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**Item No. 2**  
**Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality**  
**May 1, 2024**

**TO:** Chair Kent and Commissioners of the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  

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Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** April 22, 2024

**SUBJECT:** NSFM Seeking Further Insights from Members with their Own Police Agencies

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

This is a staff initiated report.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 7(2) of the Police Board By-law, Halifax Regional Municipality By-law P-100.

**BACKGROUND**

The following information is submitted for the information of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC). Regarding Municipal Police Agencies Opportunities and Challenges letter from Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) dated April 12, 2024. [see Attachment 1]

**DISCUSSION**

The following information is submitted to BoPC in response to letter from Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) dated April 12, 2024. Regarding Municipal Police Agencies Opportunities and Challenges. [see Attachment 2]

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications identified.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required for the purpose of preparing this response letter.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – NSFM Letter Re: Municipal Policy Agencies 12.04.2024

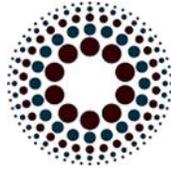
Attachment 2 – Response letter Municipal Policing Agencies NSFM\_CAO HRM 22.04.2024

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Bill Moore, Executive Director Community Safety 902.943.0207

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12 April 2024

(Delivered via email)

Dear NSFM members with municipal police agencies,

**RE: Municipal Police Agencies Opportunities and Challenges**

This letter is being sent to the ten NSFM members that have their own municipal police agencies. All municipalities are experiencing challenges related to the cost and effectiveness of policing services to some degree. However, NSFM recognizes that municipal police agencies experience distinct challenges and offer distinct opportunities in pursuit of providing a high standard of public safety to Nova Scotians. Municipal police have a long and proud history in Nova Scotia and stand to offer important insights on the future of policing in this province.

Following our series of consultations on policing in 2023, NSFM would like to delve deeper into the opportunities and challenges that characterize municipal policing. In our recent consultation on policing, NSFM identified pressing issues in municipal policing that include but are not limited to:

- Communication between municipal police agencies and the Department of Justice (DoJ) could be improved by creating a designated Municipal Police Liaison similar to the RCMP Liaison.
- The cost of policing is rising. Additionally, municipal police agencies in towns and regional municipalities are required to provide these services to a significantly larger portion of the population than is included in their municipality's tax base. Therefore, financial assistance similar to the Additional Officer Program (AOP) is called for.
- Central support services are relied on but are not always readily available or of sufficient quality. Similarly, Biological Casework Analysis is paid for by all Nova Scotian municipalities, but these services are not always sufficiently high-quality or available when needed.
- Police officers are often called on to assist people experiencing breakdowns in mental health and are required to maintain custody of people awaiting treatment at a hospital for long durations of time. This is a drain on officer time that would be otherwise spent preventing and investigating crime and could be more appropriately done by an alternative designated position.

We invite you to work with your Board of Police Commissioners or whoever else you deem appropriate to provide further information on significant issues and opportunities that would make a difference to your police agency and constituents. Please submit a response to this letter to [REDACTED] by May 31st. Please consider the following questions in addition to any other aspects of policing that you and your council would like to comment on.

- What are the existing pressures discussed in your Board of Police Commissioners and council meetings related to policing?
- What expanded or additional supports could serve as solutions to these pressures?
- What hopes or expectations do you have regarding the upcoming new Provincial Policing Standards announced by DoJ?
- Do you see any opportunities for further collaboration on the provision of central support services?
- Do you experience barriers to collaborating with other municipal police agencies or the RCMP? How often does your police agency receive requests for support from the RCMP?
- Do you see any opportunities to increase police interoperability?
- Do you think the current *Police Act* allows you to effectively administer policing? If not, what would useful changes look like?

Discussions on policing in Nova Scotia will take place as part of a comprehensive review of policing, being conducted by the [Police Review Engagement Advisory Committee](#) and technical consultant Deloitte. NSFM is dedicated to representing all municipalities and understanding the distinct challenges that they experience.

Thanks in advance for contributing your perspective to this important discussion.

Kind Regards,



**- Original Signed -**

*Juanita Spencer,*  
CEO, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

April 22, 2024

Juanita Spencer  
CEO Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities  
1809 Barrington St., Suite 1304  
Halifax, NS B3J 3K8

RE: Municipal Police Agencies Opportunities and Challenges

Thank you for your letter of April 12, 2024, related to Municipal Police Agencies Opportunities and Challenges. We have provided responses to the questions posed. If you require additional information or clarity, please feel free to reach out.

**What are the existing pressures discussed in your Board of Police Commissioners and council meetings related to policing?**

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a dual model of policing. Regional Council directed that a review be undertaken the integrated policing model and contracted Price Waterhouse Cooper to provide that review. The report was completed in 2023 and HRM is presently working through the recommendations. The report recommends maintaining an integrated model but it does call on work to be done in the areas of Governance, Leadership, Community Safety Function and Operations.

