



**Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association**  
**Position Paper**  
**Successes, Gaps & Opportunities:**  
**Leading to a Re-envisioned Model of Policing in Nova Scotia**  
*July 2024*

**Introduction**

A comprehensive review of the policing structure in Nova Scotia, commissioned by the Department of Justice, is underway. This review is in response to the final report of the Mass Casualty Commission (MCC), a public inquiry that was created to examine the April 18-19, 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia. In [\*Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission\*](#), the MCC recommended a multi-sectoral council be established to review the structure of policing in our province and make recommendations.

As part of the ongoing policing review, police agencies in Nova Scotia have been asked to identify the successes, gaps and opportunities in policing. The Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association (NSCPA) – representing ten municipal policing agencies across the province – is sharing its perspective with its stakeholders through this position paper.

This document will identify the successes, gaps and opportunities in policing in Nova Scotia; outline what the best policing model for Nova Scotians looks like; and propose alternatives that re-envision policing in the province.

**Existing Model of Policing in Nova Scotia**

To provide context for those conducting the current policing review, we will first explain the existing model of policing in the province. Today, policing in Nova Scotia consists of ten municipal police agencies and the RCMP.

*Municipal Police Services*

The municipal policing agencies are Cape Breton Regional Police, Stellarton Police Department, New Glasgow Regional Police, Westville Police Service, Truro Police Service, Halifax Regional Police, Bridgewater Police Service, Annapolis Royal Police Service, Kentville Police Service and Amherst Police Department.

*RCMP*

The RCMP are contracted by communities that choose not to have their own police agency and buy that service from the Province of Nova Scotia or through a direct contract with the RCMP. This is referred to as contract policing throughout this paper. The RCMP are also contracted by the Province of Nova Scotia to be the provincial police service.

## **Reviews of Policing in Nova Scotia**

Policing reviews of various types have been conducted over the last 2+ decades, which have included studies of the structure of policing for particular communities. It is a long-examined issue.

In fact, our predecessors with the Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police in 2008 put forth their vision, [A Safer Nova Scotia](#), to create an improved, more economical and more sustainable model of policing to address growing costs and complexities in policing and enhance public safety for all Nova Scotians.

Therefore, our position and ideas are not new; they have been said before and supported elsewhere. Regardless, they bear repeating.

As police leaders who continuously look to the future, we recognize that the current policing model in Nova Scotia is not sustainable, particularly given the existing structure of policing agencies and funding models through the Province of Nova Scotia. How and why the current model of policing is unsustainable, and alternate policing models will be explored in this paper. Ultimately, this paper will provide more viable options that seek to enhance public safety and better serve all Nova Scotians.

First, we will delve into the successes, gaps and opportunities from the municipal policing perspective.

### **Successes**

#### ***Community Connection***

Municipal police agencies are known for creating and fostering strong community connections, and we pride ourselves on this approach. It is inherent in municipal community-based policing because we are from our communities and know them well, are connected to the citizens and invested in the communities we serve, and are in it for the long-haul. We have long-standing, experiential knowledge of our communities and are therefore able to provide policing and crime prevention that is community-specific. This is in contrast to what some view as a one-size-fits-all approach by the RCMP, which fails to respond to local needs or address community priorities, as is evidenced in the May 2024 [Public Safety Canada Contract Policing Assessment](#).

Our community outreach is robust and we have strong community partnerships with community resources, service providers and subject matter experts (MCC Rec. P73)<sup>1</sup> because of the stability and longevity of our officers and staff.

All of our efforts result in confidence and trust in local police.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this Position Paper, reference will be made to specific recommendations in *Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission* to provide context and support our standpoint.

### ***Robust Service Delivery***

Municipal police agencies are present in the community 24/7, 365 days of the year and have low vacancy rates and limited turnover. We also have quick response times, particularly to high-priority calls. And through our strong knowledge of and connections in the community, we swiftly respond to localized priorities with solution-based outcomes. We are also nimble and adaptable in our decision-making, and do not have to report upwards through a multi-layered bureaucracy like contract policing is required to do by virtue of their structure.

