

CITY OF SURREY

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 20, 2023

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to you about the Surrey police transition, and the growing impacts on all communities in the region as a result of the Provincial Government's approach. Instead of working with the City of Surrey to unwind this poorly planned transition, the Province is trying to take power over policing away from local governments. The Province will be spending significant provincial tax dollars for no added public safety benefit in Surrey, and creating an environment for policing instability in the region.

Sweeping new powers over local policing

As you likely know, the Province recently introduced unprecedented revisions to the *Police Act* to cover up a mess they created. The Province approved the original transition in 2019 despite prescient warnings about the overwhelming cost impacts to Surrey taxpayers, as well as significant challenges to recruiting frontline officers to the Surrey Police Service (SPS).

The proposed changes to the *Police Act* should concern all local governments and elected officials. Effectively, the Solicitor General is taking the ultimate power of choosing the model of policing away from local governments, clearly motivated by papering over a decision he should not have made in the first place.

As elected officials, it is our job to represent the voters and work earnestly to enact the mandate upon which we were elected. The Province's job should continue to be to ensure that local governments have an appropriate policing plan in place, supported by voters. It is not their role to step-in and make important decisions about local policing models based on their own political motivations.

Significant new costs for Surrey and regional taxpayers

If forced to move ahead, this transition will cost Surrey taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. I continue to oppose the Province's plan, and do not believe that it is in the best interest of Surrey, or the region. It is not the best use of provincial tax dollars to fund a police transition that Surrey does not want and that will provide no added public safety benefit.

The Province has already committed \$150 million toward support with additional transition costs, but the ongoing gap between the RCMP contract model and a new municipal force is estimated at no less than \$462 million over the next 10 years. We are looking at our options to continue to fight this transition, but make no mistake, if the Province has the ability to force this transition ahead with this unprecedented legislation, I will be seeking hundreds of millions more from the Province to protect Surrey taxpayers.



BRENDA LOCKE
MAYOR

MAYOR@SURREY.CA

604.591.4126



Furthermore, if Surrey does not maintain the RCMP, our City's share of the Division Administrative costs are in excess of \$32M per year, based on our full strength of members. Once the RCMP ceases to police Surrey, these costs will need to be absorbed by all other Municipalities across BC that continue to have RCMP provide Policing services.

But, again, this is not the best use of Provincial tax dollars. As a region, we have significant challenges in front of us requiring urgent Provincial attention including housing, hospitals, schools, and transit. We should all be encouraging the Province to stand down and focus scarce provincial funds on more urgent priorities.

Recruitment woes creating a destabilizing effect on local policing

Finally, if the Province is able to force this transition ahead, it will have a significant destabilizing effect on policing throughout the region. The Province was warned by many experts that the original transition plan had a gaping hole in it, and those warnings about SPS recruitment issues have come true. Today, 75% of the police in Surrey are still with the RCMP. In recent weeks and months, the SPS has even lost recruits. As it stands, the SPS is nowhere near the number of frontline officers they need to become the police of jurisdiction.

And since Surrey RCMP officers are not transferring to the SPS, which the Province was very clearly warned about, the SPS is actively recruiting from municipal police forces in Vancouver, Delta, Abbotsford, New Westminster, Port Moody, and West Vancouver. This has become a serious policing problem not just in Surrey, but in other communities now as well. Again, this issue is a direct result of the Province's mismanagement of this transition from the beginning.

Sending the Province a message

As the Mayor of Surrey, it is my job to stand up for public safety and taxpayers in Surrey. But as this issue continues to drag on, the impacts for the rest of the region are also growing. Instead of doing their job and properly scrutinizing the proposed transition from the start, the Province is now taking policing powers from local governments, spending scarce tax dollars on a transition Surrey does not want, and creating real instability in policing throughout the region.

I hope that you will join me in raising these concerns with the Premier and the Solicitor General. They need to know that the region's Mayors are not prepared to accept the growing list of impacts as a result of their mismanagement of this important file.

Sincerely,



Brenda Locke,
Mayor

