



SURREY
POLICE BOARD



SURREY
POLICE SERVICE



Surrey Police Service:

The Future of Public Safety in Surrey

December 2022

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Executive Summary

The establishment of Surrey Police Service (SPS) has been well examined. Numerous studies and reports have been conducted by experts and more are expected to be submitted to the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General by the end of 2022. This report summarizes the current landscape of the Surrey Police Board (SPB) and SPS in this ongoing work toward the induction of SPS as the Police of Jurisdiction (POJ) for the City of Surrey.

SPS has clearly demonstrated their ability to recruit and retain the numbers of police officers required to serve the City of Surrey. In two years SPS has hired 375 employees. We are confident that we can hire the required number of police officers to serve Surrey in a very short period of time and we are prepared to increase hiring in anticipation of the City's expected growth. Work is well underway and nearing completion for SPS to become POJ.

The SPB and the SPS believe that it is not in the best interests of the residents of Surrey to reverse the transition, nor is it in the best interest of policing in British Columbia. In fact, the establishment of SPS provides a net benefit to the stabilization of policing in the province by freeing up hundreds of RCMP officers to fill vacancies within that organization.

We provide the following rationale:

1. **The transition has been underway for four years with the last two years placing SPS officers on the frontline.** Reversing the transition would be time consuming, complicated, and costly.
2. **SPS has hired 375 employees. Reversing the transition would require terminating their employment.** Many officers are from outside British Columbia. These officers moved their families to Surrey in good faith, incurred debt, and started a new chapter in their lives.
3. **Two unions have been formed: Surrey Police Union (SPU) and Surrey Police Inspectors' Association (SPIA).** Reversing the transition would require dissolving both unions.
4. **The SPB employs 23 exempt civilian employees who are not members of CUPE 402.** Reversing the transition would require that the SPB be dissolved, resulting in these employees being terminated.
5. **SPS is the only major police service in Canada that is not challenged in hiring experienced police officers or new recruits (2,500 applications).** It is well reported that the RCMP experiences significant challenges in recruiting.

6. **Due to the high number of applicants, SPS can sustain the required number of police officers now and into the future as the city grows.** To date, intensive marketing has not been required.
7. **Very few SPS officers would join the RCMP.** As of December 22, 2022, 95% of SPS officers signed a Surrey Police Union attestation stating they would not join the RCMP.
8. **Dissolving two unions and terminating 315 police officers requires that the severance clauses of the Collective Agreement be applied as well as the implementation of relevant sections of the Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the BC Labour Relations Code. This would be costly and may also involve grievances which would not be favourable in retaining public trust.** Due to the unprecedented nature of this transition, all possible termination scenarios could not be forecasted in the Collective Agreement, meaning ambiguity exists in the severance provisions. Legal costs would be probable.
9. **Keeping SPS is a net gain for policing in British Columbia. Reversing the transition is a net loss.** There are hundreds of RCMP vacancies in British Columbia which Surrey RCMP officers could be deployed into. No RCMP officers would have their employment terminated.
10. **Reversing the transition would be contrary to recommendations of the all-party Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act¹.** Recommendations in the report that directly support the retention of SPS include:
 - 2) Transition to a new BC provincial police service that is governed by a new Community Safety and Policing Act. This includes:
 - a. Establishing a governance model, such as municipal or regional police boards or committees, that is representative of the community and provides opportunities for local input on policing and public safety priorities.
 - 5)
 - a. Ensuring all policing is responsive to and informed by the community.
 - b. Implementing and enforcing provincial standards, policies, and expectations for service with respect to responding to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, conducting wellness checks, responding to sexual assault, and conducting trauma-informed interviews.
 - 7) Enhance and standardize initial and ongoing police education and training to reflect key values and competencies in order to shift police culture.

¹ [SC-RPA-Report_42-3_2022-04-28.pdf \(leg.bc.ca\)](#)

11. **SPS is very close to being validated by the provincial government as the POJ. SPS would be capable of becoming the POJ in the summer of 2023.** For the last two years SPS has built infrastructure, hired 375 employees, developed policies, built IT systems, and implemented training programs to be ready for provincial assessment.
12. **SPS “sunk costs” by the end of 2022 are estimated at \$107 million. This includes \$17 million in IT systems that are primarily not compatible with RCMP infrastructure. Severance costs are estimated at \$81.5 million, plus \$13.6 million with ESA group termination requirements. The combined investment loss is estimated at \$202.1 million.** Reversing the transition raises questions about public accountability and financial responsibility.
13. **Every major city in Canada has its own municipal police service. Surrey is on its way to being the largest city in British Columbia.** It is broadly accepted that “local accountability” and “modernization” are two of the many reasons that large municipal policing agencies exist.



Background: The Creation of Surrey Police Service

Residents of the City of Surrey have made it clear that a top concern for their community is public safety. In November 2018, Surrey City Council responded to that concern, approving a motion to establish an independent, locally governed municipal police service. Under the *Police Act* of British Columbia, municipalities with more than 5,000 residents may request a policing model for municipal policing in their city. Cities may make these requests, but the provincial government makes the decision on which policing model is appropriate to ensure adequate and effective policing.

Based on the findings of two studies², the Province of British Columbia approved the police transition in February 2020 and established the SPB in June 2020. SPS was established by the SPB in August 2020, under section 26 of the *Police Act*, followed by the hiring of the Chief Constable in December 2020, members of the SPS Executive Leadership Team, and then sworn police officers and civilian staff.

