

## Key Messages on Municipal Policing Costs and the Police Funding Model

### Municipal Role in Public Safety

- Municipalities play a crucial role in public safety as they possess local expertise, understand community needs, and are accountable to residents.
- Municipalities have an intimate understanding of their communities, including their unique needs, challenges, and demographics. This local knowledge allows them to make informed decisions about the level of policing required to maintain public safety.
- Municipalities are responsible for allocating resources across various essential services, including policing. Consulting with them allows for a holistic approach to resource allocation, ensuring that public safety needs are effectively balanced with other community priorities.

### Police Funding Model (PFM)

- ABmunis appreciates the provincial government's efforts to develop a more equitable funding strategy for communities served by the RCMP, as we have been advocating for a fair approach to police funding for over a decade.
- ABmunis continues to support the "everyone should pay" concept for policing services. This means keeping the current PFM formula based on population and property assessment and continuing to invest these funds in public safety.
- We would welcome data from Public Safety and Emergency Services that provides a full accounting of how funds raised through the police funding model (PFM) were spent. This would assist us in demonstrating the value of the PFM to local rate payers.
- ABmunis also believes in "no pay without say" – as local experts, municipalities need to have oversight of local police services and the ability to set local policing priorities. We appreciate Public Safety and Emergency Services' recent efforts to strengthen civilian oversight of policing.
- ABmunis believes that creating a new, stand-alone provincial police service would be prohibitively expensive and face the same recruitment challenges as every other police service in Canada.
- We also know that the majority of municipalities and Albertans support keeping Alberta RCMP.
- However, we are deeply concerned that recent and significant increases in RCMP policing costs are being passed along to municipalities who cannot cover these increases without raising property taxes, cutting services or both.

### Provincial Police Service Agreement

- The PFM was implemented in 2020-21, using cost estimates from 2019.
- Since then, the cost of the Provincial Police Service Agreement has increased by 39%, primarily due to salary increases negotiated through collective bargaining.
- Municipalities who receive policing under the PPSA cannot absorb this scale of cost increase without either raising taxes, cutting services, or both.

- ABmunis therefore requests that the provincial government provide additional assistance to municipalities that pay for policing through the PFM by:
  1. Increasing the total amount of subsidies distributed to municipalities through the PFM to offset their policing costs.
  2. Distributing fines and penalties under the *Traffic Safety Act* to municipalities receiving policing services under the Provincial Police Services Agreement at the same percentage that these municipalities pay in cost recovery.
  3. Adequately funding community infrastructure needs so that municipalities do not face competing demands for funding local infrastructure versus public safety.

#### Municipal Police Service Agreements

- Municipalities who contract the RCMP are already paying higher policing costs: four years ago, the collective salary increases negotiated through collective bargaining added approximately \$60 million to the total policing costs of the 47 municipalities in Alberta with Municipal Police Service Agreements.
- These costs were particularly difficult to absorb as municipalities were not at the bargaining table and did not have adequate notice of either the scale or timing of significant cost increases.
- Notably, Treasury Board Canada advised municipalities to plan for a 2.5% cost increase; however, the first collective bargaining agreement included retroactive salary increases that resulted in the salary for a First-Class Constable rising by a total of 24% over six years
- ABmunis therefore calls on the provincial government to:
  1. Enhance the total amount of assistance provided through the Policing Support Grant to better offset the rising costs of policing.
  2. Provide additional support to municipalities who are crossing the 5,000 and 15,000 population markers and therefore triggering changes to their policing arrangements and funding models.

#### Municipal Financial Pressures

- Rising policing costs, coupled with decreased infrastructure funding and increased provincial downloading, are placing immense strain on local budgets.
- With limited financial flexibility and no ability to run deficits, municipalities are forced to make difficult choices: cut vital services or burden residents with higher property taxes.
- The cost of providing essential services like policing continues to escalate, leaving municipalities struggling to balance budgets without sacrificing public safety.
- Provincial infrastructure funding to municipal governments has plummeted by 64% since 2011, exacerbating the financial challenges facing our communities.
- We urgently need the provincial government to step up and provide fair and sustainable funding solutions for municipalities.
- Provincial leaders must recognize the critical role municipalities play in delivering essential services and commit to providing adequate funding to address budgetary pressures and infrastructure deficits.

