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Item No. 10.3.2

Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality
March 2, 2026

TO:	Chair Greg O'Malley and Commissioners of the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality
FROM:	Bill Moore, Commissioner of Public Safety
DATE:	February 13, 2026
SUBJECT:	**Halifax Regional Police Participation in RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee**

ORIGIN

December 4, 2024, Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality motion (Item No.10.2.1):

MOVED by Commissioner Giles, seconded by Commissioner Hinch

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners for Halifax Regional Municipality direct the Chief Officer of Halifax Regional Police and advise the Chief Officer of Halifax Regional Detachment to participate in the RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee process for a trial period of 12 months, and return to the Board in February 2026 with an update and a recommendation as to continued participation.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality:

1. Direct the Chief Officer of Halifax Regional Police to continue participation in the RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee process for an additional 12 months and return to the Board in February 2027 with an update and a recommendation as to continued participation.

BACKGROUND

On December 4, 2024, the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) passed motion 10.2.1 which directed the Chief Officer of Halifax Regional Police (HRP) to participate in the RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process for a trial period of 12 months, and return to the Board in February 2026 with an update and a recommendation as to continued participation.

This Recommendation Report is in response to the above motion.

At the May 21, 2025, BoPC meeting, Commissioner Tony Mancini requested an interim six-month staff report evaluating the performance of, and findings to date, from the use of the SAIRC process in the review of sexual assault cases which did not lead to charges.

A copy of the **"Interim update on HRP use of the RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process"** can be found at **Attachment 1**.

DISCUSSION

The BoPC provides civilian governance and oversight for HRP on behalf of Regional Council. It also acts as an advisory board for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment (RCMP HRD).

The 2025-2026 BoPC Work Plan[1] contains the following four key pillars:

- Develop
- Engage
- Adapt
- Evolve

A key focus of the "Evolve" pillar centres around evolving police response in critical areas identified by community, stakeholders, and public safety reports. Included within this pillar is the strategic priority "Review, align, and action findings and recommendations from key reports" and contains the action item of monitoring HRP's participation in the RCMP's Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee process.

Since December 2024, HRP has been participating in the RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC).

SAIRC is comprised of provincial independent subject matter experts across governmental and non-governmental organizations, all of whom are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The committee is responsible for reviewing sexual assault investigations which were cleared without charges, to ensure that appropriate steps were taken. The goal is to provide investigative oversight, to ensure investigations are thorough, timely, impartial, and properly classified, as well as to identify any systemic gaps and barriers.

RCMP analysts, who conduct the random selection of files for review by the SAIRC, were provided with access to the HRP Records Management System (Versadex RMS) to enable the selection and preparation of files for review. Investigations are selected at random prior to each SAIRC meeting, with the un-vetted file material securely and completely prepared and transferred. No sexual assault investigations are excluded from being selected for review, including those involving children.

[1] https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/boards-committees-commissions/250521bopc1021.pdf

SAIRC meets two to four times per year. Each committee member is responsible for reviewing a single file individually and in-depth, against an agreed set of standards. The SAIRC member has access to any audio or video interviews which were completed during the investigation, officer notes, reports, and monitor notes[2] associated with the file.

Following their review of the file, the SAIRC member may find that the investigation was completed in accordance with best practice, or they may make recommendations, including (but not limited to) that the investigation be re-opened for additional investigative steps to be taken, or that the investigating officer receive feedback.

To date, HRP has participated in four SAIRC meetings, which took place on the following dates:

- December 2-3, 2024
- May 12-13, 2025
- September 3-4, 2025
- December 8- 9, 2025

A total of 34 files were reviewed at the four meetings: three at the December 2024 meeting, eight at the May 2025 meeting, nine at the September 2025 meeting and 14 at the December 2025 meeting.

Two of the 34 files which were reviewed through the SAIRC process have been reopened to confirm that specific tasks were completed.

A number of the files which were reviewed relate to either historical complaints or cases where the survivor did not wish to proceed with the investigation.

Overall, there has been consistent feedback provided by SAIRC members that investigators displayed a trauma-informed approach when dealing with survivors, something that was again noted during the SAIRC meetings held on September 3-4, 2025, and December 8-9, 2025. Committee members also provided helpful feedback reminding investigators to review safety planning with the survivor and provide information on resources, such as Victim Services.