To facilitate a timely and orderly policing transition, three levels of government formed the Surrey Policing Transition Trilateral Committee (SPTTC). The SPTTC was established in September 2020 and includes representatives from Canada, British Columbia, and the City of Surrey. The Committee provides guidance and oversight of many aspects of the transition. The RCMP and SPS also participate in and support the work of the SPTTC by offering subject matter experts to plan and implement the transition.

In this unprecedented and historic transition from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to SPS, the SPTTC has provided all-government support and direction for complex developmental issues. The SPTTC approved a joint SPS-RCMP HR Strategy and Plan that directed the deployment of SPS officers into the RCMP Municipal Policing Unit in bi-monthly cohorts of approximately 35 officers.

According to the plan, a corresponding number of RCMP officers were to be redeployed within the broader organization of the RCMP, resulting in a gradual shift toward SPS becoming the POJ in Surrey. As of November 2022, 189 SPS officers have been deployed into frontline policing operations, providing response to calls for service from the public.

² [Surrey Policing Transition Report](#)
[Surrey Policing Transition: Report of the Provincial Municipal Policing Transition Study Committee \(December 2019\) \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

The Five Pillars of SPS

The materials presented in support of reaffirming SPS are categorized into five pillars: What SPS Offers, Human Resources, Community Engagement, Financial Considerations, and Becoming the Police of Jurisdiction.

Pillar 1: What SPS Offers

The Benefits of an Independent Municipal Service

There are numerous reasons why cities such as Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto choose to have their own municipal police service instead of contracting the RCMP. Surrey is the largest municipality in Canada that does not have its own independent municipal police service. Ultimately, the choice to have a municipal police agency is about increased accountability and modernization.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Municipal police boards in British Columbia perform four main governance functions³:

1. Employer of all sworn and civilian members of the department;
2. Provide financial oversight for the department;
3. Establish policies that set the direction for the department; and
4. Act as the authority for policy and service complaints, with the Chair being responsible for discipline matters related to the Chief Constable and Deputy.

As an independent municipal police service, SPS is governed by a police board, and accountable to provincial oversight bodies such as the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner. The Board sets the priorities and policing budget in consultation with the city and based on the needs and expectations of Surrey citizens.

The SPB and SPS are independent of government. The SPS Chief Constable reports to the SPB, not to the mayor; however, the SPB will work with mayor and council to help determine and enact the city's priorities for policing. By this governance model, policing is kept arms-length from local government to prevent undue political influence on policing. In contrast, RCMP detachments have a significant accountability stream to RCMP HQ in Ottawa.

³ [BC Police Board Handbook \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)

CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

This publicly accountable oversight serves to build and maintain trust and confidence in the police officers serving the community. The SPB has the authority to hire and assess the performance of the Chief Constable. RCMP policed municipalities do not post senior leadership positions Canada wide.

TRANSPARENCY

Independent municipal police agencies make their policies, budgets, expenditures, public complaints, staffing levels, and collective agreements available to the public. SPS policies, financial information and service and policy complaint outcomes are published on the SPB website. Public board meetings are held monthly and are live streamed for ease of access.

LOCAL CONTROL

Municipal agencies make decisions at the local level to address the community's public safety priorities. Police boards control the type of policing model required. At present, the RCMP can re-deploy municipal officers to provincial and federal emergencies, (e.g., protests, wildfires, etc.). Although the municipality is reimbursed, these officers are not available for deployment in Surrey at that time.

MODERNIZATION

Municipal police services can quickly develop policies, programs, and initiatives at the local level to respond to changing public safety needs. Municipal police can procure leading-edge equipment and implement new training techniques quickly and effectively. A municipal police agency can also research and implement new equipment and technologies. Federal agencies must rely on federal government approvals and procurement processes. The RCMP have demonstrated that they are slow to implement policy recommendations even when public and officer safety is at risk⁴.

LOCALLY FOCUSED POLICIES, TRAINING, AND OPERATIONS

Municipal police agencies develop policies specific to the needs of the community, as opposed to broad national policies that are applied to all RCMP-policed communities, regardless of their specific and local needs.

⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/rcmp-recommendations-1.6576112>

[RCMP's Labour Code trial stemming from shooting hears about carbine acquisition | CTV News](#)

Municipal officers are trained for the unique needs of the community they serve. SPS has developed Indigenous cultural awareness training specific to the Semiahmoo, Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations, as well as Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training to support other distinct groups in the community. This training is provided to all SPS officers upon hire.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

The BC Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act recommended that policing in the province be based on a tiered policing model. This would include Bylaw officers, Community Safety Officers, Special Municipal Constables, and sworn officers. Independent municipal police services are able to design and build this model of policing. The RCMP does not have this freedom.

SPS has committed to including Community Safety Officers in its community policing model and is currently building policy and guidelines to implement these positions upon becoming the POJ. Municipal police services have the flexibility to develop and implement innovative programs. For example, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) has hired social workers to respond to non-law enforcement calls for service. The EPS is also a partner in the Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP) unit, a partnership with several organizations involved in frontline service delivery to vulnerable and at-risk persons. SPS will research the development of similar programs, should that be supported by the community.

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

With control over recruiting, an independent municipal police service can focus on attracting highly qualified candidates from diverse communities, e.g.: the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and the Indigenous community. The goal is to ensure that the composition of the police service reflects the diversity of the community. Currently, 50% of the SPS sworn officer complement come from culturally diverse backgrounds.



