

Report to Council



Date: March 30, 2026
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Comparative Police Service Model Review – Briefing Report
Department: Community Safety

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive, for information, the report dated March 30, 2026;

AND THAT Council direct staff to conduct a Tiered Policing review that evaluates alternatives for delivering police services that increase efficiency, effectiveness and reduce the rate of escalating costs.

Purpose:

To provide a detailed overview of the Comparative Police Service Model Report led by PwC, a third-party independent consultant.

Background:

Crime and safety persist as top priorities for our community. Examining Kelowna's current contract policing model alongside a municipal policing model is timely given increasingly complex public safety needs, significantly increasing policing costs and expiration of the RCMP contract in 2032. Between Financial Plan 2020 and 2026, Kelowna's policing costs escalated from \$34.8M to ~\$63M (81 per cent increase) while 53 police officers (26 per cent increase) were approved by Council.

This review was about good governance. Specifically, being fiscally responsible to ensure that Kelowna taxpayers are receiving best value for money from contract services. It was also about prudently planning for Kelowna's future needs and being proactive given uncertainty about the future availability of RCMP after 2032. This review was not an assessment or reflection on the hardworking members of the RCMP for whom we have a deep appreciation and respect for the very difficult and vitally important work they – and the many civilian professionals in our detachment – provide to our community daily.

The review was conducted by PwC, a third-party consulting firm, procured through a fair, accessible and transparent process in summer 2025. PwC brought extensive experience conducting similar reviews across Canada in addition to the superior expertise of their senior advisory team which included highly regarded policing experts from both municipal police and RCMP arenas.

Numerous RCMP-contracting communities, over the years, have conducted comparative police service model reviews; some, more than once. All except for Surrey, BC and Grande Prairie, Alberta retained the RCMP as their (contracted) police service. Kelowna's objective comparison of the two police service

models draws on operational data, financial analysis and jurisdictional research, as well as engagement with community, police, City staff and Council.

In March 2025, Council endorsed *Terms of Reference* for this review, which scoped the project to:

- assess existing police service delivery;
- compare the alternative municipal policing model; and
- develop a report that supports effective, accountable and responsive public safety for the community.

Engagement, followed by data, were key drivers in this process. Considerable engagement included:

- one-on-one interviews with senior City staff;
- two community focus groups;
- City Council engagement session;
- one-on-one interviews with senior RCMP personnel; and
- open public survey which netted >1,200 respondents.

By design, the review does not make recommendations but, instead, outlines the strengths, limitations and tradeoffs inherent to the two policing models by evaluating each across five pillars; summarized, as follows:

Governance and Accountability

- A municipal policing model would significantly strengthen local oversight and accountability through a Police Services Board, giving Kelowna greater transparency and influence over budgeting and performance management of the police service. Council's role would shift to more budgetary influence but less direct priority-setting, which moves to a Board. A municipal model can also broaden the pool of leadership candidates and improve leadership continuity—though it adds cost and administrative burden to establish and operate the Board.

Operations and Resources

- Kelowna's current RCMP model provides strong economies of scale, plus no-additional-cost access to many specialized services and national IT/infrastructure supports. Moving to a municipal police service could offer greater local flexibility and innovation, but Kelowna would need to replace or contract for specialized capabilities and would assume full responsibility for technology, equipment and other supports currently provided through the RCMP model.

Community Responsiveness

- Both models can be locally responsive, but a municipal service typically enables stronger continuity and local authority (local hiring/retention, longer leadership tenure and faster partnership/service-model changes). The RCMP rotational model can reduce continuity but brings broader experience and new perspectives. The contract model also offers economies of scale (i.e., once tools/tech are approved, costs and training can be standardized), which can come at the expense of nimbleness and local customization. There may be opportunities to create economies of scale in a municipal model utilizing some City infrastructure.

Financial Cost and Value for Money

- Kelowna's RCMP policing costs increased 66 per cent (2020-2024); about double the growth seen in other BC municipal and RCMP services (~30 to 35 per cent), with no clear link to service

enhancements and no proportionate improvement in outcomes locally. Kelowna now pays about 20 per cent more per deployed officer and has weaker service coverage (population-to-officer ratio ~31 per cent worse) than municipal peers. A *'should-cost'* analysis suggests 2025 costs could be ~\$17M (35 per cent) lower if growth tracked population, call demand and inflation. Based on current trends, Kelowna could reach cost parity with the average municipal service by 2029, indicating declining value for money under current cost growth.

