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Public Safety and Security Division

Hayley Crichton, Executive Director of Public Safety and Security Division

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To Nova Scotia Federation of Municipality (NSFM) Members

Re: NSFM Meeting on Policing

I wish to thank the NSFM for inviting Department of Justice – Public Safety and Security Division (PSSD) staff to the meeting on policing held prior to the Annual General Meeting. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback directly from our municipal partners with respect to policing in Nova Scotia and to listen to how municipalities are exploring novel solutions to the public safety challenges they face in their communities.

We were also happy to share how PSSD and the NSFM are collaborating on a strategy to better communicate items impacting municipalities who receive policing services through RCMP as the provincial police service provider as well as those municipalities with a direct-municipal RCMP contract. Quarterly policing service recipient updates will be shared with municipalities with RCMP contracted services highlighting items which may include but are not limited to the following:

- Upcoming Presentations and Training from PSSD
- RCMP Contract Management Committee Updates
 - Recruitment and Retention initiatives
 - Equipment Modernization
 - Collective Bargaining
- Local Contract Updates
 - Division Support and Centralized Services
 - Division Administration
 - Division Property and Equipment
 - Division Staffing Updates
- Policing Strategies Updates
 - Ongoing Initiatives
 - Upcoming Engagements
 - Provincial Policing Review
 - Provincial Policing Priorities
- Crime Prevention Updates

I will continue to work with NSFM to ensure this reporting template provides relevant and useful information for your purposes. Our intent is to ensure you feel as though you are able to make informed decisions for your constituents.

I would like to affirm that we heard your comments and feedback after our presentation concluded. Specifically, addressing continued vacancy challenges in policing remain a priority. In addition, we will be taking concerns regarding school safety to our colleagues in Government to discuss possible ways forward.

Public Safety and Security Division was also extremely pleased to hear from policing partners who are supporting new and novel approaches to addressing public safety. I was particularly impressed and interested in the Crisis Navigator position in the Town of Kentville. The Crisis Navigator position represents a proactive and cost-efficient way to deal with some of the socio-economic drivers of crime, especially given the broader challenges with police officer recruitment. We have taken note that it is a model that could likely be of value to other jurisdictions in the Province and elsewhere.

We also heard from the Town of Bridgewater and the Chief of Bridgewater Police regarding formalized agreements prepared for accessing specialized services. Regarding specialized services, Public Safety and Security Division is pleased to hear about productive collaboration between police agencies to build sustainable capacity in response to complex acute crises. As you are aware, the Public Safety and Security Division has been working to draft Provincial Policing Standards with our police and police governance partners. This work will ensure all police agencies in Nova Scotia meet base minimum requirements, including having formalized access to specialized services such as Emergency Response Teams and Forensic Investigators.

Additional presentations by municipalities policed by the RCMP were frank about the challenges they have faced and were forward looking with respect to opportunities they are actively exploring in support of public safety in their communities. The Mayor and CAO of the Municipality of Cumberland County shared their experience through the policing review process and subsequent request for proposals. We are committed to continue working with the MOCC and the RCMP to support the delivery of policing services in Cumberland. The Town of Wolfville's Mayor and CAO shared their policing review experience which also coincided with a change to a direct-municipal contract for policing services from the RCMP given their population growth. We look forward to supporting the Town of Wolfville as part of their Community Safety Office study. We also heard from the CAO of the Municipality of the District of East Hants who shared the proactive approach their community has taken to support the policing services delivered by the RCMP. In light of population growth in East Hants and a move to 24-hour policing (no quiet hours), they have increased the number of officers in their jurisdiction. Furthermore, a pilot has been established to increase their complement of civilian support staff which will reduce aspects of the administrative burden associated to officers thereby allowing them to spend more time on core policing duties. We would be happy to explore alternative models, such as the one to be piloted in East Hants, with other municipalities.

Last but certainly not least, we are in receipt of the What We Heard Report prepared by the NSFM from their engagement on policing with their membership earlier this year. This feedback comes at a very opportune time as PSSD is actively working on initiatives that will specifically address a number of concerns identified by municipalities through the survey such as:

- Cost-Related Concerns
 - The aforementioned quarterly policing service recipient update will allow for more transparency with respect to policing costs for those policed by the RCMP, in particular those policed through the PPSA.
 - DOJ will regularly engage with municipalities to allow for a better understanding of the PPSA through presentations, discussions and sharing of more detailed financial information.
 - In particular, as annual invoices are sent to municipalities for policing services under the PPSA, details pertaining to particular cost drivers and further clarity on the particular costs for which municipalities are invoiced will be communicated.

- Governance-Related Concerns
 - Parallel to the NSFAM survey on policing, PSSD staff has recently surveyed RCMP Detachment Commanders and municipalities policed by the RCMP to better understand their concerns with respect to police governance.
 - PSSD is collaborating with the RCMP on developing more consistent and relevant reporting for local Advisory Boards, with a particular focus on policing statistics.
 - Opportunities are being explored to better support boards in their priority setting process the results of which will also serve to inform provincial policing priorities.
 - Training for RCMP Advisory Boards and Boards of Police Commissioners facilitated by DOJ is being refreshed to better respond to the needs of the boards.
 - The process for Ministerial Appointees for Police Advisory Boards and Board of Police Commissioners is lengthy, and in some cases, has been vacant for a period of time. The Public Safety and Security Division will work with each board independently to ensure their vacancy is noted and help to support, where appropriate.

- Service-Level Concerns

- Staffing Concerns
 - Use of civilian positions to support the delivery of policing services can be a proactive and cost-efficient method to address staffing concerns by alleviating some of the administrative burden on officers and PSSD would be happy to explore such solutions with municipalities.
 - Challenges with recruitment, retention and the return to work for officers who are off sick remain a challenge in policing broadly across the country. PSSD will continue to support efforts to address these challenges with and on behalf of all police services in Nova Scotia. Reporting on RCMP initiatives both at a national and local level will be shared via the quarterly policing service recipient update.

- Other Concerns
 - PSSD is working to establish a framework around the administration of Special Events as outlined in the PPSA. More is to come on this.

Just as differences in geography and demographics make for different municipalities, it also creates different and nuanced challenges with respect to policing and public safety in each jurisdiction which is reflected in the What We Heard Report. We look forward to continuing to partnering with NSFM and engaging with individual municipalities as we navigate processes to ensure the safety and security of all Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,



Hayley Crichton
Executive Director
Public Safety and Security Division