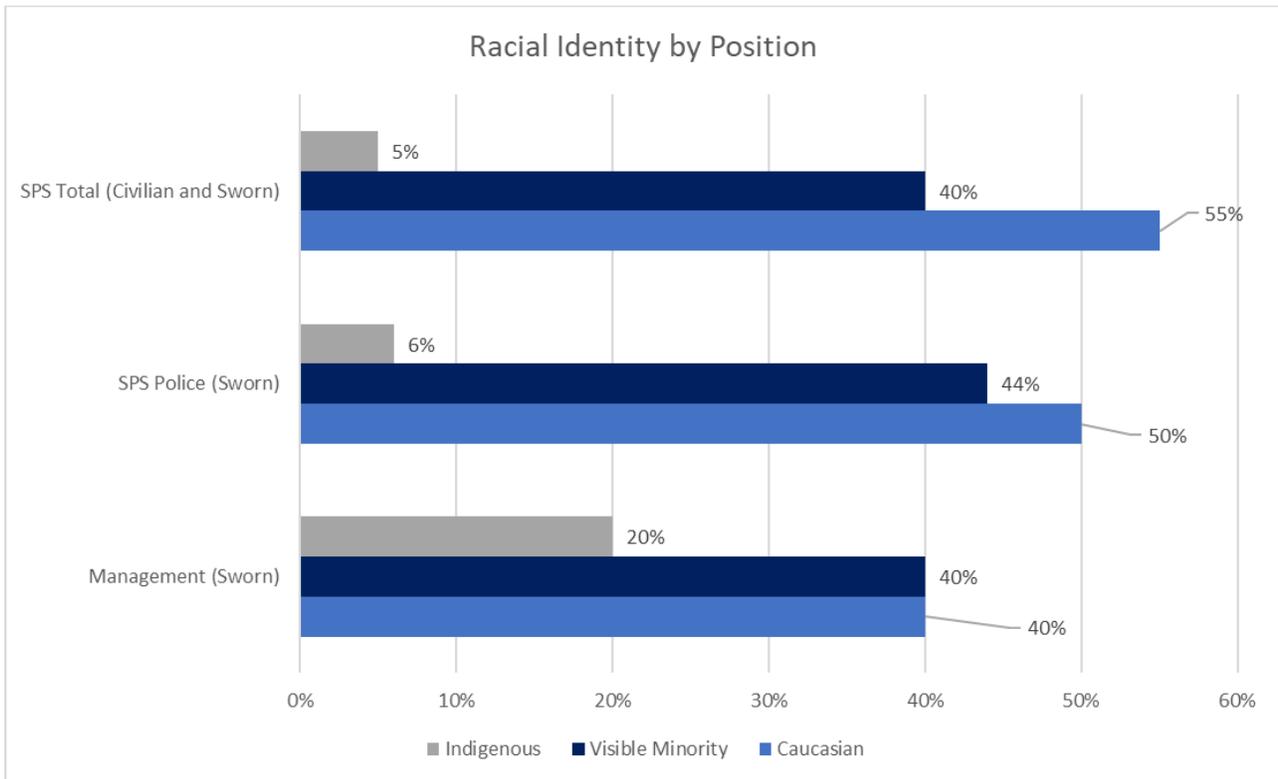


Table 1 SPS Employee Diversity

CONSISTENT STAFFING LEVELS

Municipal agencies provide residents with consistent staffing levels, as they are not impacted by large volumes of officer transfers or deployments to support other agencies. Municipal agencies can plan for attrition and requirements for new recruits. Daily staffing levels are solidified in collective agreements and adhered to.

LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE CONTINUITY

In municipal agencies, promotions are internal, meaning that significant investments in officer training and their knowledge and skills remain in the agency. RCMP members frequently apply for promotional opportunities in other jurisdictions in order to advance their careers, resulting in a loss of experience and expertise for the community.

LONGEVITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The majority of municipal officers spend their entire careers with one police service. This translates to more stability for the police agency, a deeper understanding of the community, and longer-term relationships with the community and partners.

OFFICER RECRUITMENT

An independent municipal police service is able to implement innovative approaches to recruit and retain officers. Several police services, for example, are developing permanent part-time positions for officers, which is an effort to attract more women and persons with diverse needs into policing.

Municipal services recruit officers who will often spend their entire career in one department. These officers applied to the police service to commit their efforts to the community. In contrast, the RCMP recruits, trains, transfers, and promotes on a national scale.

RECRUITING SUPPORT STAFF

The RCMP's process of conducting security clearances for municipal employees is so lengthy, often taking up to one year, that potential applicants often find other employment while their security clearance requirements are being processed. The hiring and security screening process in a municipal police agency is much more efficient, meaning that hiring and filling critical support positions can be done in a matter of weeks. For example, critical staff shortages in the Surrey Operational Communication Centre could be resolved expeditiously by a municipal agency that does not rely on the RCMP security clearance process.

EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A municipal service has the flexibility to design and deliver mental health and wellness programs for officers and civilian employees that are tailored to their specific needs. SPS has implemented several innovative programs and services (e.g., wellness leave, dedicated Wellness Team, Operational Stress Injury dog, etc.) that are not available in the RCMP.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT

Procurement in the RCMP is done at the national level which results in lengthy delays in obtaining equipment and other resources. An independent municipal police service can procure quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively. Local purchasing also benefits the local economy. The decision of the RCMP to adopt certain technology, e.g., equipping officers with body-worn cameras, is made in Ottawa without municipal input, although the municipality is required to assume the costs associated with the technology and the municipal employee positions that will be required to support the technology.