We are a business unit within our municipalities/towns and, as a result of this municipal government structure, have strong relationships and work regularly with other municipal services to provide timely responses to community issues. Further, our ten municipal police agencies regularly collaborate and support one another, and have integrated and interoperable teams. For example, Truro, New Glasgow, Westville, Stellarton and Amherst have memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for sharing of resources (MCC Rec. P64) – an MOU regarding an Integrated Major Crime Unit between the five agencies, and an MOU for access to Truro Police Service K-9 and Forensic Identification Services for the remaining four. Bridgewater Police Service provides call taking and dispatch services for Kentville and Annapolis Royal while Truro Police Service provides the same for Westville and Stellarton. These are just a few examples, and such partnerships are continually evolving.

### ***Accountability, Governance & Oversight***

Municipal policing brings with it strong fiscal accountability. Municipal policing costs less than contract policing, and municipalities can give input on priorities, budget, resources and also have the ability to negotiate salaries. Contract policing does not allow for such consultation or negotiation. In the [\*White Paper on the Development of a Policing Plan for Nova Scotia\*](#) authored in the 1990's, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (now the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities) raised concerns that they are paying for yet have no say in contract policing, resulting in no input on priorities, unclear standards, no ability to understand the true costs of policing and an overall lack of accountability. These issues continue today; the rising and prohibitive costs of contract policing, and municipalities' limited influence over the RCMP were themes in the aforementioned May 2024 Public Safety Canada Contract Policing Assessment.

Governance underscores municipal policing, with municipal agencies each having a police governance board to whom they are accountable and report regularly. These boards set policy on governance, approve policing budgets and provide administrative direction to us Chiefs of Police and our leadership teams. This differs starkly from contract policing where RCMP advisory boards can only make recommendations to an RCMP Division or Detachment.

Similarly, oversight of municipal policing is managed provincially rather than federally. Oversight processes/bodies include the Nova Scotia Police Act, the Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT), the provincial Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner and the Police Review Board, the latter of which is an independent civilian review body empowered to hear and rule on public complainant appeals.

Operational oversight is also strong, with frontline supervisors present 24/7 to oversee and manage calls, incidents and responses, which offers layers of accountability (MCC Rec. P48). Further, they know the community well and the resources that are immediately available. This differs vastly from the RCMP's risk manager model which entails remote supervision.

### **Gaps**

While we have many strengths, we have also critically evaluated ourselves to identify the gaps that exist within municipal policing.

First and foremost, we would be remiss if we did not mention the duplication of both administrative and operational duties across our ten agencies, and across 11 in the province when we add in the RCMP. Having eleven police agencies and all that is required to effectively operate them is neither efficient nor effective; however, there needs to be the political will at all levels of government to significantly alter the policing model in Nova Scotia.

With respect to interoperability (groups/systems operating in conjunction with one another), several municipal agencies use different Records Management Systems than the majority of others, which does not allow for the seamless exchange of information. This is also an issue between municipal agencies and the RCMP. Municipal police agencies have long advocated for a common integrated computer system for all police in Nova Scotia and respectfully request that the Nova Scotia Department of Justice coordinates and funds same, just as they do effectively now with the Justice Enterprise Information Network.

Our municipal agencies also have three separate unions, one of which has numerous locals, rather than one union. This results in duplication of labour relations efforts.

### **Opportunities**

Municipal police see many opportunities to work together in partnership, including shared resources (both human and equipment), shared training, enhanced collaboration and improved interoperability. We are accustomed to partnering and collaborating and welcome the opportunity to do so even more.

As mentioned previously, we believe there can be a re-envisioned policing model for the province. We also believe that the RCMP should be positioned to bolster its focus as a federal agency and enhance their ability to address national public safety issues, instead of being pulled in multiple directions. More will be stated on these two matters in the Recommendations section (p. 5-8).

### **Review of *Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission***

Given that this position paper is directly related to the policing review recommended in *Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission*, we remain committed to responding to the recommendations which involve municipal police.

We reviewed the final report and related findings carefully when released in 2023, and regularly revisit them. The majority of the policing-related recommendations were directly related to the RCMP, however, we diligently reviewed them to determine the appropriate response from municipal police where applicable.