Other Considerations (i.e., risks, transition implications, and cost drivers)

- A transition to a municipal police service would be a complex, multi-year commitment and effectively irreversible once the Province approves a plan. Estimated one-time transition costs are \$30–65M (highly dependent on decisions such as IT, facilities, equipment, staffing ramp-up, legal arrangements and specialized service/dispatch solutions). Provincial funding would likely be a key affordability lever. The largest execution risks are workforce recruitment/training (including RCMP badge-overs), technology and data migration (e.g., PRIME-BC, digital evidence, dispatch) and maintaining strong governance and clear communications to protect service continuity and public confidence.

PwC will present an overview of the methodology, share *'What We Heard'* through community engagement, and detail key findings in respect to each of the five pillars.

Discussion/Next Steps:

Since commencing this review, the federal and provincial governments have signaled their intention to renegotiate the RCMP contract beyond 2032. Although no formal announcements have been made, such assurance alleviates any urgency for municipalities to make sweeping decisions or changes. It also presents the ideal opportunity to conduct a supplementary review; one that would provide a future City Council with a more fulsome picture of *'What's possible'* in policing in terms of reducing the rate of escalating costs and improving community responsiveness by optimizing efficiency and effectiveness.

Police agencies – RCMP and municipal, alike – must adapt to a shifting environment which is rapidly driving police budgets with nominal service improvement, including:

- emergent case law and technology adding to the volume and complexity of police work;
- a now protracted labour shortage yielding high workloads, an over-reliance on overtime and higher vacancy/turnover;
- persistent downloading/offloading of complex social and health issues to police;
- increasing demand on police for low to non-criminal 'social disorder' matters which compete with an increasing volume of emergent, less visible but higher risk threats to community (i.e., organized crime and trafficking);
- diminishing returns/outcomes of police work in the context of a strained justice system (i.e., inadequate Crown Prosecutor resources) and 'catch and release' legislation (i.e., Bill C-75); and
- insufficient flexibility for police in terms of alternative service providers (i.e., co-responders) to offset their work and few alternatives beyond hospitals and jails to address the complex needs of, particularly, repeat offenders.

Akin to the health sector and the emergence of different 'levels' of trained professionals to deliver different services, there is a compelling need to boldly enact levers that reduce unnecessary or inappropriate demands on finite, highly trained, and increasingly expensive police officers. Through

innovation, automation, civilianization and the deployment of alternative and flexible deployment models, the efficacy of police must be optimized.

To this end, a future Council would be well-served to review this Comparative Police Service Model Review in conjunction with a Tiered Policing review that evaluates alternatives for delivering police services that reduce the rate of escalating costs. Such a report would outline tangible opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness including, for example, increased use of technology and municipal/non-sworn staff as well as alternative co-response/deployment models.

As recommended in the BC Government's 2022 report by the [Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act](#), tiered policing would enable 'different categories of policing and public safety personnel' to attend to the growing number of low to non-criminal calls that police experience. Tiered policing is found in numerous settings across Canada (i.e., Vancouver Police Department, Transit Police, Alberta, Waterloo and Winnipeg) and internationally (i.e., United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and Belgium).

Conclusion:

Crime and safety persist as top priorities for Kelowna citizens and Council, alike. In recent years, consecutive Councils have invested significantly in police resources while the base costs for policing have also rapidly increased. The City is committed to leading responsibly through effective fiscal stewardship; ensuring that taxpayers are receiving best value for money from contract services while also ensuring deployment of the most effective and efficient policing model available to meet current and future policing needs.

Internal Circulation:

Communications Department

Submitted by: D. Caul, Community Safety Director

Approved for inclusion: S. Leatherdale, General Manager, People & Protective Services

Attachments:

Attachment A - 2026-03-30 - Police Service Model Review Council Presentation - FINAL

Attachment B – 2026-03-30 – Kelowna Police Service Model Review – Briefing Report

cc: Joe Sass, General Manager, Corporate Services
James McGregor, Chief Technology Officer
Lisa Corcoran, Communications Director