Pillar 2: Human Resources

Current HR Status

As of December 15, 2022, SPS has hired 375 employees, comprised of 315 sworn and 60 civilian staff. Experienced officers have come from 26 different police agencies across the country, providing SPS with a broad spectrum of perspectives and experience, and allowing policing in the Lower Mainland to remain stable.



To date, 109 officers have been hired with RCMP backgrounds, and 178 have come from municipal or other police departments. Twenty-eight new recruits have also been hired, 14 of whom are currently deployed with their Recruit Field Trainers, already providing service to the community. An additional 11 recruits will start with SPS at the end of December 2022.

To date, SPS has deployed 189 officers into the Municipal Police Unit through the operationalization of the joint SPS-RCMP HR Plan that was endorsed by the SPTTC. Twenty-two more experienced SPS officers will deploy in January 2023.

While all SPS officers are fully trained and operational, those who have not yet been deployed are currently assigned to critical infrastructure roles, working to build the necessary systems and supports for SPS, such as HR, IT, recruiting, training, professional standards, policy development, and planning. Civilian employees perform important administrative, technological, and management functions, such as finance, facilities management, communications, executive services, and legal services.

Two recruit classes are at various stages of training at the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC), with two classes of 14 new officers each scheduled to graduate in March and July of 2023. SPS's third recruit class will begin onboarding in late December 2022 and will start Block 1 training at the JIBC on January 9, 2023.

SPS is an experienced police service (see Table 2). It is a positive feature of SPS and is due to the considerable number of officers who “badged over” from other departments during the first

years of the transition. This highly experienced cadre of officers has set the foundation for SPS and will serve as mentors for the new recruits.

In addition to their years of service (Table 2), individuals who were supervisors and respected leaders of specialized services such as Homicide Teams, Major Crime Units, Special Investigative Sections, CFSEU, Critical Incident Commanders, etc. brought their vast experiences to help build and establish SPS as a highly skilled and capable police service.

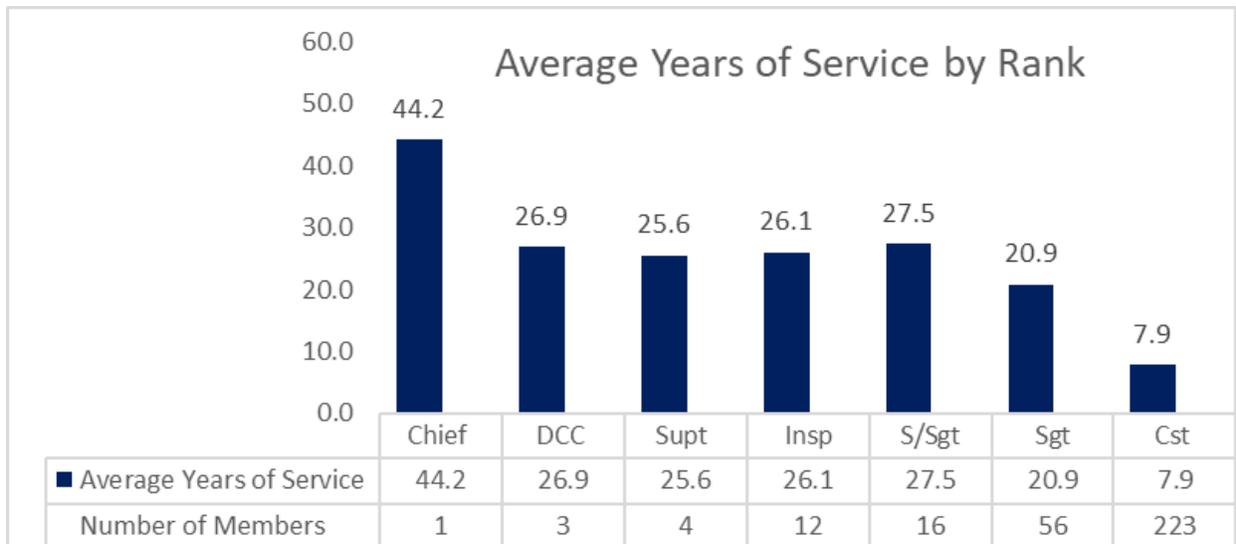


Table 2 SPS Years of Service

SPS Ability to Hire

SPS expects to have a full complement of 734 officers to complete the transition. Presently, SPS officers make up almost 50% of the frontline uniformed patrol response in Surrey. As of December 15, 2022, SPS’s 315 sworn police officers represent 43% of the total funded strength of the Surrey RCMP (734).

Recruiting has been very strong leading up to the municipal election. SPS has received more than 1,300 applications for experienced officer positions and another 1,249 for recruit officer positions. Hiring has only been limited by the 2022 cap required by the Province, which was implemented to prevent destabilization of other police agencies in British Columbia. It is anticipated that there will be a significant surge in applications upon a positive provincial decision. SPS is very confident that they will be in a strong position to provide the number of officers required to ensure adequate and effective policing in Surrey.

