

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Robert Nicolay, City Manager	DATE: September 27, 2022
FROM: Lee Newton, Strategic Projects Manager	MEETING: Council Committee of the Whole
SUBJECT: Police Service Model Review	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council authorize up to \$250,000 for the development of a detailed Transition and Community Engagement Plan to further assess the opportunity to establish a municipal police service for the City of Grande Prairie.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

City Budget 2021 funded a capital project to complete a Police Service Delivery Review.

BACKGROUND

The Fair Deal Panel Report in June 2020 recommended the Province ‘establish a provincial police service by ending the Alberta Police Service Agreement with the Government of Canada.’

In response, the Government of Alberta (GOA) engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to complete a review of provincial policing in Alberta. The PWC review suggested to the GOA that creating a new Alberta Provincial Police Service had the opportunity to be both more cost effective and responsive to local needs than the current provincial policing offered through contract with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The GOA is now undertaking stakeholder engagement to determine whether it is desirable to proceed with transitioning provincial policing responsibility from the RCMP to an Alberta Provincial Police Service.

The City of Grande Prairie contracts the RCMP as its municipal police service provider through a Municipal Police Services Agreement (MPSA). MPSA’s are available through the Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA) between the GOA and RCMP. If the GOA were to form a new Provincial Police Service, the RCMP will no longer be available to provide municipal contract policing in the City of Grande Prairie or elsewhere in Alberta.

In anticipation of a coming decision point regarding police service delivery in the community, City Council initiated a Police Service Model Review.

ANALYSIS

The Police Service Review finds that in general, the operational front-line policing services provided by RCMP members in Grande Prairie are considered acceptable. The police officers assigned to the community are viewed as hardworking and well regarded.

Despite these efforts and substantial investment, the City of Grande Prairie continues to greatly exceed both provincial and national averages in relation to Crime Severity Indexes.

There also remain significant concerns regarding the larger RCMP organization's ability to provide a high level of contract policing services due to its significant recruiting challenges, inability to retain senior members in the community, bureaucratic policies and procurement systems, and ever-increasing costs. These concerns are further compounded by the unknowns concerning the future long-term ability of the RCMP to perform contract policing across Canada.

The RCMP "one-size-fits-all approach" to municipal policing can fail to meet the specific needs of a local community. By design, a municipal police service needs to be governed by a local independent police oversight body e.g., a commission, with the sole mandate of ensuring the police service is providing what is required by the community it serves.

A Grande Prairie municipal police service could provide an alternative. The police service would be free of many historical encumbrances limiting modernization and would represent an opportunity to increase local accountability, organizational efficiency, community policing, employee retention and decrease cost.

Further third-party analysis and in-depth public engagement is necessary to truly assess the viability of such an initiative.

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

The Police Service Review aligns with Council's Strategic Priorities of Quality of Life, Innovative Efficiencies & Economic Readiness, and Engaging Relationships.

Environmental Impact

No relevant environmental impact.

Economic Impact

Policing is the City's most significant operating expense. Adjustments to the provision of service are likely to have an economic impact. Future analysis, if Council directed, will further assess this impact.

Social Impact

Crime can affect a community's residents, businesses, and growth opportunities. Effective law enforcement is necessary to manage such impacts.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

Alberta Police Act
RCMP Act
Peace Officer Act
Police Officers Collective Bargaining Act

Alternatives (Optional)

1. Council could receive the Police Service Model Review for information.
2. Council may direct Administration to take an alternative action.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Specific stakeholder was engaged for the initial Police Service Model Review. Broad public engagement is highly recommended for any future analysis.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget necessary to complete the next phase Transition and Community Engagement Plan is requested to be authorized at up to \$250,000.

Administration will apply to the recent announced Alberta Community Policing Grant to assist in offsetting these costs.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

Following the initial Police Service Model Review there remains concern that the existing municipal policing arrangement with the RCMP may not be viable in the future and there should be further consideration as to whether contract policing is the most appropriate service delivery option for the City regardless of external decisions made by the provincial or federal governments.

The transition from the RCMP to a Grande Prairie Police Service would require significant effort and resources including but not limited to the investment in organizational infrastructure, recruitment, training, information technology investment for both hardware and software, potential leasehold improvement costs to update the space as well as legal and professional fees to move the project to completion.

A detailed Transition and Community Engagement Plan is necessary to ensure adequate consideration is paid to such a complex matter.

The Transition Plan would be expected to describe in detail the necessary regulatory, planning, community engagement, staffing, equipment, training, records management, technological and operational steps, funding requirements, and timeline for a new municipal service to become the police service of jurisdiction for the City of Grande Prairie.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 – Police Service Model Review