It is encouraging that municipal police already had in place prior to the mass casualty many of the processes and procedures recommended in the final report. For example, we:

- Possess effective and robust field supervision, and scene command (MCC Rec. P48)
- Conduct regular operational debriefs (MCC Rec. P23)
- Have integrated and interoperable teams with other agencies (MCC Rec. P64)
- Have strong policies and practices for community engagement and consultation on service delivery (MCC Rec. 73)
- Have low vacancy rates and low turnover (MCC Rec. P47)
- Ensure community orientation for new members (MCC Rec. P55)
- Possess regular, effective supervision standards of practice (MCC Rec. P72)
- Adhere to the principles of effective critical incident response (MCC Rec. P1)
- Possess current Emergency Operational Plans (MCC Rec. P2)
- Rapidly deploy Critical Incident Commander (MCC Rec. P9)

We remain committed to continue responding to the recommendations that involve municipal police.

### **Recommendations**

The identified strengths, gaps and opportunities and where we are in relation to the MCC recommendations all signify the prospect of change.

We assert that we can build on the successes, close the gaps and seize the opportunities by outlining what the best policing model for Nova Scotians looks like and re-envisioning policing in the province.

#### ***The best possible police model for Nova Scotians is grounded in the following principles:***

- Responsive
  - Efficient, effective service delivery with budget and resource availability to achieve objectives
  - policies, programs and service delivery based on the evidence of changing needs of the community
  - ability to implement changes and acquire equipment and resources quickly (no lengthy government processes) in order to meet community needs
  - capacity to respond to any/all calls for service and investigative needs and perform all core functions, including crime prevention and community policing

- Consistent & Stable
  - Responsible to the communities in the province where officers are employed and serve – no forced transfers or re-deployment to other priorities
  - Long-term employment to ensure community knowledge and understanding, community investment, strong relationships
- Accountable & Transparent
  - Local government and civilian oversight for priorities, expectations, budgets and expenditures and public complaints
  - Public trust and confidence in police officers and service delivery
- Community-Centric
  - Localized priorities developed for and specific to the community and citizens being served
  - Officers connected to and invested in communities they serve with long-standing experiential knowledge and understanding
  - Outreach and partnerships with service providers and resources for crime prevention

### ***Re-envisioning & Transforming Policing***

We assert that we can take the best possible police model for Nova Scotia outlined above and apply its principles to re-envision and transform policing in our province. Such a transformation aligns with the MCC's recommendations regarding Peel's Principles of Policing (MCC Rec. P36) and Lessons Learned (Chapter 11), and also with the aforementioned White Paper on the Development of a Policing Plan for Nova Scotia.

Our re-envisioned models include the following concepts:

- We support the exploration of more municipal regional police services in Nova Scotia, which would allow our current community-engaged policing approach to be expanded to more rural communities. This could mean the consolidation of current agencies and/or the expansion of single agencies. In this agile and adaptive approach, there would be a sharing of resources in communities of interest based on local needs without sacrificing local accountability. This would not require dramatic transformational change because it aligns with the current municipal policing approach and can readily use existing municipal police infrastructure (e.g. buildings) to support this growth and expansion.
- If this first suggestion does not move forward, we support an assessment of specialized services (such as Emergency Response Teams, forensic identification services, K-9 services) in the province and a funding stream to ensure they are adequately, effectively and efficiently organized to meet the demand in Nova Scotia (MCC Rec. P63). For us, specialized services would preferably be organized and accessible on a geographic versus centralized basis.
- We recognize that provincial policing will exist in some form, whether on its own or via a contract, and remain committed to working in partnership with our provincial counterparts and ensuring strong and sustainable interoperability.

Overall, we are committed to working collaboratively to provide the best policing model for all Nova Scotians.

### ***Considering the RCMP***

The RCMP is renowned internationally as a premier federal police agency. Our country and its citizens require that strong federal police presence from the RCMP (akin to the FBI in the United States); however, restructuring is required to better position the RCMP to focus on national public safety priorities.