SPS is an attractive agency for officers who want to be a part of a new and innovative department that wants to do things better. Our wellness programs, supportive organizational

culture, leadership, training, and opportunities have attracted some of the most respected police leaders from across the country. Policies and practices are in place to support and protect our officers' well-being. For example, SPS staffing minimums, enforced by the Surrey Police Union, ensure that officers have safe working conditions. Currently, SPS has a 2% "soft" vacancy rate (i.e., officers on long term leaves due to injury, illness, parental obligations, etc.). This low rate can, in part, be attributed to SPS's modern training practices and focus on officer wellness.

Human Resources Implications of Returning to the RCMP

In their November 28th report to Surrey City Council, the RCMP stated that their plan to restaff Surrey Detachment is dependent on large numbers of SPS officers applying to work for the RCMP⁵. This is despite the fact that the Surrey Police Union has communicated that 95% of SPS officers represented by the SPU have declared they will not join the RCMP.

The RCMP is experiencing significant systemic recruiting challenges that will adversely affect its ability to fully staff its detachments, including Surrey, for the foreseeable future. In submissions to the Standing Committee on Finance and to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the National Police Federation (NPF) acknowledged the systemic shortage of recruits and the inability of the RCMP to meet its contractual obligations to municipalities with respect to staffing⁶. In their submissions, the NPF:

- Noted the significant decrease in the number of applications (17% between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022);
- Confirmed that current training capacity is not keeping pace with current needs;
- Warned that Depot is anticipating a 29% decrease in recruit graduates by 2022-2023;
- Cited a 2020 recruitment assessment which concluded that RCMP recruitment is not currently resourced to meet the 40 troops per year requirement;
- Confirmed that "The pace of demands from contract partners for more RCMP officers is outstripping the RCMP's capacity to recruit and train officers, causing shortages"; and
- Stated that "While FTE positions are forecast to increase in future years, this does not mean the RCMP can staff them".

⁵ [Regular Council - Public Hearing \(November 28, 2022\) - Nov 29th, 2022 \(granicus.com\)](#)

⁶ [NPF-Submission-on-Labour-Shortages-Working-Conditions-and-the-Care-Economy-FINAL.pdf \(npf-fpn.com\)](#)

At the same time, the RCMP is also experiencing increasing attrition of officers. A decade ago, the average annual attrition rate was 11%; it is now 19.5%. Data provided by the NPF reveals a net negative in “troop capacity in 2021/2022 of -482 and in 2022/2023 of -494”, leading the NPF to state that “Depot is planning reduced capacity for all 40 troops, as they are currently challenged to fill the troops given the dwindling application rates”. Staffing shortages across the three RCMP business lines in BC total more than 1,000 current “hard” and “soft”



vacancies in the province. This will be exacerbated by the BC government’s funding announcement of \$230 million to fill vacant RCMP positions in the provincial business line⁷.

These challenges raise serious questions as to whether the RCMP can deliver adequate and effective police services to the City of Surrey now and in the future. On November 27, 2022, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald stated that, despite average vacancy rates in BC of 20%, “We have not fallen below the standard of adequate and effective policing, but what it does do is put pressures on those officers that are carrying extra workload”⁸.

The extra workload that officers are carrying has a significant impact on their mental health and well-being and contributes to officers being non-deployable and on leave. The understaffing also has a major impact on the ability of detachments to engage in proactive policing, community engagement, and community policing. Officers can do little more than respond to calls. There have been several recent articles in the news media describing RCMP staffing concerns.⁹

Transitioning away from the RCMP in Surrey will free up RCMP resources to fill existing vacancies in the Lower Mainland and throughout the province. Few, if any, detachments are currently at full strength and dispersing officers to communities in need would be invaluable to these detachments.

⁷ [Province invests in specialized, rural police services | BC Gov News](#)

⁸ <https://vancouversun.com/news/rcmp-vacancy-rates-at-20-per-cent-in-b-c-because-positions-not-filled-officers-on-leave>

⁹ [RCMP running short of officers to protect cabinet ministers from a growing number of threats | CBC News](#)
[Shocked, angry British Columbians push for inquiry into RCMP's money laundering resources | CBC News](#)

Numerous independent investigations over the past decade have documented the RCMP's unhealthy organizational environment and the absence of a respectful workplace, free of bullying, harassment, and a negative culture. The Honorable Michel Bastarache cited at least 11 reports from independent investigations documenting the RCMP's unhealthy workplace culture in his report, *Broken Dreams Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP* ¹⁰.

Approximately two billion Canadian taxpayers' dollars have been paid or are allocated to future settlements respecting individual and class action lawsuits brought by current and former RCMP officers and civilian employees for respectful workplace failures¹¹.

This is a significant contributing factor for why 95% of SPS officers have stated that they will not work for the RCMP. Further, SPS has filed complaints regarding respectful workplace issues in Surrey Detachment that have been experienced by some of our deployed officers.

The Human Factor: Impacts on SPS Members and their Families

It is important to understand that, regardless of the Minister's decision, no RCMP member will lose their job as a result of the policing transition.

The RCMP has hundreds of vacancies in BC alone, and the Province has recently approved funding for another 270 positions throughout BC. The same cannot be said for employees of SPS. These employees chose to come to SPS because they wanted to contribute to the building of something different than what they had experienced in their past organizations, or simply because they wanted to be a part of building a new police service based on collective best practices.

