



# City of Kelowna Police Service Model Review

Council Meeting

March 30, 2026

# Agenda



- 1 Welcome and introductions
- 2 Purpose and approach to this review
- 3 “What We Heard” Community Engagement
- 4 Current State Assessment
- 5 Comparative Analysis (Governance, Community Responsiveness, Operations, Costs and Value for Money, Other Considerations)

# Our Police Service Model Review Team



## **Joshua Oviatt, CPA**

Police Review Lead

Joshua has led over 20 policing model reviews working with municipalities, provincial governments, RCMP and law enforcement agencies across Canada.



## **James Anderson**

National Public Safety Leader

James leads our Public Safety practice nationally and oversees all our policing and public safety work across Canada including with municipal, provincial and federal public safety, policing, and defence organizations.

# Our Police Service Model Review Advisory Panel



**Doug LePard, O.O.M., M.A.,  
Police Chief (Retired)**

Doug has 37 years of policing experience, including as Police Chief of Metro Vancouver Transit Police and Deputy Chief of VPD. He is the member of the BC Review Board and Mental Health Review Board, among others.



**W.M. (Bill) Sweeney, O.O.M.,  
MStJ, RCMP Sr. Deputy  
Commissioner (Retired)**

Bill is the former ADM of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and is a retired RCMP officer, where he served career serving as Senior Deputy Commissioner.



**Curt T. Griffiths, Ph.D.**

Curt is a Professor at the Simon Fraser University School of Criminology and the author of numerous curricula textbooks on Canadian corrections, police work and justice systems.

# Purpose and Approach of the Review



# What this report is intended to do



- Provide an **objective, evidence-based assessment** of Kelowna's current RCMP contract policing model
- **Compare strengths and challenges of contract and municipal models** in Kelowna's context
- Help the City understand **how each model supports service delivery, aligns with community expectations, and affects financial sustainability**
- Compare models across **governance, operations/resources, community responsiveness, costs and value-for-money, and other considerations**
- Incorporate perspectives from **community members, City staff, Council and RCMP members to** reflect lived experience and operational reality

# Our methodology is built on combining community perspectives, research, data analysis, and subject matter specialist perspectives



## Community & Stakeholder Engagement

- Public policing survey (1,200+ respondents)
- Focus groups with 17 local organizations
- Workshop with City Council
- Interviews with RCMP members and City staff
- Supplemented by Ipsos Community Safety Survey data



## Jurisdictional Scans & Research

- Jurisdictional research from B.C., and across Canada
- Case studies from both RCMP and municipal models
- Research on policing operations and leading practices relevant to Kelowna's context
- Legislation and policies relevant to contract and municipal policing



## Data & Document Analysis

Data provided by the RCMP and the City including:

- Calls for service and demand for services
- Operations, units, teams and resourcing
- Costs, cost drivers, financial plans and trends
- Other transition or policing model reviews



## Policing Specialist Panel Review & research

Research and analysis completed in consultation with a policing advisory panel including lived experience including:

- RCMP contract policing
- Municipal policing in B.C.
- Academic and research on policing, policing models and transition

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## “What we Heard” through Community Engagement

# “What we heard” from Community and staff offer insights into priorities, strengths and opportunities in police services



## Community safety priorities identified by residents

- Focus on safety outcomes as the priority, not changing policing structures for the same outcomes
- Address root causes: mental health, addiction, homelessness
- Stronger integration with health and social services
- More visible, responsive policing for everyday issues including non-violent crime and traffic safety



## Perceived strengths of the contract policing model

- Professional, committed frontline officers
- Access to specialized units and surge capacity locally
- Access to economies of scale and national programs



## Concerns raised by City Staff, Council and community

- The need for greater budget and financial oversight and cost transparency
- Stronger local governance, performance oversight and influence on priorities
- Improved leadership continuity and staffing stability to drive improved responsiveness
- Ability to innovate, modernize and be responsive to community needs

# 4

## Current State Baseline

# Policing demand is shifting toward lower-urgency and social disorder calls for service, with overall calls for service declining