HRP believes it is important to have sexual assault investigations which were cleared without charges reviewed by an independent review committee to ensure that appropriate steps were taken. While the fact that no significant issues have so far been identified by the SAIRC reviews could be considered a positive reflection on the practice of HRP in this area, we are always looking for ways to improve service delivery, especially to vulnerable victims. We believe there is value in continuing to participate in the SAIRC process for an additional 12-month period. This would allow additional files to be reviewed by SAIRC members and provide HRP with a larger sample size in order to make a more informed decision about a long-term commitment to participation in the SAIRC process.

Please refer to the **Interim update on HRP use of the RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process at Attachment 1** for additional information on the formation of the Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee, the integrated Sexual Assault Investigation Team and the first two SAIRC meetings.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications identified as a result of this report.

[2] Monitor notes refer to notes which are taken by an officer who is observing an interview

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required for the purpose of preparing this report. The report itself outlines that SAIRCs are comprised of provincial independent subject matter experts across governmental and non-governmental organizations.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality could choose not to approve the recommendation.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under subsection 55(1) of the Police Act, the function of a board is to provide:

(a) civilian governance on behalf of the council in relation to the enforcement of law, the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime in the municipality; and
(b) the administrative direction, organization and policy required to maintain an adequate, effective and efficient police department

Without limiting the generality of the functions noted in subsection 55(1), under subsection 55(3) the Board has the following specific duties: …

(c) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing priorities, objectives, goals, programs and strategies;
(d) ensure that police services are delivered in a manner consistent with community values, needs and expectations;
(e) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers.

Section 8 (2) (b), (h), (i), (j) and (k) of the Police Board By-law, Halifax Regional Municipality By-law P100.

8. (2) The Board in accordance with the Police Act and HRM Bylaws may carry out any of the following roles and responsibilities:

(b) provide civilian governance on behalf of the Council in relation to enforcement of the law, the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime within the municipality;
(h) carry out any studies or investigations respecting its civilian governance responsibilities;
(i) monitor gender, ethnic and minority group issues and making recommendations concerning these matters to the Chief of Police;
(j) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing goals and methods;
(k) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Interim update on HRP use of the RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process

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Report Prepared by: Natasha Pace – Coordinator, Halifax Regional Police

Report Approved by: Chief Don MacLean – Halifax Regional Police
Superintendent Dave Boon – Criminal Investigation Division, Halifax Regional Police

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Attachment 1

Item No. 3

Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality
September 3, 2025

TO:	Chair Greg O'Malley and Commissioners of the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality
FROM:	Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE:	August 11, 2025
SUBJECT:	**Interim update on HRP use of the RCMP H Division Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

May 21, 2025, Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality (Item No.10.3.1):

MOVED by Commissioner Mancini, seconded by Commissioner Hinch

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners for Halifax Regional Municipality direct the Chief Officer of the Halifax Regional Police and recommend that the Officer in Charge of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Halifax Regional Detachment prepare an interim six month staff report from the Halifax Regional Police evaluating the performance of and findings to date from the use of the RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process in the review of sexual assault cases which did not lead to arrest.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED.

BACKGROUND

On December 4, 2024, the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) passed motion 10.2.1 which directed the Chief Officer of Halifax Regional Police (HRP) to participate in the RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process for a trial period of 12 months, and return to the Board in February 2026 with an update and a recommendation as to continued participation.

At the May 21, 2025, BoPC meeting, Commissioner Tony Mancini requested an interim six-month staff report evaluating the performance of, and findings to date, from the use of the SAIRC process in the review of sexual assault cases which did not lead to arrest.

Councillor Mancini specifically requested the following information be included in the interim report:

- How many files have been reviewed through the SAIRC process since its inception;
- How many reviewed files have resulted in additional investigation actions as opposed to clerical changes;
- How many investigations have been reopened as a result of the review; and
- Whether any reopened cases resulted in a charge being laid.

This staff report is in response to the above request for an interim update. It is recommended that this report not be released to the public.

DISCUSSION

Integrated Sexual Assault Investigation Team (SAIT)

Sexual violence is one of the most underreported types of crime, and experiences attrition at all levels of the criminal justice system[1].