¹⁰ [RCMP_Final-Report_Broken-Dreams.pdf \(callkleinlawyers.com\)](#)

- ¹¹ *Sulz v Canada, 2006*
- *Thompson v Canada, 2007*
- *Jackson v RCMP, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, 2007*
- *Catherine Galliford v Marvin Wawia, Mike Bergerman, Doug Henderson, Phil Little, Dr. Ian MacDonald, Canada (Attorney General) and British Columbia (Minister of Justice)*
- *Gastaldo v Canada, 2011*
- *Couture v Canada, 2011*
- *Katz v Canada, 2012*
- *Rai v RCMP, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, 2012*
- *O'Farrell v Canada, 2013*
- *Montague v Shields, 2013*
- *Rai v RCMP, 2013*
- *Merlo and Davidson v Canada, 2017*

Many early adopters of SPS made an intentional and difficult decision to leave their organizations – specifically to be part of the creation of a police organization that was best-in-class, where their well-being is a priority. They do not want to return to their old organizations. For some, it is incomprehensible to think about returning to places that harmed them¹².

In addition to the psychological stressors faced by SPS employees when considering a potential reversal of the transition, there are practical, career, and financial impacts. For some sworn and civilian employees of SPS, there are no opportunities for them at Surrey RCMP. The rank structure and organizational chart at SPS is not equivalent to the RCMP detachment, and some positions do not exist at the detachment because those roles are provided at a regional level in the RCMP structure. Civilian exempt staff with decades of policing support experience are unlikely to be hired by either the RCMP or the City of Surrey. Others have stated that they would not be able to return to Surrey Detachment as a result of the impact the transition has had on them over the past four years.

Sworn SPS officers could face losing their rank, seniority, earned service pay, and complications with transferring their pensions. There are many officers who moved their families across the country who may suffer losses on real estate purchases and fees and potential duplicate moving costs. This would be extremely disruptive to them and the well-being of their families.

Three hundred and seventy-five employees applied for and accepted SPS positions in good faith, knowing that the Province had carefully considered and evaluated Surrey's proposal to transition to a municipal police service. These individuals rightfully believed this was an opportunity to embark on a journey to build a new progressive, community-based policing model for the residents of Surrey. They left established policing careers to work with like-minded leaders and innovators. The risk they took was the unknown challenge of building a new police service, not that they may lose their jobs because the decision could be reversed.

Impact on the Policing Landscape in BC

Although the RCMP's plan to maintain adequate levels of policing is dependent on retaining SPS officers, there is nothing to compel these officers to accept work with the RCMP. Many SPS officers have stated that they would prefer to quit and find work elsewhere, with some stating that the reversal of the transition would cause such a loss of faith and confidence in policing that they would likely leave the field altogether. The harm to the policing environment in BC would be considerable; not just in numbers, but in the collective experience, training, expertise, and community relationships that would be lost.

¹² Dr. Lisa Kitt, 2022, Considerations Regarding the Future of the Surrey Police Service: A Psychological Perspective

Pillar 3: Community Engagement

Initial Community Consultation

From June to October 2021, SPS and the SPB undertook a three-part community consultation project to provide the foundation for a community policing model and SPS's first strategic plan. Over 1,200 Surrey residents were consulted during this project. SPS gathered qualitative and quantitative information that represents Surrey's total population and its many diverse groups. Input was gathered from Indigenous leaders, seniors, the differently abled, school officials, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, the private sector, organizations focused on housing, mental health and addictions, newcomers, youth, and others.

The SPB and the SPS leadership team have used the results from this consultation to inform SPS's first strategic plan.

A key finding from SPS community consultation was that community stakeholders expressed concerns with the challenges in establishing and sustaining partnerships with the RCMP due to the constant turnover of officers and, due to understaffing in patrol, to commit officers to work in a community policing model.

Several groups of stakeholders mentioned that they had no, or very limited contact with the Surrey RCMP with respect to communication and discussions for partnerships. This included the leaders from the faith communities who expressed a high level of interest in developing partnerships.

Ongoing Community Engagement

Ongoing and consistent community engagement forms an important part of SPS's commitment to ensuring that interested and affected parties are an integral part of developing the SPS community policing model. Consultation influences policies and operational strategies as they are developed. A high level of community involvement helps to build trust and partnerships within the community.

SPS officers frequently engage with the public while out on patrol, and Community Policing Bureau staff conduct regular community consultation meetings to further inform the development of the community policing model, including specific and tailored Indigenous and youth strategies. SPS members from the Indigenous Relations Unit have already established strong relationships with many community groups and Indigenous leaders, building

partnerships and programs to support indigenous youth, housing, literacy, and addressing the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system.

More than 600 community engagement opportunities have been conducted to date in 2022. Many SPS officers live, work, and volunteer in Surrey, creating strong bonds and relationships, providing a direct connection and deep understanding of community needs.

