

CITY OF SURREY

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 4, 2023

Mayor and Council
Barriere (District)
PO Box 219,
Barriere, BC, V0E 1E0

By email: inquiry@barriere.ca

Dear Mayor and Council,

It is important for local governments to know the impact of the Surrey Police Transition on your city, town or regional district, should it go ahead.

As you may know, Surrey Council voted to keep the RCMP as the police of jurisdiction (POJ). We communicated our decision to the Solicitor General (SG) who, continued to “recommend” that the city stay with the transition to the Surrey Police Service (SPS), but asked that the City choose between two options,

- 1) To continue the transition to the SPS with no evaluation of the SPS model.
- 2) To stay with the RCMP as the POJ with conditions.

The Premier, the SG and the Ministry’s report recognize that it is the role of municipalities to choose their policing model. The SGs’ authority under the Act is a safety net if the “adequate and effective” policing standard is not met. It does not grant the SG the authority to impose hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of costs into the municipal budget on a political whim.

I am writing to you today for two reasons.

Firstly, is to express my deep concern for the statements made by the provincial government and the Solicitor General suggesting that should Surrey remain with the RCMP would create a public safety crisis; this is not truthful.

In fact, the ministry’s own report states *“It is not based on a failure by police to deliver adequate and effective policing nor a failure in public safety. Quite the opposite is true, front-line officers in the SPS and the RCMP are working hard to serve those who reside in and visit Surrey”*. It went on to say *“This Director’s Report is not a comparative assessment of the two police models. It is also not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of continuing with the current police transition to the SPS.”*

This interference should have significant concern to local government if the SG establishes a precedent of indiscriminately imposing massive costs onto municipal government with no rationale other than vaguely referencing public safety concerns.



BRENDA LOCKE
MAYOR

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Adequate and effective policing is in place in our city and our province, and for the Premier and the Solicitor General to infer there is a public safety crisis is not supported by data.

The central fear articulated by the premier and SG is the sudden dissolution of the SPS may lead to a walk out. The SPS Board has provided assurances that the SPS officers will remain on duty. Because the SPS Board reports to the province (not the city), they will take its instructions from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Public Safety. One simple mandate letter from the province would remove the only concern for this public safety threat.

On the other hand, approving the SPS would create massive pressure on policing in the province, which would not exist if we remained with the RCMP. The only police training facility in the province, the JIBC, was past its capacity to meet the needs of municipal policing in BC even before the SPS was established. It is also important to recognize that police officer training at the JIBC has been under scrutiny. In order to properly address the police training needs in British Columbia would require expanding the JIBC. To date, the provincial budget has not addressed this expensive and time-consuming need. Waiting years for the JIBC training to fill the SPS cadet requirement will not only cost Surrey millions in time delays, but it will also impact other municipal police forces who cannot get seats at the JIBC.

Therefore, the only other route to full capacity for the SPS is hiring experienced police officers from your communities as they have done to date.

If the SG were to impose the SPS on Surrey, I would strongly recommend you communicate directly to the SG that you expect him to impose the same "public safety" restrictions on the SPS hiring from LMD communities as he has placed on the RCMP.

Secondly, and perhaps more important to local governments, is the financial and human resource impact that continuing with the Surrey Police Transition will have on every city, town, transit police and regional district in the province.

The SG's plan to move forward with the SPS will cost you financially if you are currently an RCMP jurisdiction. As RCMP divisional administrative costs are shared costs among all RCMP jurisdictions, so far it is estimated that because of the size of the Surrey detachment, your policing costs will increase by up to 7%.

If you are served by a municipal police force, it is important to know that the provincially appointed Surrey Police Board signed the richest collective agreement in Canada. This agreement will likely impact all future municipal police board negotiations.

The Surrey RCMP requires approx. 170 officers to return to full complement. Over 80 SPS officers have expressed interest in making this move according to the Officer in Charge. Further, the RCMP has stated that they can and will accommodate the human resource needs, not only to Surrey, but throughout the region, with the new recruiting and experienced officer programs.

In contrast, the Surrey Police Service (SPS) requires over 400 additional officers beyond those hired to date, to get to full strength. Although the province recognized the scope of the Surrey police transition from the beginning, they did not increase the funding to the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) in order to accommodate the officer training needed. The reality is that, just as the SPS has done to date, the vast majority of the SPS hires will come by recruiting from the RCMP, TransLink and other municipal forces throughout the province.



In closing,

My concern is the duplicity of the provincial government on this matter. The Ministry report and SG explicitly stated that we had two choices - to remain with the RCMP or the SPS - and conditions to meet with either option.

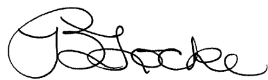
Based on the facts we examined, we chose the RCMP - with a more significant majority of council than we had originally - and we have committed to meeting the binding conditions.

The SGs' response is to move the goalposts and claim the need to review the plan and potentially overturn the council decision. I have offered to work with the province to ensure the requirements are met, and the province refuses to acknowledge the offer.

As local government leaders, we need to stand up for our authority under the Police Act. Like with your municipality, Surrey Council knows our community best. We cannot allow a "manufactured crisis" to drive a significant and costly public safety decision that will impact generations to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Brenda Locke
Mayor