## BRIEFING NOTE

### **TOPIC:**

Police Funding Model (PFM) and Municipal Policing Costs

### **BACKGROUND:**

Until 2020, under the Alberta Police Act, the Government of Alberta provided police services to municipalities with populations of 5,000 or less, as well as to all municipal districts and counties, at no direct cost to these municipalities.

In 2019, the Government of Alberta opened consultations on a police funding model.

ABmunis established a Police Act Working Group made up of municipalities of all sizes to inform our response to consultation and this group developed a written submission in partnership with the Safe and Healthy Communities and Small Communities Committees. ABmunis' written submission emphasized that any new police funding model must:

- Reflect a municipality's demand for services and ability to pay.
- Give municipalities paying for policing improved oversight of and accountability for local policing.
- Reinvest all revenue raised by a new funding model back into policing services.

In 2020 the provincial government implemented a new police funding model that applies to all municipalities that are policed by the RCMP under the Provincial Police Service Agreement (those with populations under 5,000, as well as municipal districts and counties).. Under the five-year model, municipalities paid 10% of their policing costs in Year One, 15% in Year Two, 20% in Year Three, and 30% in Years Four and Five. Each municipality's share of policing costs was calculated according to a formula that weighs equalized assessment at 50% and population at 50%, with modifiers related to shadow populations, crime severity, proximity to detachment, and existing enhanced policing positions.

As the police funding model expired on March 31, 2025, the provincial government announced earlier this year that they would temporarily freeze the amount municipalities are responsible for paying for the 2025-26 fiscal year. The provincial news release noted that "due to higher costs from recent RCMP collective agreements, the cost for policing in these smaller communities will increase to 39 per cent, with no corresponding increase in the services provided. To assist municipalities with these new costs, Alberta's government will pay the increase for one year and will begin engagement with them on their policing needs for the future."

### Municipal Policing Costs

The following table shows the current arrangements for responsibility for policing costs in Alberta:

Policing Arrangement	Population	Responsibility for policing costs			
		Municipality pays:	Provincial government pays:	Federal government pays:	Eligible for Policing Support Grant?
<b>Cities, Towns, Villages, and Summer Villages</b>					
• Municipally-run police service	Various	100%	-	-	Yes
• Municipal agreement with RCMP	15,000+	90%	-	10%	Yes
	5,001 - 15,000	70%	-	30%	Yes
• Provincial agreement with RCMP	1 - 5,000	30% of provincial cost (21% of total cost)	70% of provincial cost (49% of total cost)	30% of total cost	No
<b>Municipal Districts and Counties</b>					
• Provincial agreement with RCMP	Various	30% of provincial cost (21% of total cost)	70% of provincial cost (49% of total cost)	30% of total cost	No

Municipalities with populations over 5,000 that provide their own policing, through either a municipal police service or by contracting the RCMP, are eligible for the provincial Policing Support Grant. Grant amounts are calculated based on population, but the per capita rate has not changed since 2018.

As a result, grant amounts do not cover a significant portion of policing costs:

- For example, in 2022, the City of Calgary (population of 1.4 million, municipal police service) received \$32.8 million, which represents about 6% of its \$547 million police operating budget.
- The Town of Slave Lake (population of 6,836, Municipal Police Service Agreement) received \$353,208, which is about 15% of its \$2.3 million RCMP contract.

The following table on the following page shows the average costs of policing based on the size of municipality and the type of policing agreement they have.