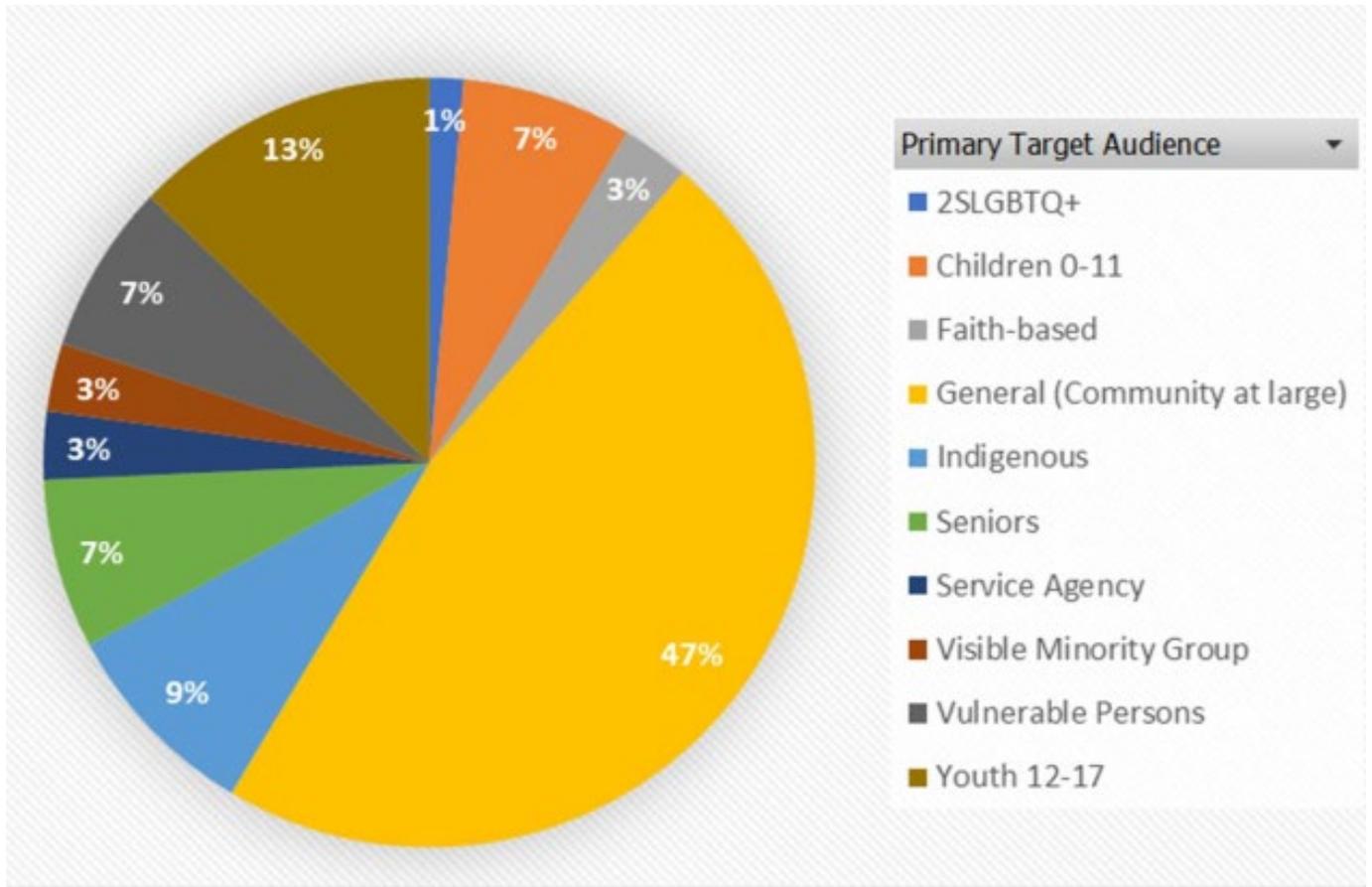


Table 3 Community Engagements November 2022

Pillar 4: Financial Considerations

Financial transparency and accountability are key principles for the SPB. Responsible expenditure of taxpayer funds and transparent reporting are of critical importance. The terms for the development of the budget are set out in section 27 of the BC Police Act. Monthly financial statements are presented in the public board meetings, and financial reports are published on the SPB website^[1].

The City of Surrey and its taxpayers have invested significantly in SPS for two years, based on the approval of the transition by the provincial government. The creation and operation of SPS required considerable investments, most of which will be unrecoverable if a decision is made to reverse the transition.

It is unfortunate that neither the SPB nor SPS were consulted on the report submitted to the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General by the City. Assumptions and omissions in the report are concerning and do not provide Surrey residents with an accurate picture of their options for the future of policing in Surrey. Some of these concerns are outlined below.

- Over-estimation (27-50%) of the number of SPS officers who would transfer to the Surrey RCMP that is not supported by the Surrey Police Union's survey of its membership (95% stating they are not interested in joining the RCMP).
- Assumption that SPS will have difficulty recruiting the remaining 419 officers, when SPS has a proven ability to hire new and experienced officers with over 2,500+ applications received in under two years. This is unprecedented interest for any Canadian police agency. Conversely, the report does not mention the RCMP's documented recruiting challenges and labour shortages.
- No consideration of the more than \$100 million in unrecoverable costs that the city and taxpayers have already invested toward their own municipal police service, including \$17 million in IT infrastructure that would primarily be incompatible with the RCMP IT environment.
- The notion of a nine-month pause to allow for the approval of phase two of the transition to SPS. During this period, the report asserts that no further RCMP officers would be demobilized, and no additional SPS officers would be deployed, while SPS would continue to hire. This is not a reasonable or fiscally responsible assumption that would add an estimated \$14.2M of unnecessary costs.

[1]

- Assumption that the transition to SPS would take another five years. This is inconsistent with previous discussions between the three levels of government and seems excessive given SPS's proven ability to hire. We can achieve the City's targeted police strength of 734 by the end of Q2 2024 if we are funded for our full 2023 Provisional Budget and hiring plan.
- Comparing the SPS's 2023 salary rates with the RCMP's 2022 rates (source data/websites identified on page five of the City's report).
- An estimation that SPS would cost \$31.9 million more per year than the RCMP, while SPS calculations estimate the cost difference would be \$18.3 million.