The report is available at: <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/230425cow4.pdf>

In addition, the following list of pressures were presented by each police agency during the most recent budget preparation:

**Halifax Regional Police Pressures**

- Number of officers resigning or retiring from HRP
- Number of officers currently on long-term leave
- Increased focus on the well-being of officers
- Enhance the Background and Security Clearance Unit
- Employee and Family Assistance Program
- Enhancement to the frontline response levels
- The increase in number of emergency events (fire, flood, weather)
- The increase of severity of crime in Halifax, both violent and non-violent
- The increased number of charge files which take more time as they go through the court
- The increased number of hate crimes and incidents reported against the backdrop of geopolitical conflict
- The average time spent on each call has increased since 2015
- Less time on proactive policing initiatives within the community
- Lengthy hospital wait times under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act (IPTA)
- Compensation and benefits: these relate to employees' salaries and benefits

- Inflation of non-compensation operating expenses: these include items such as equipment, building
- costs, services, and supplies

### **RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment Pressures**

- Increases in population growth & calls for service
- The inherent risk and prevalence of Intimate partner Violence (IPV)
- Rural areas have fewer resources and or resources are spread over a larger land mass.
- Increased investigative time
- New community office requests
- Increase and duration of mental health calls on police services
- Underhoused crisis – HRM Homeless Strategy
- Climate change induced & other large operational pressure
- Increased frontline response demands

### **What expanded or additional supports could serve as solutions to these pressures?**

- Use of designated persons to take custody of patients at emergency departments under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act (IPTA).
- Introduction of mental health outreach to deal with a portion of the mental health calls for service.
- Housing outreach to deal with calls for service of those experiencing homelessness.
- Ability to utilize non-police traffic control for special events.

### **What hopes or expectations do you have regarding the upcoming new Provincial Policing Standards announced by the DOJ?**

The policing standards should provide a standard service level to all Nova Scotians regardless of their policing service provider and location. The creation of standards does open a conversation on potential economies of scale and mutual aid.

### **Do you see any opportunities for further collaboration on the provision of central support services?**

This is an opportunity to further collaborate on the provision of central support services relating to police services however there would need to be clarity about costing, resourcing, priority of accessing services and capital funding plan. There may also be an opportunity for the province to have a lawyer on retainer to provide independent legal advice to Boards and access to researchers. Taking this step would be in keeping with the spirit of MCC Report Recommendation P. 61c “Municipalities should provide adequate funding to police boards to permit them to conduct independent research, seek legal advice, maintain records, and otherwise discharge their governance role”.

### **Do you experience barriers to collaborating with other municipal police agencies or the RCMP?**

The Halifax Board of Police Commissioners is both the Board and the Advisory Board to the HRP and RCMP respectively and both agencies attend a single Board meeting. There is a common reporting approach to the Board and both agencies are responsive to inquiries.

As to interaction with other municipal agencies, we are not aware of any barriers to collaboration.

**How often does your police agency receive requests for support from the RCMP?**

In the Halifax Regional Municipality, the HRP and RCMP are on the same Computer aided dispatch, records management system and common radio channels so there is a high degree of support going both ways between HRP and RCMP. Criminal Investigations is also provided in an integrated manner.

**Do you see any opportunities to increase police interoperability?**

Standardized training and equipment could lead to potential lower purchasing costs and training creation (do it once and share widely), common operating policies and the ability to provide mutual aid to other agencies in a relatively seamless manner.

**Do you think the current Police Act allows you to effectively administer policing? If not, what would useful changes look like?**

We reviewed the Board of Police Commissioners motion tracker and pasted below all motions since 2017 that reference amendments or clarification to the Police Act.

2022-02-13

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners request the Province of Nova Scotia Minister of Justice change the Police Regulations made under subsection 97(1) of the Police Act to align and be consistent with the longer national RCMP limitations period for police complaints.

2022-02-28

TAKE NOTICE that, at a future meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners, I intend to move a motion to propose that the Board of Police Commissioners request a staff report from HRM Legal Services clarifying the meaning of the phrases “discipline,” “personnel conduct,” “contract negotiations,” and “security of police operations” in section 51 of the Police Act (collectively, the “grounds” for going in camera). The staff report should provide a definition for each of these phrases and explain what evidence is required under each ground before the Board can move in camera.

2022-03-09

TAKE NOTICE that, at the March 21, 2022, meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners, I intend to move a motion that the Board of Police Commissioners seek an independent legal opinion relating to the Commission’s jurisdiction under the Police Act, including how it relates to the review and approval of the annual Halifax Regional Police budget.

2023-03-01

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners recommend that Regional Council:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer provide a staff report for the purpose of developing an operational and capital budget review and approval process for the Halifax Regional Police, including public consultation and associated timelines, for the 2023/24 fiscal year in compliance with the Police Act.

2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer provide a staff report regarding the Board of Police Commissioners' jurisdiction under the Police Act, including as it relates to the review and approval of the annual Halifax Regional Police budget proposal under Section 53 of the Police Act.

In addition to the Motions of the Board there are other reports that have suggested recommendations to the Police Act.

**Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM:**

<https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/boards-committees-commissions/220117bopc1021.pdf>

- Recommendations 10: Study integrity of police complaints process.
- Recommendation 11: Advocate for RCMP to be subject to Police Act complaints procedure.
- Recommendation 13: The Police Board and Regional Council should advocate for the provincial government to establish a special legislative committee dedicated to reforming the Police Act.

**HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA: STREET CHECKS REPORT**

[https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editor-uploads/halifax\\_street\\_checks\\_report\\_march\\_2019\\_0.pdf](https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editor-uploads/halifax_street_checks_report_march_2019_0.pdf)

- Recommendation 4.11 "Form a committee to study the strength and integrity of the current police complaints process and Defund Report.

**Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission**

<https://masscasualtycommission.ca/documents/>

- Recommendation P.61: Explain the respective roles and responsibilities of board members, police leaders, and civil servants.

Please feel free to contact us if you should have any questions. We look forward to reviewing the results of this exercise and to the discussions to follow.

Sincerely,

**- Original Signed -**

Cathie O'Toole, CAO  
Halifax Regional Municipality

cc: Board of Police Commissioners, HRM