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(Manning, AB)**

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## Town of Grimshaw firmly opposes development of provincial police force

Kristin Dyck

**T**own of Grimshaw has joined the growing list of municipalities who are standing firm in their support of the ROMP.

This sudden and vocal support of the RCMP has come about as the result of the United Conservative Party's decision to explore the idea of re-establishing its own provincial police force—something that has not existed in Alberta since 1932.

While provincial police forces exist in both Ontario and Quebec, Mayor Bob Regal said he hoped the letter he signed on behalf of Council made it abundantly clear that “we do not want to change.”

“As a municipality we are not prepared to bear the additional costs that will inevitably result if the transition toward an Alberta Provincial Police force is followed through with,” wrote Regal. “The Town of Grimshaw has a great, collaborative relationship with the members of the Peace Regional RCMP Detachment, which includes regular meetings and updates. Council’s ability to work with the RCMP and express our concerns has resulted in an increased community polic-

ing presence.”

The idea for the development of a provincial police force came about following the release of a report in May, 2020, from Alberta’s Fair Deal Panel. The panel expressed that while many Albertans appreciate their local RCMP, Albertans have also expressed frustration with the bureaucracy of the RCMP, specifically regarding the frequency in which officers are transferred to another town.

The Province then commissioned Price-waterhouseCoopers LLC to complete a report detailing whether a provincial police service was in the best interest of all Albertans. This report was expected to be complete by April 30.

On April 29, the National Police Federation, which represents 3,500 RCMP members in Alberta, called on the province to share the details of this \$2 million report. As of mid-May, the report had yet to be made public.

Currently, the federal government provides about \$160 million in annual funding towards the RCMP in Alberta. A provincial police force would forfeit

these funds causing taxpayers to absorb the difference.

Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Kaycee Madu has said that Alberta will only pursue a provincial police force if it will enhance community policing without imposing additional costs onto municipalities.

“They don’t have an actual cost estimate of what the changeover would be,” said Regal at the May 12 Grimshaw council meeting.

Grimshaw’s letter joins letters from the Towns of Morinville, Magrath, Edson, Didsbury, the Counties of St. Paul, and Paintearth, among others.

The National Police Federation conducted their own survey of both rural and urban Albertans in October, 2020. The results of their survey indicated that 70 per cent of Albertans have a favourable impression of RCMP officers and that 81 per cent of residents in RCMP-served communities are either satisfied or very satisfied with RCMP policing.

There are currently seven municipalities

in Alberta that utilize their own municipal police service: Calgary, Camrose, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Lacombe, and Taber. However, Grimshaw is standing firm in their opinion that the Town is not prepared to step away from the RCMP.

“The Town of Grimshaw encourages the province to abandon efforts to implement a provincial police force and to refocus on working with the RCMP to achieve better outcomes in the fight against crime in Alberta,” wrote Regal.