

Review of Yukon's Police Force

PROCESS OUTLINE

Context

In Yukon, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the RCMP) is contracted to provide policing services for the Territory. Yukon Government works with the RCMP to ensure local accountability and values are addressed through identified policing priorities.

In order to be effective, all police services must establish and maintain the confidence of those who they police. Public confidence is established in the day to day relationships that police officers develop with citizens as they perform their duties. In order to maintain public confidence, Yukoners must have the assurance their public safety priorities are met.

Policing in the Yukon presents unique challenges to front-line police officers and police managements. Yukon's geography, First Nations cultural heritage and its small population create unique policing challenges that are not evident in other parts of Canada. Officers have increased autonomy and profile in isolated, northern communities and they are called upon to provide a wide range of services that require a variety of skills and attributes. By virtue of the authority of their position, officers hold a unique position in their community. Communities also expect officers to build relationships with citizens and to integrate into community life.

From time to time circumstances arise that may compromise the public's confidence in the police. In these circumstances citizens need a process to make their concerns known, and a mechanism that responds while promoting accountability.

It is a priority for Yukon Government that the significant power and authority vested in police officers is administered in an ethical and fair manner in the provision of service to the public. The RCMP is committed to providing policing services that maintain the unbiased and ethical standards embodied in their Mission, Vision and Values and in their Commitment to Our Communities (www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca).

The Government of Yukon, the RCMP and the Council for Yukon First Nations are committed to working in partnership to ensure that Yukoners' expectations of their police service be met.

Purpose of the Review

This Review has been launched in response to concerns raised by some Yukon citizens regarding the service they have received from the RCMP. Public confidence in the RCMP has been brought into question and it is important to both the Department of Justice, the RCMP (locally and nationally) and the Council of Yukon First Nations to respond to this issue. Collaboratively, the co-chairs will speak directly to Yukoners to gain a better appreciation of their concerns and to build a process for restoring public confidence.

The Review will bring forward recommendations that respond to the priorities identified in the Terms of Reference.

The desired outcome of the Review is to develop recommendations that:

- i) seek understanding and start the process that will foster positive relationships between the RCMP and citizens in order to increase public confidence in the police service, and,
- ii) renew relationships for the RCMP, Yukon Government and First Nations towards ensuring all Yukon citizens receive high quality police services.

Principles

The principles that guide the Review are significant and are intended to reflect a commitment by the Co-Chairs and the Advisory Committee to allow for different perspectives, to encourage dialogue and to allow for diversity in both personal and institutional cultures.

The principles that guide the Review include:

- **Transparency:** Make it easy for people to find out about the Review and participate.
- **Cultural diversity:** Appreciate and respect cultural diversity in First Nations, minorities, communities and institutions.
- **Honesty:** Promote honesty, fairness and open dialogue.
- **Respect:** Carry out the Review in a respectful manner and respect those who participate in the process.
- **Confidentiality:** Allow for and respect confidentiality and anonymity as required.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Review identified the following six priority areas:

- Consider measures and make recommendations to better ensure that Yukon's police force is responsive and accountable to the needs of Yukon citizens;
- Review how public complaints relating to the RCMP in Yukon are currently dealt with and to make recommendations on any required improvements;
- 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;
- 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;
- Identify and build upon successes and best practices in the delivery of policing services to Yukon; and,
- Review and make recommendations on how best to implement in Yukon the existing RCMP policy on External Investigations and Reviews.

The Review Process

The Review will be co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice, the Commanding Officer for "M" Division RCMP and the Council of Yukon First Nations Justice Manager. The co-chairs will work with an Advisory Committee to carry out the Review.

The Advisory Committee will include representatives from the following sectors:

- First Nations
- Municipalities,
- Women's Groups,
- the RCMP,
- the Women's Directorate, and,
- the Departments of Health & Social Services, Community Services and Justice.

The Advisory Committee will work with the co-chairs to facilitate public participation opportunities with targeted stakeholders.

The public participation phase of this Review will begin mid-May 2010 and continue through to mid-July.

In consultation with the Advisory Committee, the Co-chairs will develop a public engagement strategy to ensure Yukoners can participate in the process in meaningful ways. Advisory Committee members will be asked to facilitate meetings with their constituents. A discussion document will be prepared. The discussion document will provide background information and questions to help generate discussion.

Information about the Review and opportunities to contribute will be provided through a variety of media, including radio and newspaper ads. Written submissions will be accepted.

The public engagement process will focus on five questions:

1. What concerns do you have with the policing service you receive?
2. How has the RCMP contributed to public safety in your community?
3. What is the community's role in interacting with the police to improve public safety?
4. What is the RCMP's role in interacting with the community to improve public safety?
5. What changes would you recommend to improve the policing service in the Yukon?

Based on the material gathered throughout the Review process and on the independent research that is conducted, the Co-Chairs will prepare a draft report with recommendations. The Co-Chairs will review the draft report with the Advisory Committee to ensure that the report and the recommendations accurately reflect the process. The final report will be submitted to the Minister of Justice by September 15th, 2010.