

Review of Yukon's Police Force 2010 Municipal Response

During the month of June 2010, I travelled to all eight Yukon municipalities as part of our Association of Yukon Communities (AYC) community tour. The discussions held with Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), City Managers and councils included the Yukon Police Force Review. Each municipality was urged to provide a municipal response to the questions, or alternatively, respond as individuals.

The concept of a review appears positive, although few specific comments arose. All indications are that the RCMP and municipalities interact in a positive manner, many reporting regular updates provided by the RCMP at council meetings. No written responses were directed back to me, and follow-up contact to the mayors by email instigated nothing further. I am assuming that written response was sent directly to the Coordinator.

The Whitehorse meeting hosted for the public drew about 75 people, with mixed comments. I also attended, as an observer, two RCMP staff meetings. The combined observations corresponding to the Terms of Reference are:

1. Consider measures and make recommendations to better ensure that Yukon's police force is responsive and accountable to the needs of Yukon citizens;

As the public in general does not understand the current role of the RCMP, explaining the current role in basic terms is crucial to meet expectations.

- i. In what situations does an officer respond to a call; how long should it take; and when will an officer not respond?
- ii. What languages can service be accessed in? Is there a list of translators available?
- iii. What transcripts, documents, audio-visuals are releasable to the client/family?
- iv. What information will be required from a caller, and why is it important?
- v. Define what constitutes "public safety."

2. Review how public complaints relating to the RCMP in Yukon are currently dealt with and to make recommendations on any required improvements;

Some comments indicate residents do not know how to access the available information to make a complaint; therefore finding new and different ways to make correct information available is key. Despite the accepted use of email and the internet, a large part of Yukon society is not as "tapped in" as we might believe, therefore assuming individuals have capabilities to look up this information on the internet is erroneous. Also bear in mind that not all respond to the written word or speak other than English as a first language and may therefore need assistance.

3. Determine the skills that Yukon officers require in order to provide policing services in Yukon communities and make recommendations to enhance training, including the potential for Yukon-based training;

Many comments relate to the perceived lack of training of officers while in depot. Communities request a higher level of education/age for officers (referring to life experience), rather than rookie status. The emphasis is not on tactical training, but situational to social and cultural scenarios:

- i. Provide officer education on the high instances of alcohol and drug related incidents along with training on FASD, physical and mental disabilities and family violence.
- ii. Provide training on working with sexual assault victims with care and compassion.
- iii. Provide training on working with youth and seniors-different age brackets require different responses.
- iv. Recognize the ethnic and cultural diversity in Yukon-many immigrants now reside in Yukon and have different experiences and expectations than long time Canadians.
- v. Instil the need for empathy in difficult situations.

4. Review the services provided by the RCMP to citizens who are in vulnerable positions, including victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as individuals who are arrested and detained in custody;

The rights of individuals while detained are brought up repeatedly, although there is recognition for the work the officers perform in maintaining law and order. Higher visibility and increased presence in the community is requested to provide more positive interactions with residents. Suggestions include:

- i. Public education on the role of the RCMP may align public expectations when facing crisis situations, and provides an opportunity to interact other than in a negative situation.
- ii. Close the loop with individuals reporting crimes, and victims and families of crimes, in a timely manner.
- iii. Provide individuals with a document that outlines the reason for detainment by the RCMP so individuals have a written record for reference that may aid in understanding the situation, if this is not already happening.
- iv. Remove responsibility of intoxicated persons from RCMP to more appropriate and medically trained care providers.

5. Identify and build upon successes and best practices in the delivery of policing services to Yukon; and,

The RCMP needs to showcase the positive aspects of the organization more often than is current practice; reinforce the public support for the RCMP. The following may be helpful:

- i. Report statistics on crimes on a regular basis, and inform the public when public safety is at risk.
- ii. Post officers to the communities for longer time periods allowing for continuity and relationship building.
- iii. Undertake a review of policing in Yukon every 10 years, and report on progress annually.
- iv. Continue to encourage residents to report incidents when they occur and not a year later.
- v. Extend an annual invitation to every territorial, federal, municipal and First Nation elected official to go on a "Ride Along" in his or her respective community.

- vi. Use education as a crime prevention measure-such as talks on safety, senior abuse and family violence, as resources allow.
- vii. Provide easily accessible ways for the public to provide feedback policing service-to whom, where, in what format? Personal community visits from senior staff would be well accepted.
- viii. Volunteer involvement from residents, such as for circle healing programs would assist the RCMP; current expectations require funding.
- ix. Residents respect the need for family time and time off by RCMP members whom are involved in their off-time in the community.

6. Review and make recommendations on how best to implement in Yukon the existing RCMP policy on External Investigations and Reviews.

- i. Explain the policy in simple language, give examples.
- ii. Provide easily accessible information on reporting officer misconduct.
- iii. Provide follow-up in a timely manner-what actions were taken?

Outside of the RCMP role, but integral to the work of the RCMP is territorial legislation it enforces. Does the legislation enhance or constrict officer's abilities to do their jobs of enforcing public safety?

Reports of bootleggers, under- age drinkers and crimes committed while under the influence of alcohol and drugs lead to the need for preventative measures on alcohol and drug consumption and ease of access to these substances. As a high percentage of the crimes in Yukon are committed while under the influence, the relationship between the lack of personal accountability to cost of fines for infractions needs to be reviewed through the Yukon Liquor Act. Significant revenue is realized through the legal sale of liquor-examine how much of the revenue is used on alcohol abuse prevention.

Speeding is enforced by the RCMP but fines are controlled through the Motor Vehicles Act; increase the fines.

Respectfully submitted

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