The integrated Sexual Assault Investigation Team (SAIT) investigates adult and child sexual assaults and child physical abuse in the municipality. SAIT is a unit within the Special Victims Section of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). SAIT is comprised of members from HRP and RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment (HRD) who are all trained, qualified specialists in this field. The current staffing levels within SAIT are as follows: two Sergeants (one HRP and one RCMP HRD) and 15 investigators (11 HRP and four RCMP HRD).

In recent years, the SAIT team has focused on training, education and strengthening relationships with partner agencies to improve the overall response to sexual assault investigations. Members of SAIT are often asked to conduct investigations on behalf of police agencies outside of Halifax who require their expertise.

Prior to conducting an interview with a survivor of sexual assault, SAIT investigators will offer to connect adult survivors with the Victim Services Unit[2], which offers support services to victims of crime, and in particular to victims of domestic violence, sexualized violence, and serious crimes. Investigators will also offer to connect survivors with the Independent Legal Advice[3] (ILA) program. ILA provides free, independent legal advice to adult survivors of sexual assault. All interviews with adult survivors take place in a soft interview room[4] where there is access to pamphlets with additional information on support services.

Prior to SAIT interviewing a child in relation to a sexual assault investigation, the SeaStar[5] program will be offered. SeaStar is located at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and is one of many Child and Youth Advocacy Centres across Canada. SeaStar brings together professionals from law enforcement, child welfare, health care, mental health, and the justice system to create an integrated approach to investigation, assessment, and treatment of suspected violence or abuse.

[1] https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2024/statcan/11-627-m/11-627-m2024051-eng.pdf
[2] https://www.halifax.ca/safety-security/police/programs-services/victim-services-halifax
[3] https://novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice/
[4] Soft interview rooms refer to rooms designed specifically for trauma-informed interviews
[5] https://www.seastarcyac.ca/

Often times, SAIT will interview children at the SeaStar office, which is designed specifically for children and youth.

Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC)

Sexual assault investigations have been the subject of increased public scrutiny over the past several years. In response, the RCMP began reviewing sexual assault investigations which were cleared without charges to ensure that appropriate steps were taken.

The review of RCMP sexual assault investigations is conducted by the Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC).

SAIRCs are being established in all RCMP contract policing divisions. The goal is to provide investigative oversight, to ensure investigations are thorough, timely, impartial, and properly classified, as well as to identify any systemic gaps and barriers.

To date, SAIRCs have been established in 12 RCMP divisions across Canada. There is one in every contract division and two in British Columbia, with the province currently in the process of implementing a third SAIRC in Fall 2025.

Each SAIRC meets two to four times per year to review sexual assault investigations. In December 2019, a SAIRC was established in H Division (Nova Scotia). At the time, committee members and the RCMP's Divisional Coordinator participated in two days of training. The training was delivered by the National Office of Sexual Offence Investigative Standards[6], and included the following topics:

- Sexual violence
- The RCMP's approach to external review
- RCMP policing
- Sexual offence investigative steps
- Uniform Crime Reporting
- Completing a review of sexual offence investigations

The SAIRC is comprised of provincial independent subject matter experts across governmental and non-governmental organizations, all of whom are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. An RCMP Sergeant attends the meetings on behalf of RCMP but does not participate in the file review process; their role is to answer any questions from SAIRC members.

Investigations are selected at random prior to each SAIRC meeting, with the un-vetted file material securely and completely prepared and transferred. No sexual assault investigations are excluded from being selected from review, including those involving children.

Each committee member reviews a file individually and in-depth, against an agreed set of standards. The SAIRC member has access to any audio or video interviews which were completed during the investigation, officer notes, reports, and monitor notes[7] associated with the file.

Following the review, the SAIRC may find that the investigation was completed in accordance with best practice, or they may make recommendations, including (but not limited to) that the investigation be re-opened for additional investigative steps to be taken, or that the investigating officer receive feedback. The benefits of a review model for sexual violence investigations is recognized and acknowledged by HRP. In exploring the options for such a model in Halifax, HRP has been working collaboratively with the

[6] The National Office of Sexual Offence Investigative Standards (NOSOIS), formerly known as Sexual Assault Review Team (SART), was established in 2017. NOSOIS is the national centre of expertise for sexual assault investigations
[7] Monitor notes refer to notes which are taken by an officer who is observing an interview

RCMP on including files investigated by SAIT into the RCMP H Division SAIRC process.

Previously, sexual assault investigations conducted by RCMP HRD members were not being reviewed by SAIRC, only files which occurred outside of HRM.

