



VIA EMAIL

Ref. 673328

January 20, 2025

His Worship Rob Douglas  
Mayor of the Municipality of North Cowichan  
7030 Trans-Canada Highway  
Duncan BC V9L 6A1  
Email: [terri.brennan@northcowichan.ca](mailto:terri.brennan@northcowichan.ca); [mayor@northcowichan.ca](mailto:mayor@northcowichan.ca)

Dear Mayor Douglas:

Thank you for your letter dated October 3, 2024, addressed to Premier David Eby, regarding your desires to expand the roles and responsibilities of your community policing volunteers. As your letter deals with public safety and security of British Columbians, your letter has been referred to me as the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to respond.

I apologize for the delay in responding, as the Province recently completed its transition between governments. I appreciate your desire to ensure greater community safety within the Municipality of North Cowichan by taking progressive and incremental steps towards its improvement. Your deployment of community policing volunteers to improve presence on the streets is innovative, and within the purview of your municipality as an over 5,000 population municipality.

The Policing and Public Safety Modernization (PPSM) initiative is making progress on responding to recommendations of the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act*, including the recommendation to adopt a flexible approach to policing and public safety that allows for different categories of public safety personnel. As part of the first phase of the PPSM initiative, a regulatory authority to establish new officers known as Safety Officers was added to the *Police Act*. Over the coming years, this authority could be used to develop regulations that allow municipalities to hire a new class of peace officer and implement a tiered approach to public safety.

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As you are likely aware, the City of Duncan emerged past the 5,000 population threshold in 2021 and as per the *Police Act*, became responsible for the provision of policing on April 1, 2022. The City of Duncan signed a Municipal Police Unit Agreement (MPUA) with the Province to contract the BC RCMP as their police service provider and as set out in the MPUA, the authorized strength of the Duncan Municipal Unit (MUN) started as eight (8) Regular Members (RMs) and is scheduled to increase annually on April 1st of each year by one (1) RM for a total of 12 RMs by April 1, 2026.

Additionally, following the City of Duncan assuming policing responsibilities and as per the terms of the MPUA, the BC RCMP, in consultation with the City of Duncan, are conducting a post-emergence resource review. The purpose of the review, which is scheduled to begin in January 2025, is to assess current resources in all units within the North Cowichan/Duncan Detachment, and determine, as per the *Police Act* and MPUA, whether they support the delivery of adequate and effective policing.

Should the review identify the need for a change to the authorized strength in either the Duncan Provincial Unit (PROV), the Duncan Municipal Unit (MUN) or the North Cowichan MUN, the Province will work with the BC RCMP to identify the necessary resource levels.

You may be pleased to know that in support of the Provincial Government's Safer Communities Action Plan, announced November 20, 2022, the Province has approved an unprecedented, multi-year investment of approximately \$230 million to the RCMP, as the Provincial Police Service. This funding is intended to address existing gaps in staffing, and resource pressures in specialized functions, such as Major Crime Section and BC Highway Patrol, as well as at front-line provincial detachment units. I am pleased to advise that under the Provincial Investment, Duncan PROV received the addition of +2 RMs to the unit's authorized strength which is reflected in the current authorized strength of 22 RMs.

My ministry also continues to support communities across BC through the Situation Table model. The model brings together frontline staff from the public safety, health, and social service sectors to identify at-risk individuals and collaboratively and rapidly connect them to the services and supports they need. Across BC, every year over 80 per cent of all cases brought forward by the police to a Table are transferred to a more suitable agency, not only helping decrease policing workload but also offering appropriate and safe supports to those most at-risk. In 2021, my ministry provided \$30,000 to support the implementation of a Situation Table in the Cowichan Valley. As you are likely aware, in September of 2024, an additional \$30,000 was provided to North Cowichan to re-train and re-mobilize the Cowichan Valley Table, known as the Cowichan Valley Interagency Response Team (CVIRT). The Table will begin its re-training this month. I can assure you that the CVIRT will be fully supported by the local RCMP detachment. My ministry will also continue to provide data analysis and stakeholder engagement support to the Table.

His Worship Rob Douglas  
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I encourage you to continue your close working relationship with your RCMP Detachment and look forward to learning about the outcomes of your program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Garry Begg". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink.

Garry Begg  
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

pc: The Honourable David Eby, KC

October 3, 2024

Honourable David Eby  
Office of the Premier  
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9E1

via email: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Premier Eby

**Re: Community Policing program**

We listened with great interest to your speech at UBCM, and one of the points that really resonated with us was your comments related to funding municipalities' protective service needs, resulting from managing public disorder from mental health, drug addiction and homeless issues.

North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP has one of the largest caseloads per member in the province. We know they are getting burnt out due to the enormous and complex number of issues each member is faced with. We also supplement RCMP work with community patrols utilizing four bylaw officers. The calls for service for our bylaw team are also beyond what they can manage and are predominantly due to the mental health, drug addiction and homelessness issues in our community.

Our region has over 400 homeless persons, and every day, we struggle to keep up. We are a community of only 30,000 people and have been spending approximately \$15,000 per day on protective services related to these issues.

With the average cost of a police officer continuing to rise and currently at nearly \$250,000 per member, there is real value in funding a different model to supplement our police efforts. We propose to increase our volunteer presence in the community through a retooled Community Policing program utilizing a "tiered" approach to training volunteers based on the risks of the patrolling we request of them. Knowing that over 20% of an RCMP officer's time is dedicated to social services issues, there is a great benefit to using community policing officers to tackle many of these issues and, therefore, freeing up RCMP officers to focus on more traditional "police work."

We plan to redeploy our community policing volunteers through RCMP and Bylaw oversight to help patrol our streets, connect the homeless to services and act as ambassadors for our community. To coordinate these efforts, we need to hire a Community Policing Manager. The budget for this type of operation, including training all volunteers, will top \$200,000 per year. Our ask of the province, based

on your statements, is to provide funding in the amount of \$1 million to cover the next five years of operating a new Community Policing program. The benefits for the province will be evidence-based on the results, showing that communities can address the issues utilizing creative, non-police-based approaches, ultimately demonstrating better value and results to the business owners and residents of the Municipality of North Cowichan.

We know we cannot arrest ourselves out of the homeless mental health and drug addiction issues. Therefore, money is better spent on community policing officers that support the homeless and business community. At the same time, as we work on other ways to move the homeless through the continuum of housing and rehabilitation.

We know this is an early ask based on the election time frames but it was important that we provide you our request as soon as possible based on your speech at UBCM.

We look forward to discussing this matter further with you post-election.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely



Rob Douglas  
Mayor

[mayor@northcowichan.ca](mailto:mayor@northcowichan.ca)

cc: John Horn, Director, Social Planning and Protective Services  
North Cowichan Council  
Ted Swabey, Chief Administrative Officer, North Cowichan