**UBCM 2021 Meeting Notes - September 8 at 910AM**

**Public Safety and Solicitor General – RCMP Contract for Municipal Policing 2022**

**Attending:**

**Town of Gibsons:**

Mayor Beamish

Councillor Croal

CAO Mark Brown

**Public Safety & SG**

Katherine St. Denis, Director RCMP Services Division

Kevin Plummer, Sr. Program Manager – RCMP Contract

Ryan Wong, Program Assistant

The purpose of this meeting was to follow-up on the 2020 meeting that focused on planning for transition to municipal policing in 2022 if the Town has exceeded 5000 population according to census data. Our understanding is that the transition will likely occur on April 1, 2022; however, there has been limited planning and contact with the Ministry apart from the study that the Town did in 2019. A/Comm. Stubbs commented that he is not aware that the Town is on the list for transition (See Note on Meeting Sept 7, 2021).

Mayor Beamish emphasized that the community expects that there will be increased police presence in the community and that members will start and end their shifts in Gibsons. Currently the RCMP has reported that the SC Detachment is significantly under staffed and the Gibsons office is on reduced hours due to lack of support staff. How can we ensure that there are sufficient resources to staff the Gibsons office in 2022?

The Town is also concerned about the cost of policing given the recent increases due to the collective agreement that has now been settled with the RCMP.

Katherine St. Denis response:

* Appreciate Gibsons being proactive and also informing us of Police Act Review committee being conducted now.
* Mayor – commented that he had provided a submission to the Review Committee including increasing the population threshold from the current 5,000 people as well as a phase in of costs over 5 years

Kevin Plummer – stated that the Ministry will work with RCMP to determine resources required and then provide a cost estimate based on cost per member. When this is completed an information document will sent to Municipality directly later this year with a view to meeting with the Town in

December and January even if census data is not known at this time. This will identify minimum resource agreed upon and then phase in of costs as well as transition of number of members which is usually over a 2-3 year period.

Mayor Beamish responded that it is good to learn that there will be a phase-in and transition period and that the cost shock may not be immediate.

Katherine also suggested that the Town should confirm with the RCMP that the Gibsons RCMP building will be suitable to be used as a full time detachment office. This building was built in 2011 to federal standards in anticipation of future use as a Gibsons detachment office. It currently lacks cells.

Mayor Beamish suggested that the Town needs to be included in any planning and discussion between the Ministry and the RCMP so that we are fully aware of the plans and options being considered for the community and have opportunity to present information as needed.

Katherine committed to following up with the Town in October on this subject.

**2020 Ministry Note:**

**AG/PUBLIC SAFETY MINISTER MEETING SCRIPT – UBCM Sept 17 20**

**Mayor Siegers, District of Sechelt**

**Darnelda, Lori, Bill, David, Mark, Leonard, Matt, Nicholas Simons, Kerianne**

1. TOPIC Despite the average file load for our local RCMP detachment remaining fairly consistent on the Sunshine Coast over the last few years, and with no recent census numbers to justify the addition of additional members, we believe the business cases currently being created will support our RCMP detachment gaining 2 additional provincial members. The business cases may even support a request to the District of Sechelt to fund an additional municipal member.

2. BACKGROUND We are extremely lucky to have S/Sgt Poppy Hallam as our detachment commander here on the Sunshine Coast. She actively partners with our local governments and works with us to understand and address the safety and security of our residents and our communities. She makes herself available to help us understand the impacts of issues like the opioid crisis and mental health issues and their impacts on businesses, our health system, the local crime scene and much more. She encourages her members to be visible in the community and has raised the profile of the good work the RCMP do on the Sunshine Cost.

Currently, our full complement of members on the Sunshine Coast sits at 35. Of that, the District of Sechelt pays for 11 members. The last member to be added to the complement was a municipal member in 2009. ***The province has not added any members since 2008 when they added one to make 24. We anticipate that, in 2022, the Town of Gibsons will hit the magic 5000 number which will also impact member number manning their RCMP facility. Until fairly recently, given the difficulty in recruiting members throughout Canada to the RCMP, our detachment has usually not been staffed to our full complement.***

Given our location, a ferry ride away from the lower mainland and other jurisdictions with RCMP detachments, we do not have the ability to avail ourselves of members from other jurisdictions who may be available and are willing to take additional or overtime shifts to fill vacancies. Working in this environment over a period of time, has a negative effect on our regular members physical, mental and emotional health. There is no room to deal with sick days, injuries, or leave.

As per the 2017 allocation stats, we are also to have 2 First Nations liaison members. We have difficulty keeping one position filled for this role.

So, given these parameters, while our overall crime stats may have remained fairly constant here on the Sunshine Coast, the change in type of calls for service, the location of the calls, and the geography of the Sunshine Coast have impacted the level of service that can be provided with the current member count as it is.

Here are some details.

Over the last few years, in downtown Sechelt, within a two block radius we’ve added: a permanent homeless shelter, a supportive housing complex, and, recently, a local hotel which has been leased by BC Housing to supplement the shelter beds, and an Overdose Prevention Site. Also in the area are transition houses for other members of our community. There are expansion plans to double the capacity of the homeless shelter within the next year. The Sunshine Coast Community Services Society will be moving forward with construction of 4 floors of supportive housing for women and children in need. The shishalh Nation will be starting construction on a 6 story building of affordable housing this fall two blocks away.

And currently, BC Housing is building a supportive housing structure in the Town of Gibsons, a short distance down the highway.

Over the last two years, we have seen, a rise in the number of homeless and an increase in calls to the RCMP dealing with mental health related issues. We recently took a closer look at our local call stats. Given the congregation of some of our most vulnerable in a small area downtown, calls for service in that particular area have increased 20% from 2018 to 2019 and a further 20% from 2019 to 2020. The most recent RCMP directive is that all mental health and check well-being files require a two officer response to de-escalate.

As Gibsons supportive housing complex is expected to be occupied by December of this year, we anticipate that mental health calls and their draw on additional resources will have a further impact on our detachment.

Other calls for service that are showing an increase in the 10 year average are auto and bike theft, break and enters, frauds, and sex offences. Assaults are at an all time high and most often require a two man response team. Many of the aforementioned offences are more serious in nature and require more time of the officers to investigate and bring to charges.

Add in the challenging geography of the Sunshine Coast, where the detachment must provide service from Port Mellon to Egmont which spans a 100 km two-lane congested highway, which becomes gridlock after each Horseshoe Bay ferry unloads. This impacts response times and the logistics of attending calls in Sechelt, up to Garden Bay, down to Gibsons, and back to Sechelt. This can have all of the detachments resources tied up in just 4 calls for service.

Given the impact of the current mental health issues and the opioid health emergency on the greater population, the greater community at large has started organizing demanding that their concerns for the safety and security of their homes and businesses and their streets be addressed by the local governments and the RCMP. With the current complement of members on the Sunshine Coast and the increased work load, proactive policing is a pipe dream.

3. THE ASK What we are asking for is that, when the request for the addition of 2 provincial members comes in from our local detachment, it be viewed favourably through the lens of the information provided.

4. FOLLOW-UP Following this meeting, who should we connect with to provide more information or to advocate for the increase in provincial members to our detachment?