Respectfully and in fairness to our policing partners, the RCMP currently has too many priorities and conflicting mandates given that they are expected to do federal policing, provincial policing and are contracted to provide municipal policing. As such, they struggle to maintain adequate staffing at all levels which, according to the aforementioned May 2024 Public Safety Canada Contract Policing Assessment, is starting to make communities feel unsafe. They cannot be everything to everybody; nor could we.

These conflicting mandates facing the RCMP were recognized in the MCC's final report (Rec. P50), which recommended that: "Public Safety Canada and the federal minister of public safety establish clear priorities for the RCMP, retaining the tasks that are suitable to a federal policing agency and identifying what responsibilities are better reassigned to other agencies (including, potentially to new policing agencies). This may entail a reconfiguration of policing in Canada and a new approach to federal financial support for provincial and municipal policing services."

The National Security & Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians agreed with this recommendation in their 2023 [Special Report on the Federal Policing Mandate of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#), citing the agency's inability to adequately fulfill its federal policing responsibilities due, in part, to their extended focus on contract policing.

A reconfiguration of the RCMP and a re-envisioned model of policing in Nova Scotia would address the conflicting mandates, support the concept of the RCMP exiting contract policing and enhance their ability to be a strong federal agency on which municipal and provincial police and all citizens rely. The concept of exiting contract policing and/or establishing provincial/territorial police services has been recommended in various studies:

- June 2021 report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on [Systemic Racism and Policing in Canada](#), which recommended that the Government of Canada explore the possibility of ending contract policing with the RCMP, and that the Government work with the provinces, territories and municipalities to help those interested establish their own provincial and territorial police services.
- [2019 Briefing Book of the Minister of Public Safety Canada](#) identifying systemic sustainability challenges impacting the whole of the RCMP, which relate to contract policing, noting the growing dissatisfaction from contract jurisdictions with regard to costs, officer vacancies, and resulting impact on community safety.

- Alberta's 2020 [Fair Deal Panel Final Report to Government](#), which also recommended the exploration of an Alberta Police Service, and the corresponding [Alberta Police Service Transition Study](#).
- [2022 report on the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act](#), which recommended a transition away from contract policing in BC to address inconsistencies with respect to service delivery, and improved local accountability responsiveness and decision-making.
- Legislative Assembly of British Columbia's 2022 report [Transforming Policing & Community Safety in British Columbia](#)

Further to the studies urging the RCMP to exit contract policing, the RCMP's current contract with provinces and territories expires in 2032 and leaves the future of contract policing uncertain. In the face of such uncertainty, it is prudent for Nova Scotia to be prepared accordingly and demonstrate leadership should the federal government cease contract policing. Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association asserts that its re-envisioned model can be implemented in advance of 2032 to create a stable, community-centred policing model that enhances public safety.

## **Conclusion**

We realize our detailed analysis of policing in Nova Scotia and our proposed way forward is a lot to digest; however, it is a complex issue that requires a complex response – including a re-envisioned and transformed policing approach in the province.

While we were asked to identify the successes, gaps and opportunities in policing today, we focussed primarily on the opportunities and our vision for the future as the time is ripe for change. The state of policing in the province has been examined for decades – our predecessors studied it and provided a worthy proposal in 2008 as noted previously, and government and consultants have long-studied it, too. We do not want to find the next generation of leaders, whether government officials or police executives, still studying it. Nova Scotians deserve such enhancements to public safety and the time for action is now. This requires political will at all levels of government, strong and transformative leadership by both police and government, and acceptance of change by all involved.

To that end, Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association is eager to play a key role in the much-needed transformation of policing in our province. We are committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to create a model of policing that enhances public safety and best serves all Nova Scotians.

Respectfully,

**Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association**

Consisting of:



Chief Robert Walsh, Cape Breton Regional Police  
Chief Mark Hobeck, Stellarton Police Department & Westville Police Service  
Chief Stephen Chisholm, New Glasgow Regional Police  
Chief Dave MacNeil, Truro Police Service  
Chief Don MacLean, Halifax Regional Police  
Chief Scott Feener, Bridgewater Police Service  
Chief Mark Kane, Annapolis Royal Police Service  
Chief Marty Smith, Kentville Police Service  
Chief Dwayne Pike, Amherst Police Department