



**March 15, 2024**

**Mayor Rob Douglas and Councillors**

District of North Cowichan  
7030 Trans-Canada Highway  
Duncan BC V9L 6A1

Dear Mayor Douglas and Councillors:

**RE: 2024 AVICC Resolution: Fail to Appear Charges in Policing Statistics**

I am writing to bring to your attention a resolution that will be considered at the upcoming Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities Annual General Meeting and Convention, and to respectfully request your support when the resolution is presented.

As described in the attached backgrounder, Fail to Appear is a Criminal Code charge brought against an individual who fails to attend a scheduled court appearance. These charges do not impact police resources because they are simply an additional charge against the individual.

Despite having no impact on police workload, these charges are counted alongside all other Criminal Code charges attributed to municipalities with courthouses, regardless of where the original offence occurred. Particularly in smaller jurisdictions, this practice significantly inflates the policing statistics for communities with courthouses. In the case of the City of Duncan, 80% of the Fail to Appear charges attributed to our community originated from outside of our jurisdiction, representing a 23% increase in the City's total 2023 Criminal Code cases. This inflated number has a significant and corresponding impact on the requests for the number of officers, particularly when a community is transitioning past the 5,000 and 15,000 population thresholds.

The City of Duncan recognizes that the impact of the Fail to Appear charges is felt differently across BC communities. We appreciate your consideration of the disproportionate impact of including Fail to Appear charges in policing statistics for jurisdictions in which courthouses are located, and respectfully request your support for our resolution to remove these charges from policing statistics.

Sincerely,

**Michelle Staples**  
Mayor

Encl. Backgrounder: Fail to Appear Charges

cc: Duncan City Council

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#### REQUEST

The City of Duncan respectfully requests delegates' support for our resolution requesting that the Province of British Columbia exclude Fail to Appear charges from the workload data of municipalities where courthouses are located:

WHEREAS 100% of Fail to Appear charges at provincial courthouses are assigned to the policing statistics of the municipality in which the courthouse is located, having a disproportionate impact on the policing costs assigned to small municipalities with courthouses that serve a much broader area outside their jurisdiction;

AND WHEREAS this inflates the Criminal Code case load for all municipalities with courthouses within their jurisdiction and results in an unfair burden to the taxpayers of those municipalities, especially considering that Fail to Appear cases have no effect on the workload of the local detachment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Province of British Columbia be urged to direct that Fail to Appear charges be excluded from the policing statistics of municipalities with courthouses.

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#### BACKGROUND

The City of Duncan recognizes that the impact of the Fail to Appear charges is felt differently across BC communities. BC local governments with a courthouse in their jurisdiction with populations over 5,000 will likely be aware of the impacts of these calculations on their policing costs.

Duncan is a small urban municipality (population 5,047) that serves a much larger population outside of its jurisdiction. The population surpassed 5,000 in the 2021 census, and is now required to pay 70 percent of RCMP policing costs, with the federal government paying the remaining 30 percent, in accordance with the *Policing Act*. Duncan has negotiated with the province to determine how many police officers will be included in the policing agreement, which the province based on the number of Criminal Code offences within the City's policing statistics as part of ensuring "adequate and effective" levels of policing and law enforcement. The province was very inflexible with this methodology.

Through these negotiations, Duncan learned that Fail to Appear charges, a Criminal Code charge brought against an individual who fails to attend a scheduled court appearance, for the Duncan Courthouse (Provincial Court) are attributed to the City's policing statistics, regardless of where the original offence occurred. However, prior to 2022, Fail to Appear charges were simply added to the originating Criminal Code offence, as only the most serious offence was counted for statistical purposes. Now these Fail to Appear charges are added as a new charge because they were created on a different date.

The inclusion of Fail to Appear charges has inflated the policing statistics and consequently the number of officers required for not only Duncan, but likely for other jurisdictions where courthouses are located; particularly when transitioning past the 5,000 and 15,000 population levels. Furthermore, these charges do not impact police resources because they are simply an additional charge against the individual.

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## DISCUSSION

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In the City of Duncan context, the inclusion of the Fail to Appear charges equates to two additional officers to address these charges. In 2023, the City is allocated 100% of the 325 Fail to Appear charges, whereas only approximately 65 of these cases (20%) originated from within the City of Duncan, versus 260 of these cases (80%) originated from other jurisdictions. These Criminal Code cases originating from other jurisdictions inflated the City's 2023 Criminal Code cases from 1,152 to 1,412; this was an increase of 23%. This inflated number has a significant and corresponding impact on the number of required officers.

Our secondary concern, confirmed by multiple senior RCMP officials, is that Fail to Appear cases have no effect on the workload of the local detachment; they are simply an additional charge against the individual.

If Fail to Appear charges are not excluded from the policing statistics of municipalities with courthouses, they should at least be tracked separately like Criminal Code traffic offences, so that their impacts on local policing can be appropriately considered.

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## KEY BENEFIT

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Our hope is that delegates will recognize the disproportionate impact of including Fail to Appear charges in policing statistics for jurisdictions in which courthouses are located, particularly on small municipalities that serve a much larger population outside of their boundaries. If these charges are eliminated from the policing statistics used to calculate the number of officers, the jurisdiction in which courthouses are located could see dramatic impact on the cost of policing. By supporting this resolution, delegates can ask Province to remove Fail to Appear charges from the policing workload calculations of jurisdictions with courthouses for a fairer distribution of costs.

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**Contact:** Mayor Michelle Staples | Phone: 250-466-9412 | Email: [mayorstaples@duncan.ca](mailto:mayorstaples@duncan.ca)

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