



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

INTERNAL M E M O R A N D U M

TO: W. Pearce, Chief Administrative Officer **FILE:** 7400-20-2022
PC: K. Poole, Director, Community Safety, Lands and Administration **DATE:** August 9, 2022
FROM: Supt. Shawna Baher, Officer in Charge, Vernon North Okanagan Detachment
SUBJECT: **ADDITION RCMP REGULAR MEMBER INCREASE FOR 2023 BUDGET**

In total, there are currently 56 funded positions of Regular Members to police the City of Vernon. The last increase to the membership was in November of 2017 when six new positions were asked for and approved for the 2018 budget. Over the last five years the population of the City of Vernon has increased by 11% to 44,519.

Policing in the City of Vernon is 24 hours per day, seven days a week. There are 28 of the members attached to General Duty and work in a four watch system (A,B,C,D), each watch contains seven Vernon funded members. These members respond to calls for service from the public, complete proactive patrols and foot patrols, traffic duties and other duties as required. To supplement the times when calls for service are higher a fifth watch was created (E watch) to work peak hour coverage, there are two Vernon members attached to this unit. To support investigations there are a number of plainclothes units, 18 Vernon positions in total. These units are specialized and take on files that require additional investigation and expertise and can often be very lengthy and require numerous members to take on different roles. There are eight other positions funded by Vernon including a Police dog handler, two Identification Services members, Operations Officer and other administrative positions.

Calls from the public are prioritized, Priority 1 being the most urgent all the way to Priority 4, which is the least urgent. Many of the Priority 1 and 2 calls for service for the General Duty membership require a minimum of two members to attend, these usually involve violence, threats of violence, an urgency to protect life and property and often mental health calls. The additional member response to these calls leaves less time for members to investigate their own files and complete the extensive disclosure process required by the Courts. It also creates a delayed response for attending other calls for service received from the public and limits the member's ability to complete proactive patrols and proactive traffic enforcement. Often there is a backlog of files for members waiting for a member to become available, even though the file they are currently working on is still under investigation.

The policing environment is rapidly changing especially with new technology and the rules of disclosure to the Courts. Police are always adjusting to Case Law where mandated disclosure obligations have posed logistical and time constraints for the police during the criminal justice process. Documenting and efficiently disclosing large quantities of information is an onerous task for the members as well as the need to complete judicial

authorizations on many of the files that the members hold. The additional work on files takes time and as a result takes the members off the road, becoming unavailable to attend calls for service.

The Opioid crisis in BC and mental health calls have also brought additional demands on the police where police are now often called to ensure the safety of other first responder personnel. These files often require at least a two-member response and can lead to apprehension under the Mental Health Act. These apprehensions usually include the member transporting the client to the hospital to be seen by a physician and often takes many hours to resolve.

In order to continue to provide a high quality level of police response, ensure proper investigations, maintain officer safety and promote well being, an increase in police officers is being requested to be considered as a Service Level Adjustment in the 2023 Budget.

The original intention was to ask for four additional police officers, in total. One officer per General Duty watch (A,B,C,D). Like many police agencies, the RCMP is struggling to recruit new applicants, resulting in a lack of officers. As Vernon has a 96% roadable rate and other jurisdictions are struggling to get members, those areas become priorities for the RCMP to staff. The Superintendent does not believe four members would be provided within the one year and therefore asking for two RCMP member positions to be considered for the 2023 Budget. A second request would be done for an additional two positions in the 2024 budget consideration.

Should council support the request for funding for two RCMP members, Administration would bring forward a Service Level Adjustment during the 2023 Budget Deliberations, for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the memorandum titled "Additional RCMP Regular Member Increase for 2023 Budget" dated August 9th, 2022 respectfully submitted by the Officer in Charge of Vernon North Okanagan Detachment;

AND FURTHER, that Council direct Administration to bring forward a Service Level Adjustment for consideration during the 2023 budget deliberations for two Regular Members of the RCMP at a fully loaded cost of \$414, 000 to be funded through taxation. (\$460, 000 before 10% Federal payment).

Respectfully Submitted,



Shawna BAHER, Supt.
Officer in Charge, Vernon North Okanagan Detachment