## **Policing demand is changing, not increasing which is impacting police service**

- **Calls for service have decreased ~5% over the past three years (2021-2024)**, despite population growth
- **High-priority calls (Priority 1–3) have declined 5–8%**. Priority 3 and 4 make up 62% of calls
- **Mental health and social disorder are major drivers**: ~1 in 3 calls involve mental health and/or social disorder
- **Emergency response remains strong**: Kelowna RCMP has maintained strong Priority 1 and 2 response times compared to peers
- **RCMP organizational structures are relatively rigid** which can limit tailoring services, units and capabilities to local needs
- **RCMP Officers in Charge have less independent authority** than a municipal Chief of Police

***“Mental health and addictions are existing together – we’re seeing those as huge for workload.”***

***– RCMP member***

# 5

## Evaluation Framework for RCMP Contract and Municipal Policing Models

# A five-pillar evaluation framework was used to compare RCMP contract policing to municipal policing models in Kelowna's context

1

## **Governance & accountability**

How each model enables local influence over priorities, budgeting, and oversight

2

## **Operations & resources**

Differences in staffing capacity, deployment, resourcing and services

3

## **Community responsiveness**

How each model enables connection to the community and responsiveness to community need

4

## **Financial cost & value for money**

Each models cost structures, sustainability, and value for money based on outcomes

