they make in contract policing, other options will need to be identified. A desire to find an alternative source of policing is clearly expressed by a Request for Proposals that was recently issued for policing services by one of our members.

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Overall, Nova Scotian municipalities desire more discretion and information on the objectives, priorities, goals, and composition of their police force, a more equitable process of determining costs of policing, and a dedicated, collective effort to increase standards of service delivery. Municipalities also value strong relationships with their police force and commanding officers and believe that the PSA should facilitate this relationship.

This is surely an important point in a long-term conversation over the viability and implementation of contract policing in Canada. NSFM calls for the continued inclusion of our members as this conversation advances. Specifically, our members are eager to learn about the findings of this consultation and to receive clear indication regarding the continuation of contract policing after 2032. Once again, we commend Public Safety Canada for conducting this consultation.

Kind regards,

Brenda Chisholm-B

Brenda Chisholm-Beaton

President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

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