HRP involvement with the Sexual Assault Investigations Review Committee (SAIRC) process

A Sergeant with the integrated SAIT attended a SAIRC meeting on May 13, 2024, as an observer. The goal was to educate themselves on the SAIRC process and prepare a report for members of HRP's senior leadership team to review.

In preparation for HRP participating in the SAIRC process, RCMP analysts, who conduct the random selection of files for review by the SAIRC, were provided access to the HRP Records Management System (Versadex RMS) to enable the selection and preparation of files for review. It is important to note that comments made on the files by Supervisors and Crown Attorneys are not included in the documents provided to SAIRC members.

HRP was initially scheduled to participate in its first SAIRC meeting in September 2024. Five investigative files from SAIT were selected and prepared for review, however, this session was cancelled.

The first SAIRC meeting which HRP participated in took place on December 2 and 3, 2024. A SAIT supervisor attended the session to answer questions from SAIRC members. Four SAIT files were originally scheduled for review, however, one of the selected files was re-opened prior to the scheduled SAIRC meeting and therefore removed from the review process.

The second SAIRC meeting that HRP participated in took place May 12 to 13, 2025. Eight SAIT files were reviewed by the committee at this time.

Since HRP began participating in the SAIRC process, a total of 11 SAIT files have been reviewed. At this time, none of the 11 files which have been reviewed through the SAIRC process have resulted in additional investigation actions or the files being reopened. Several of the files which were reviewed relate to either historical complaints or cases where the victim did not wish to proceed with the investigation.

Overall, there has been consistent feedback provided by SAIRC members that the interviews conducted with survivors are positive and that the interview space is appropriate.

In one of the files reviewed by SAIRC, a note was made that the investigator should be more cognizant of their body language. This is something that has been addressed with the member by their supervisor.

Next steps

The next two SAIRC meetings are scheduled to take place on September 3-4, and December 8-9, 2025. The goal is to have eight SAIT files reviewed at the September meeting and 10 SAIT files reviewed at the meeting in December.

HRP recognizes the benefits of a review model for sexual violence investigations to ensure all appropriate steps were taken when a sexual assault investigation is cleared without charges.

Although in the early stages, HRP believes the SAIRC process is encouraging. Supervisors within SAIT are acknowledging the feedback provided by the committee and making adjustments when and where required.

The Superintendent of CID would like to have SAIT participate in at least two more SAIRC sessions to be able to make a better assessment of the overall process.

At the direction of the BoPC, HRP is currently participating in the SAIRC process for a trial period of 12 months and is scheduled to return to the Board in February 2026 with an update and a recommendation as to continued participation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications identified as a result of this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

The report itself outlines that SAIRCs are comprised of provincial independent subject matter experts across governmental and non-governmental organizations.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under subsection 55(1) of the Police Act, the function of a board is to provide:

> (a) civilian governance on behalf of the council in relation to the enforcement of law, the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime in the municipality; and
> (b) the administrative direction, organization and policy required to maintain an adequate, effective and efficient police department

Without limiting the generality of the functions noted in subsection 55(1), under subsection 55(3) the Board has the following specific duties: …

> (c) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing priorities, objectives, goals, programs and strategies;
> (d) ensure that police services are delivered in a manner consistent with community values, needs and expectations;
> (e) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers.

Section 8 (2) (b), (h), (i), (j) and (k) of the Police Board By-law, Halifax Regional Municipality By-law P100.

8. (2) The Board in accordance with the Police Act and HRM Bylaws may carry out any of the following roles and responsibilities:

> (b) provide civilian governance on behalf of the Council in relation to enforcement of the law, the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime within the municipality;
> (h) carry out any studies or investigations respecting its civilian governance responsibilities;
> (i) monitor gender, ethnic and minority group issues and making recommendations concerning these matters to the Chief of Police;
> (j) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing goals and methods;
> (k) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments to this report.

Report Prepared by:	Natasha Pace, Coordinator – Halifax Regional Police
Report Approved by:	Chief Don MacLean – Halifax Regional Police Supt. Dave Boon, Criminal Investigation Division – Halifax Regional Police Chief Superintendent John Duff, Officer in Charge, RCMP HRD Insp. Jeff Mitchell, Management and Administrative Services Officer, RCMP HRD Bill Moore, Commissioner of Public Safety, 902.490.8545