

March 5, 2021

Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act
 c/o Parliamentary Committees Office
 Room 224, Parliament Buildings
 Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Re: Police Act Modernization

Dear Special Committee Members,

On behalf of the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM), we wish to thank you for receiving our submission and providing us the opportunity to present on February 8, 2021. We strongly support a comprehensive review of the *Police Act*, and as the order of government that pays the majority of policing costs we are seeking a prominent role in this review. Options and solutions will be most effective if developed through a partnership approach with local governments and other key stakeholders.

We would also like to take this opportunity to elaborate on some of the points raised by the Special Committee during our presentation:

1. Population per officer ratio in urban and rural areas

Deputy Chair Dan Davies sought information on population per officer in urban and rural areas, following UBCM analysis showing that local governments added over 15 times more front line RCMP officers than the provincial police force from 2004-2019, to accommodate population growth and increased demand.

Available provincial data is consistent with UBCM’s concerns, as over the past five years the provincial police force (responsible for rural areas) has maintained a much higher population per officer ratio than the RCMP municipal service (responsible for larger and urban areas) or municipal police departments.

Table 1: Population Per Officer (2015-2019)¹

Year	Provincial Police Force	RCMP Municipal Service	Municipal Police Departments
2015	842	736	536
2016	846	739	538
2017	860	739	544
2018	882	753	562
2019	882	752	570

¹ Source: *Police Resources in British Columbia, 2015-2019*

With this in mind, it is important to note that the growth in population is only one factor in the required level of policing. It is well understood that a strong police presence is still needed in communities that are experiencing limited or negative population growth. On page 8 of UBCM's submission, *Effectively Examining BC's Police Act*, we note the importance of using up-to-date needs analysis methodologies that take into account local service needs. Population growth is only one of the factors that should be used for resource planning and allocation.

2. Value of having more community organizations involved in assisting police

MLA Rachna Singh asked whether it would be beneficial to have more community organizations assisting the police, and as we indicated in our verbal response we are in full agreement. That is why UBCM is recommending that the Special Committee undertake a comprehensive, cross-departmental and cross-governmental review to ensure that the necessary resources are available in all service areas. The police are doing a great job despite being asked to work in areas outside their core expertise. We need the right people doing the right work so that those requiring assistance receive the help they need.

Many of the agencies that need to be involved (e.g. housing, health, mental health) operate under the direction of the Province and it is important that these agencies respond in a coordinated manner without creating negative externalities for others.

3. Local government input into detachment policing

MLA Gary Begg asked if local governments are currently able to provide input into detachment policing. In our response we advised that there are different models that provide for varying levels of input. Generally speaking, the ability to provide input into policing priorities is haphazard and heavily reliant on the Officer in Charge (OIC) or Chief Constable (CC) and the relationship that they hold with the local government and community. If the relationship is strained, the OIC/CC may feel unsupported while the council/board and community may feel as if the police are not considerate of their priorities.

The Special Committee should consider additional options for meaningful dialogue and feedback between the OIC/CC and key stakeholders, including local governments. These options could include oversight bodies, similar or different to the RCMP Civilian Management Advisory Board. We are asking the Special Committee to undertake this research and unearth best practices.

4. Process for closing small detachments

MLA Begg also raised the issue of closing small detachments, and what type of process would be most appropriate under this hypothetical situation. In our response we added that while this would negatively affect policing in the region, if the decision were made there would be an immediate need for early and ongoing consultation with affected communities.

We would add that when the integrated teams were first proposed for the Lower Mainland, business cases outlining what was proposed and why were prepared in consultation with the affected communities. These business cases included the service delivery and financial implications of the change. In addition to early and ongoing consultation, we would suggest that these types of business cases be prepared. They should include the steps that are to be taken to make the change as smooth as possible for those individuals receiving the service.

5. Advocacy by UBCM and FCM regarding the RCMP funding model

With respect to this issue, raised by Deputy Chair Davies, we would note that these formulae are part of the RCMP contract, which is currently going through a five-year review. UBCM has committed to raising any issues identified by its membership as part of this review. We will also continue to liaise with FCM regarding this and other relevant policing issues.

From a local government perspective, a change in the funding formulae mentioned above would change the contribution between the federal government and local governments. We are also interested in examining the difference in total funding between the Province and local governments. This difference is significant and does not take into consideration ability to pay. Local governments are largely funded through property taxation, and using a large percentage of that revenue for policing services is not sustainable. That is why we are advocating for a review of the overall funding framework for public safety, including the appropriateness of using local property taxes to fund policing costs.

As noted by UBCM's Executive Director, we are not here to advocate for any one specific funding formula at this juncture. The key message is that UBCM is interested in a review of how policing costs are funded to ensure police funding is equitable, affordable and sustainable.

6. Inequities in technology that may be impacting community policing

Chair Doug Routley sought information regarding the types of technological inequities that may be impacting the abilities of police. As we indicated, the lack of cell coverage and broadband internet outside of the Lower Mainland is a

significant issue.

Additionally, and as outlined in our report, while there has been a considerable investment in policing technology in recent years, the police remain challenged when it comes to providing data-driven responses to public and local government requests for certain types of information. For example, local governments often receive anecdotal responses to requests for information regarding police workloads and resource allocation, instead of evidence-based data. To improve transparency and accountability, data and business intelligence systems must be reviewed to ensure that they meet the needs of not just the service providers, but also the public, governing bodies and other policing partners.

We hope this additional information is helpful in clarifying some of the issues identified by the Special Committee during our presentation.

As noted by Chair Routley, “I would expect that the UBCM is always ready and willing to contribute.” We wholeheartedly agree with these comments, and wish to re-affirm UBCM’s desire to remain involved on an ongoing basis as the Special Committee’s work proceeds.

This legislative review represents a tremendous opportunity to work together and shape public safety for the future.

Yours truly,



Brian Frenkel
UBCM President



Craig Hodge
Co-Chair, Local Government Contract
Management Committee

cc: *Wayne Rideout, Assistant Deputy Minister and Director of Police Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*