5

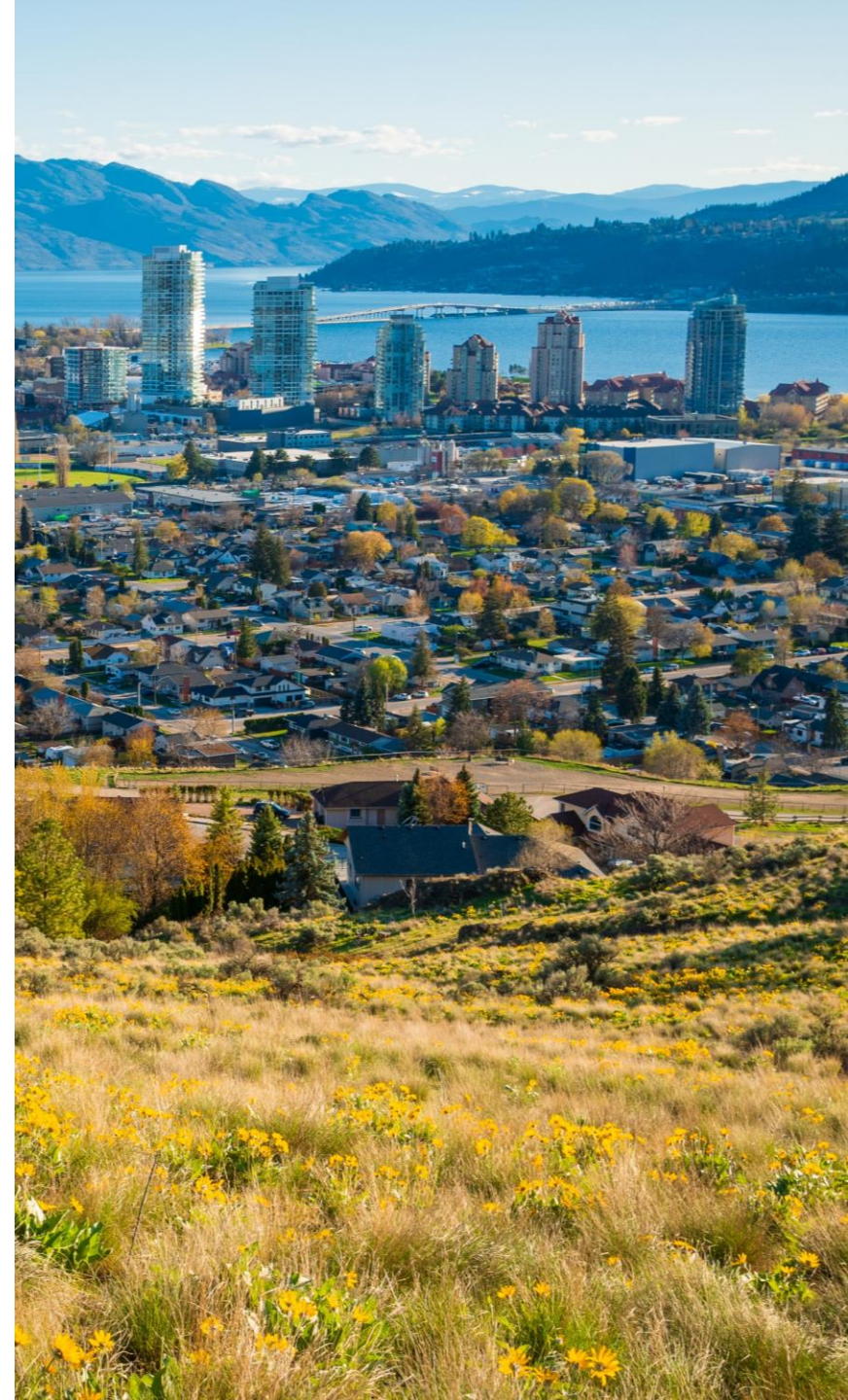
## **Other considerations**

A summary of other considerations related to transitions (i.e., risks, decisions, costs)

# Comparative Analysis – Governance:

## Local oversight is strengthened in a municipal policing model

- Priority setting and oversight responsibilities shift from RCMP to a local Police Services Board which increases the strength of oversight and accountability of the police service locally.
- RCMP today makes financial decisions with limited local oversight into costs with unplanned national expenses impacting City costs.
- Fiscal transparency and oversight is strengthened improving financial control and strategic planning at the local level but liability shifts to the City.
- Performance management of the police service is strengthened by Board's oversight of the Chief and police service outcomes rather than by the RCMP.
- A municipal model has access to a broader pool of police leadership candidates and may improve leadership continuity and connection to the community.



## Comparative Analysis – Operations & Resources:

Resourcing challenges are more pronounced under the RCMP model than in municipal comparators.

### Kelowna RCMP Resourcing, Vacancy and Attrition

- Kelowna RCMP has had challenges staffing up to its level of authorized strength
- Since 2021, Kelowna RCMP has operated at higher vacancy rate than comparable contract and municipal police services
- Authorized strength increased 22% but actual officers on the ground in Kelowna has not risen at the same pace.
- RCMP Kelowna has a high average attrition with significant turnover of both front line and leadership members year over year
- RCMP Kelowna had to fill one in seven sworn positions each year to maintain its current strength

### Municipal Comparator Resourcing, Vacancy and Attrition

- **Municipal policing models have been more successful at filling vacancies** despite global resourcing challenges across policing
- Kelowna RCMP's vacancy rates are **2 to 3 times higher than comparator municipal services**
- Municipal services have significantly less turnover with attrition rates **2 to 4 times lower than Kelowna RCMP**
- Vacancy rates impact operations, service levels and costs in the current contract policing model

## Comparative Analysis – Operations & Resources:

The RCMP model offers surge capacity, specialist services and infrastructure, though municipal models have options to access services

### **Kelowna RCMP provides specialist services at no direct cost to the City**

- RCMP provide access to specialized units (e.g., ERT, explosives disposal, operational communications centre) at no direct cost
- RCMP surge capacity allows Kelowna to absorb summer including deploying ~30 additional officers for peak events
- High tourism drives a peak monthly call volume that is only 17% higher than average monthly call volumes
- Surge capacity could likely be met if vacancy rates were comparable to municipal police services with increased service levels day-to-day

- In a municipal policing model Kelowna would be responsible for its own OCC and dispatch
- Many Specialist services are provided to municipalities at no cost through the Provincial Police Services Agreement
- A municipal model has increased local flexibility to innovate, but less economies of scale

***We appreciate the RCMP for their ability to access specialty teams... for example, we have a fully staffed 24-member ERT team based in Kelowna.”***

*– Kelowna City staff member*

# Comparative Analysis – Community Responsiveness:

Community responsiveness is shaped by connection to community, flexibility to be responsive, and integration



**Connection to the community is strengthened by longer leadership and officer tenure in a municipal model**

## RCMP Contract Policing

- Leadership and officer mobility limits continuity; senior leadership tenure in Kelowna averages ~14 months
- Sworn attrition is high (~14% annually), reducing long-term community relationships