Many of the assumptions made in the city's report have contributed to the city providing an inflated cost estimate to taxpayers to continue with the transition to SPS, which they now say is \$235.4 million over five years.

The \$18.3 million cost difference at steady state calculated by SPS is also independent and consistent with the \$18.9 million cost difference projected in the original Surrey Policing Transition Report. A report compiled after months of research, analysis, and collaboration between the City of Surrey, City of Vancouver, Vancouver Police Department, and Dr. Curt T. Griffiths (SFU); and then third-party assessed by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

By the end of December 2022, unrecoverable sunk costs are projected to be as high as \$107 million, which includes staffing costs, training, operating/business expenses, SPS specific equipment and the cost of building our customized IT platform that is over 50% complete.

In addition to the unrecoverable amounts already spent, dissolving SPS will lead to \$81.5 million of termination costs triggered by the decision (whether through working notice, immediate severance, or a combination thereof). Based on the City report's proposed mass termination notice, an additional 16 weeks of notice or pay in lieu of notice may be required as per section 64 of the Employment Standards Act for group terminations; the additional 16 weeks would cost \$13.6M.

Therefore, the total investment loss will be as high as \$202.1M (\$107.0M + \$81.5M + \$13.6M). This amount will grow further if we factor in the risk of litigations to defend against class-action lawsuits that may arise when terminating hundreds of employees and dissolving two police unions with over 300 members combined, who all joined SPS in good faith.

Looking into the future, as contract policing costs are predominately variable, based on the number of members assigned to a municipality, efficiency advantages from economies of scale would be limited or unachievable from the municipality's perspective, since cost will increase at

a relatively constant rate with growth. However, as SPS grows with the City's population, our operational efficiencies will achieve economies of scale for Surrey since we are funded for exact expenditures only.

We already see evidence of this trend in our financial models which also calls into question the true value of the 10% federal subsidy; receiving a 10% discount on a relatively more expensive item is still more costly. One example is when comparing the SPS' cost to train each recruit at the JIBC vs. the RCMP's Cadet Training Program contribution, which is billed to a municipality based on the total detachment strength, not the number of cadets that will serve Surrey. Under the RCMP contract, a per member cost of \$5,102 for every officer is charged for cadet training, regardless of the number of cadets that Surrey Detachment will receive. At steady state (734 members), the contract costs for the RCMP's Cadet Training Program are more than double the cost to train 60 recruits at the JIBC (\$3.7M vs. \$1.8M); with the 10% subsidy the cost for the RCMP's Cadet Training Program is still higher at \$3.4M, vs. \$1.8M. The value of the subsidy will diminish as policing strength increases because of the variable cost/pricing structure of contract policing. Therefore, there will likely be a future state where contract policing becomes the more expensive choice for Surrey as the City is expected to become the largest municipality in BC requiring a greater member strength.



Pillar 5: Becoming the Police of Jurisdiction

The Director of Police Services has provided the SPB with a framework by which SPS will be evaluated for readiness to become the POJ for Surrey. This framework encompasses all aspects of organizational development, infrastructure, capability, technology, and the ability to meet all Provincial Policing Standards. SPS staff have been working closely with Police Services on the requirements and evaluation for POJ status. Prior to October 2022, SPS was working toward a target date of June 2023. It is unclear yet whether City Council's decision to revisit the transition will result in a significant delay in achieving that goal.

An exceptional amount of work has been accomplished by SPS staff over the past two years as the service prepares to assume responsibility for policing duties in Surrey. Although 189 police officers have taken on operational roles while seconded to the RCMP Municipal Police Unit to-date, much more work has been undertaken by SPS officers and civilian employees in preparation for SPS to become the POJ in Surrey.

Most administrative and operational policies have been written, approved by the SPB, and are filed with the Director of Police Services. A high level of transparency and civilian oversight mechanisms have been established and are operational through the SPB and the SPS Professional Standards Section. SPS has hired, trained, and developed programs and services to ensure operational readiness and wellness for 315 police officers and 60 civilian employees.

SPS staff have researched, procured, and built a custom, secure platform as the foundation for SPS information technology and information management systems, which are all well under way. SPS members have conducted extensive engagement with a broad spectrum of community members and groups to develop a community policing model that will best serve the community and build lasting relationships with those who live and work in Surrey. It is the innovation that we have undertaken that sets us apart. We are not just replacing one police agency with another. We are building an innovative, forward-looking, police service that is victim-focused, trauma informed, accountable to each other and the community, transparent in our policies and procedures and complaint processes, and compassionate and caring for our members and those in the community.

The Way Forward

Reversing the transition to SPS would run directly counter to the recommendations of the all-party Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act. A political decision every four years to change the policing model in a city the size of Surrey will jeopardize the stability of policing across the region. A reversal of this decision also sends a clear message to other municipalities that this would be a costly, and possibly fruitless endeavor, making the provision in the Police Act for municipalities to choose their policing model meaningless.

SPS is a duly constituted police service in the Province of British Columbia and is preparing for operational responsibility when the provincial government designates it as police of jurisdiction for the City of Surrey. A provincial decision in favour of SPS will provide the certainty required for our modernized, community-based policing model to move forward for Surrey residents.





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