



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: RCMP funding request for additional officers

Date: February 23, 2025

Vision statement

Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.

Mission statement

Argyle invests time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.

Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and healthy communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.

Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities and helps celebrate its unique heritage and culture and welcomes new residents to our region.

CAO's Recommendation:

This request to add RCMP officers to the Yarmouth Rural Detachment services has been discussed in camera over the course of months, along with our colleagues at the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth (MODY). It is clear from the confidential presentation and from deliberations with MODY that additional resources are necessary for the protection and safety of our residents. Safety and protection is a strategic pillar for Argyle.

The RCMP completed a comprehensive resource study, named the General Duty Police Resource Methodology, or GDPRM for short. This confidential study examines the current resource of policing in our shared detachment, and recommends additional officers based on pre-set criteria.

The recommendation presented to Argyle Council is to approve 2 additional RCMP officers for the Yarmouth Rural Detachment to be hired in fiscal 2025-2026, with a third officer to be hired in fiscal 2026-2027.

This recommendation differs from the presentation received by RCMP, therefore it is important to revisit these decisions after the 3 new officers are added to the roster, to ensure operational effectiveness of the detachment, and that the needs of the funders are met.

Suggested motion:

That the Municipality of Argyle, along with the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth, requests the addition of 2 RCMP officers to be filled in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, and a third officer be added in the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

That the RCMP and the Province of Nova Scotia join the municipalities to re-evaluate policing resources after the new positions are filled within an 18-month period to examine police effectiveness and additional needs of all parties.

Background:

The GDPRM is led by the RCMP and is completed for various detachments across the country. The methodology is initiated to confirm (or not) resource limitations in a detachment, and based on pre-established criteria, recommends additional officers to be added to the force, or to remain at the same.

The GDPRM itself is confidential under the section of public security under the Municipal Government Act, and therefore not attached for viewing. To summarize, the RCMP uses a variety of pre-set criteria, including but not limited to police presence/visibility time, history of police leaves, occurrence of overtime hours, number of calls, nature of calls, complexity of calls etc.

One of the largest and most complex call outs from our detachment is to answer to mental health calls, where a police officer is needed for safety purposes. The nature of these calls is generally complex and time consuming. There are a variety of other calls that define the nature of the department's services. RCMP showed dramatic increases in the complexity of the calls which increases the time applied to each call.

The comprehensive study received the nod from the federal RCMP leadership and recommended additional officers for the detachment. The details of which have been shared with the council in an in-camera session, again, to preserve public security those numbers are not shared in this document but known privately by Councillors. The RCMP concluded that additional officers are required in the Yarmouth detachment. There are currently 12 RCMP officers at our Yarmouth Rural Detachment.

When considering additional forces for the local detachment, both municipalities must agree to the increase, and make an official request, collectively, to the Province of NS to approve the additional officers, as they bear a portion of the cost. The province has not traditionally opposed these requests in the past.

In discussions with MODY and within, there is no doubt that all parties agree that resources should be added to the current complement of 12 at the detachment.

A caveat to Council, the comprehensive GDPRM does its best to assume demand and supply of officers, but in the end, it is based on estimated service requirements. Actual requirements are likely to differ from their study, as well as from our recommended increase of police officers.

MGA considerations:

The additional officers are an eligible cost under section 65 of the Act, specifically RCMP services are a shared responsibility of the Province of NS and municipalities under the Provincial Policing Service Agreement (PPSA) to which both MODY and Argyle are a party.

Financial considerations:

Cost per officer is a complex calculation that is generated through the PPSA agreement. The federal government covers 30% of the cost per officer. Municipalities and the province are to share the remaining 70% of the total “all in” cost per officer. As of today, 2/3 of the remaining cost is absorbed by municipalities, and 1/3 by the province.

Cost per officer is a complex calculation, including allocation of fixed and variable costs. Cost per officer, for clarity, isn't simply the salary of an RCMP officer. It pays for central administrative costs, allocation of overtime costs, vehicle operations etc... The municipal portion of cost (allocated on a per officer basis) in 2024 was \$213,900. This amount increases annually by inflation and other factors.

Since officers are shared 50%-50%, Argyle cost is \$107,000 per officer.

Budget considerations:

From a practical perspective, the addition of 2 officers shall cost \$214,000 to the municipality, and this shall be prorated for months that the officer was on site. A realistic estimate is it shall take 6 months to fill the positions, perhaps more. Budget increase shall be \$107,000 for this coming budget year, and for year two, \$321,000. This is an annual expenditure.

There is no recommended tax rate increase for 2025-26, but consideration shall be given to a tax rate increase in 26-27 if required. This additional cost is a significant increase to our annual operating budget.

Other external budget pressures should be noted here. Specifically, increases in Uniform Assessment will be matched by increases to our contribution to education, as mandated by the province. Additional capital and operating grants are expected for the Mariners Center expansion and original building.

Internal operating pressures include those typical of what impacts our residents' pockets. Increased labor costs and labor needs, both direct and indirect, increased utilities, travel etc. Our commitment to an improved fire services review will add to the pressures.

Thankfully, there are other factors at play to reduce the pressure on the residential taxpayer. Extended producer responsibilities should decrease the cost of solid waste, and Argyle is fortunate to have the wind turbine revenues from the Wedgeport/Little River project that shall generate \$700,000 annually. These new revenues are not expected until 2027-28.

The recommendation as provided by the CAO in this request are indicative of the collective will of both municipalities to assist, balanced against the fiscal limitations of our organizations. Based on the collection of trends and needs of our community, it is likely that prior year reserves shall be used to offset costs on a temporary basis. More information on the broad implications to the municipality shall be presented in budget deliberations.