Policing Arrangement	Population	Municipal portion of the cost	# of Reporting Municipalities	Average Net Expense for Policing as a % of Total Municipal Expense (net of grants)
<b>Cities, Towns, Villages, and Summer Villages</b>				
• Municipal police service	Various	100%	7	12.1%
• Municipal agreement with RCMP	15,000+	90%	16	8.3%
	5,001 - 15,000	70%	27	7.5%
• Provincial agreement with RCMP	1,001 – 5,000	30%	28	2.0%
	<1,000	30%	102	2.2%
<b>Municipal Districts and Counties</b>				
• Provincial agreement with RCMP	Various	30%	35	2.2%

**NOTES**

- ABmunis calculations using Alberta Municipal Affairs' 2023 Financial Information Return (FIR) schedule C(1)-Revenue using Police expense (column 01210) and Total Expense (column 01580) excluding services for gas, electric, and other utility services (columns 01566, 01567, 01568).
- Expenditures are presented on a net basis after deducting grant funding received from the Government of Alberta through the Policing Support Grant for eligible municipalities to be representative of the actual expenditures funded by the municipality. The Policing Support Grant allocations represent 2022-23 figures as 2023-24 figures are not publicly available.
- Municipalities that reported zero expense for policing were excluded from the analysis. This represented 104 municipalities that appear to have reported their policing costs in other cost categories (e.g. mixed with bylaw enforcement, disaster and emergency, other protective services, or other).
- Specialized municipalities and improvement districts are excluded due to their unique treatment.

*Police Resources Added under the Police Funding Model*

Since the implementation of the police funding model in 2020, the Alberta RCMP has added 279 police officer positions and 242 civilian support positions. As of October 2024, about three-quarters of these positions had been filled. Of the 279 new police officer positions, 136 were added directly to detachments, as shown below:

<b>POLICE OFFICER POSITIONS BY DETACHMENT = 136 POSITIONS</b>											
<b>Central Alberta District Detachments</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>Eastern Alberta District Detachments</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>Southern Alberta District Detachments</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>Western Alberta District Detachments</b>		<b>36</b>
Bashaw	Stettler		Athabasca	Viking	Airdrie	Three Hills	Beaverlodge	Spirit River			
Blackfalds	Strathcona		Bonnyville	Westlock	Bassano	Vulcan	Edson	Swan Hills			
Breton	Sylvan Lake		Cold Lake		Bow Island		Evansburg	Valleyview			
Camrose	Thorsby		Elk Point		Canmore		Faust	Whitecourt			
Innisfail	Wetaskiwin		Kitscoty		Cochrane		Grande Prairie				
Leduc			Lac La Biche		Didsbury		High Level				
Morinville			Provost		Hanna		High Prairie				
Parkland			Smoky Lake		High River		Manning				
Ponoka			St. Paul		Lake Louise		Mayerthorpe				
Rimbey			Two Hills		Okotoks		Peace Regional				
Rocky Mountain House			Vegreville		Strathmore		Red Earth Creek				

To help determine where to allocate new resources, the RCMP analyzed its workload at each detachment, looking at factors such as:

- Travel time

- Call volume
- The type of crimes occurring in the area,
- The amount of time required for investigations
- The size of detachment, and
- The time available for proactive policing – things like strategic patrols, community engagement, visiting schools, and attending community events.

The RCMP has an integrated service delivery model, which means that detachments receive assistance from centralized frontline support and specialized units, as well as from civilian support positions. So even detachments that do not receive new police officer positions benefit from additional centralized services, as these positions enable frontline officers to spend more time on community policing. Some of the centralized services that have been enhanced include forensic units, police-dog teams, and Emergency Response Teams – specialized police tactical units that are trained to handle high-risk situations using specialized weapons, equipment, and tactics.

The RCMP was also able to establish a Real Time Operations Centre, which is a team of senior police officers who monitor operations in real-time, assess incident risk, coordinate resources and manage the response. This centre enables the RCMP to track suspects in real time and gives officers on the ground instant support during emergency situations.

Lastly, the RCMP built additional capacity in teams dedicated to tackling financial and cybercrime and in teams that provide specialized skills related to child advocacy. While many of these resources are not needed in each community every day, they are available to all Alberta municipalities to address more dangerous situations and more serious and complex files.

The RCMP acknowledges that, like all other police services right now, vacancies, recruitment, and retention of regular members pose challenges. More information about RCMP resource allocation and strategies to address vacancies is available in Appendix A of [this document](#).