



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 two-page document is included below on pages 3 and 4.

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 will 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, a number 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 NL, Que, Ont?

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).



Identified Policing Service Strengths and Issues for Discussion

July 12, 2023

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:

- Occasional delays in provincial government appointing its representative 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.
- Policing services are becoming increasingly expensive.

Issues Experienced by Municipal Police Forces:

- Capacity is stretched by additional responsibilities that take officers away from core duties.
- Ability 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.

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.
- Ability to 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 imposing of technology/Equipment Type A upgrades without grounds for refusal (11.2 l)).
- Rising costs require adjusted cost-share ratios or a revised list of costs included in the PSAs.

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 based on what the Nova Scotia PPSA features:

- 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 based on what the MPSA features:

- MPSAs are directly credited and reconciled based on officer utilization and vacancies longer than 30 days, municipal PPSA partners are only reconciled partially based on credits and reconciliation provided to the PPSA as a whole.
- 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 and MPSA 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.