## Municipal Policing Model

- Chiefs are hired locally and typically serve multi-year tenures (5-10 years)
- Municipal comparators show lower attrition (3–6%), enabling longer officer tenure and deeper local knowledge



**Municipal policing models are better positioned to innovate and adapt in response to local safety needs**

## RCMP Contract Policing

- Policies on resourcing, technology, and service models are set federally, OICs have constrained authority limiting local agility
- There are benefits to national scale but local tailoring and speed are constrained

## Municipal Policing Model

- Local Police Boards and Chiefs have authority to innovate and make local decisions
- Greater ability to quickly implement innovations and integrated responses to respond to community needs

# Comparative Analysis – Community Responsiveness:

Community responsiveness is shaped by connection to community, flexibility to be responsive, and integration



**Municipal models offer stronger alignment with integrated, culturally responsive service delivery**

## RCMP Contract Policing

- Approximately 1 in 3 calls involve mental health and/or social disorder, stretching traditional police responses
- Integrated Crisis Response Teams are valued but insufficient scale given workload mix

## Municipal Policing Model

- Greater authority to build formal partnerships with health and social services and expand alternative response models
- Local hiring, training and culturally appropriate practices improve community responsiveness

***“There’s an urgent need for police officers to be present... it’s about building trust, respect, and relationships.”***

**- Community Member**

## Comparative Analysis – Costs:

Costs under the RCMP contract model are increasing faster than municipal or other RCMP contract policing community peers

**Policing is the City's largest tax-funded service, and costs have increased rapidly over a short period.**

- Between 2020 and 2024, Kelowna's policing costs increased by 66%, double the rate of municipal and other RCMP services in B.C. (30–35%) Kelowna RCMP financial plans indicate a further 66% increase in the next 5 years (2026-2031)
- Despite higher spending, Kelowna is not seeing a proportionate improvement in outcomes and perceptions of safety have also declined
- If costs had increased at average peer rates since 2020, policing costs in Kelowna would have been ~\$52M; a difference of ~\$14M
- Costs rising much faster than demand, population, or inflation; indicates costs are being driven by factors that are not local to Kelowna. Costs are \$17M more than expected based on these drivers since 2020
- Based on cost trends from 2020–2024, Kelowna is projected to reach cost parity with the average municipal police service by 2029, three years before the RCMP contract expires in 2032

## Comparative Analysis – Other Considerations:

Policing model transition is complex, resource intensive and costly and would require several years to complete

**If Kelowna were to go down the path of a municipal police transition in the future, these are the major considerations:**

- **Transition is complex and resource-intensive.** A multi-year transition would require dual operations (ramping up municipal policing while winding down RCMP services)
- Based on benchmarks, one-time transition costs are estimated at ~\$30–\$65M over 5 years, depending on transition decisions
- Financial impact to Kelowna would depend on the level of financial support from the provincial government
- Key risks include financial risk, reputational/community disruption risk, technology risk, legal risk, relational risk, and workforce risk
- Cost drivers are IT systems, fleet/equipment, facilities, staffing buildout, legal agreements, specialized service arrangements, and project management capacity

Thank you.



CITY OF KELOWNA

# *Next Steps & Recommendations*





- Since commencing this review, the federal and provincial governments have signaled their intention to renegotiate the RCMP contract beyond 2032
- Ideal opportunity to conduct a Tiered Policing Review to provide a future City Council with a more fulsome picture of '*What's possible*'

## Next Steps

# Adapting to a Shifting Environment

Emergent Case  
Law &  
Technology

Impacts of  
Labour Shortage

Downloading of  
complex social &  
health issues to  
Police

Increasing non-  
criminal demands  
on police

Justice system  
challenges

Insufficient  
alternatives for  
police

# Tiered Policing Review - *proposed*

- ▶ **Objective** - to reduce the rate of escalating police costs through levers that offset unnecessary and inappropriate demands on finite, highly-trained, and increasingly expensive police
- ▶ **Levers for consideration:**
  - ▶ Innovation (i.e., technology and automation)
  - ▶ Civilianization
  - ▶ Co-response / Alternative deployment models (i.e., new categories of public safety personnel)

# *Recommendation*

**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**



*Discussion & Questions*