

Hello, it's nice to be with you again.

Today, I'd like to raise the extremely important issue of policing in our municipality and review why Regional Council has decided to retain the present system of RCMP and Halifax Regional Police (HRP).

We are the only jurisdiction in Canada which is kept safe by an integrated local/RCMP police force. The 470 officers of HRP are responsible for areas of Halifax, Dartmouth and Bedford while the RCMP's 178 officers patrol the former Halifax County, suburban and rural communities.

In 2006, Council asked the Board of Police Commissioners to review policing operations in HRM and point the way forward, given that the present 20-year Provincial Policing Service Agreement between Ottawa and Nova Scotia expires in 2012. This agreement sets out the cost-sharing formula by which provinces and territories pay Ottawa for the services of the RCMP and then bill municipalities. In our case, HRM reimburses the province for 70 per cent of the cost of Mountie policing and Ottawa covers 30 per cent.

Council asked the Board for the review because it needs to anticipate the potential impact any changes to the federal-provincial funding formula might have on the delivery of police services in the municipality. Council also needs to know what new resources and funding would be necessary, in the event of funding changes, to ensure an effective level of policing is maintained to meet public expectations.

To assist the Commission, Council contracted with consultants Perivale and Taylor for a Police Resourcing Study into existing police services in HRM.

The consultants spent a year diligently researching options for our best way forward with input from numerous sources of expertise in the community.

They came back with a report documenting four models, each based on service, accountability and cost.

These scenarios were: (A) maintain the status quo; (B) extend HRP services to Cole Harbour and Lower Sackville; (C) make HRP responsible for the entire municipality; (D) have the RCMP take over everything.

The Police Commission studied the report at length and made a recommendation to Council that HRP be responsible for policing all of HRM. The study determined that would be the most accountable and cost-effective option for the next three years, coming in at \$7.7 million less than maintaining the status quo.

Regional Council felt that the whole issue should be dealt with in-camera, not least because of the legal ramifications. What was being discussed amounted, essentially, to a contract.

Then there was the issue of public safety and security. We did not want the criminal element to have access to any of the sensitive information that was being discussed.

After two days of debate, Council decided to stay with the status quo.

There were a number of reasons for the decision to stay as we are, not least because the public was satisfied with the RCMP presence at its current levels of service and funding.

Above all, Council felt there was strong enough support for the present integrated force and the continuity it has come to represent throughout HRM.

Council is grateful to members of the Board of Police Commissioners for the thorough and comprehensive job they did. Their research has provided Council with valuable baseline information which will be used for operational purposes.

The present policing contract expires March, 2012, and Ottawa is in the process of negotiating a new contract with the provinces and territories. The new funding formula for the services of the RCMP is anticipated by late summer and is expected to be a 70/30 cost-share split.

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