

Methodology:

Results are based on a dual-mode online and telephone survey conducted from May 24 to May 31, 2023, among 966 adults in Surrey.

The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in Surrey.

The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.1 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

Thinking about the way things are going these days in British Columbia, to what extent would you say the province as a whole is on the right track, or the wrong track?

- More than half of Surrey residents (55%) say B.C. is on the right track, while 45% think it is on the wrong track.

Now thinking about the B.C. provincial government, to what extent would you say it is on the right track, or the wrong track?

- More than half of Surrey residents (53%) think the B.C. government is on the right track, while 47% say it is on the wrong track.

What would you say are the three most important issues facing British Columbia today?

- The issues that get the most mentions from Surrey residents are cost of living/affordability/inflation (68%), health care (47%), housing/price of real estate (39%), crime/public safety (29%) and homelessness (24%).

How concerned are you about crime...?

- More than three-in-four Surrey residents are “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about crime in their city (90%), in the province overall, outside of Surrey (79%) and in their neighbourhood (76%).

Do you agree or disagree with the transition from RCMP policing in Surrey to the Surrey Police Service?

- Just over two-in-five Surrey residents (42%) agree with the transition, while just under half (46%) disagree.
- The transition is popular among residents aged 18-to-34 (65%) and aged 35-to-49 (50%) but drops among those aged 50-to-64 (22%) and those aged 65+ (29%).

Are you aware the City of Surrey initiated a transition from RCMP policing services to the Surrey Police Service, which has now hired more than 390 people, including 330 officers?

- More than four-in-five Surrey residents (82%) are aware of the transition's initiation.

Are you aware the current Surrey Mayor is advocating for disbanding the Surrey Police Service and returning to RCMP policing services?

- More than four-in-five Surrey residents (84%) are aware of the mayor's advocacy.

Please say if you agree or disagree with the following reasons to keep the RCMP in Surrey...

- Three-in-four Surrey residents agree with one reason: The RCMP is a proud Canadian institution and an important symbol of our national identity (75%).
- Agreement is lower—but still reaches a majority—on all other reasons tested: The current Surrey Mayor was elected on a promise to keep the RCMP, and we should respect the will of Surrey voters (67%), The RCMP has done a good job of keeping Surrey safe from crime. If it's not broken, don't fix it (66%), Policing in Surrey is a decision for Surrey residents. The B.C.



government should not meddle in this decision (65%), The transition to a municipal police force is too costly for Surrey residents. It should be stopped and reversed now to prevent wasting more money (62%), The Surrey Police Service is a failed and unnecessary experiment that was created through a flawed and secretive process (61%), It does not matter that the BC government is willing to pay for the difference of transitioning to the Surrey Police Service (also 61%), The cost savings of keeping the RCMP outweigh the cost of reversing the transition (58%), and RCMP staffing challenges outside of Surrey are not an issue for Surrey residents (56%).

Please say if you agree or disagree with the following reasons to continue moving to the Surrey Police Service...

- Majorities of Surrey residents agree with three reasons: Surrey has already hired hundreds of staff and spent millions of dollars on the transition to a municipal police force (61%), Surrey Police Service officers are being recruited from the local community—they will be more rooted in the community they serve (52%), and The RCMP has significant recruiting challenges right now. With 1,500 vacancies across BC, we cannot afford to pull officers away from understaffed detachments across B.C. (51%)
- Agreement is lower—and short of a majority—on all other reasons tested: Continuing with the transition will save Surrey residents \$72 million in severance costs, which would result from disbanding the Surrey Police Service (46%), The B.C. government will pay for extra costs related



to the transition—\$30m per year, \$150m over five years (also 46%), The Surrey Police Service will give Surrey residents more control over our policing than the RCMP, which is based in Ottawa (also 46%), Continuing the transition to the Surrey Police The whole issue is a mess, but we need to move on and put this difficult time behind us. The best path forward is keeping the Surrey Police Service (44%), Service is the best way to ensure public safety (40%), Surrey crime rates are rising—the RCMP has NOT done a good job of keeping Surrey safe from crime (also 40%), The Director of Police Services report makes it clear that backtracking to RCMP risks reducing police presence in other regions (39%), and Transitioning back to the RCMP in Surrey will compromise safety across B.C., including in Surrey, as well as in rural and Indigenous communities (38%).

Based on what you know, do you agree or disagree with the transition from RCMP policing in Surrey to the Surrey Police Service?

- Surrey residents are split on this question: 44% agree with the transition, while 46% disagree and 10% are undecided.
- Respondents of Indian descent are more likely to agree with the transition (63%) than those of European heritage (35%).
- On a regional basis, agreement with the transition is highest in Fleetwood (53%), followed by Whalley / Centre (49%). South Surrey (40%), Newton (39%), Guildford (38%) and Cloverdale (35%).



Please say if your opinion toward Surrey policing has changed during the past month...

- Just under two-in-five Surrey residents (39%) are more likely to side with the RCMP option now, while 22% prefer the SPS and 34% say their views have not changed in the past month.

Please say if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Surrey policing issue is a mess, and we need to move on. I just want this issue over, no matter what gets decided in the end."

- Almost two thirds of Surrey residents (64%) want this issue over, no matter what gets decided in the end.

Which of the following is closest to your view?

- Just over two-in-five Surrey residents (42%) think that, even if Surrey residents bear the full costs of disbanding the Surrey Police Service, Surrey should keep the RCMP, while a similar proportion (39%) believe that now that the B.C. government is paying for the cost difference, Surrey should continue moving to the Surrey Police Service.

Some people say that if a solution can't be found, then the question of policing in Surrey should be put to a referendum. In your opinion, is a referendum on Surrey policing a good idea or a bad idea?

- More than three-in-five Surrey residents (61%) think a referendum is a good idea, while 18% believe it is a bad idea.

Some people say that if a solution can't be found, then the question of policing in Surrey should be put to a



referendum. In your opinion, is a referendum on Surrey policing a good idea or a bad idea?

- More than half of Surrey residents (55%) think a referendum would be a good approach because it is only up to Surrey residents to decide, while 28% believe a referendum would be a bad approach because the impacts will be felt outside of Surrey, and a referendum could increase conflict between Surrey residents.

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Methodology:

Results are based on a dual-mode online and telephone survey conducted from January 14 to January 19, 2023, among 704 adults in Surrey.

The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in Surrey.

The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.7 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

What are the top issues facing Surrey residents today?

- The most important issue for Surrey residents remains cost of living and affordability (43%, +1 since October 2022), followed by crime and public safety (20%, +1) and housing prices and real estate (15%, =).
- Fewer Surrey residents are primarily worried about health care (8%, -1), gas prices (4%, -2), addiction and the opioid crisis (3%, -1), jobs and the economy (3%, +2) or the impact of climate change (2%, unchanged).

Are you aware that the City of Surrey is currently transitioning from RCMP policing services to having its own municipal police force, and has already hired 350 people including 150 officers?

- Practically nine-in-ten Surrey residents (87%, -1) are aware of the transition from the RCMP to a municipal police force.
- Awareness is highest among residents aged 55 and over (97%) than their counterparts aged 35-to-54 (87%) and aged 18-to-34 (75%).

Do you agree or disagree with the transition from RCMP policing in Surrey to a municipal police force?

- Almost half of Surrey residents (49%, -3) disagree with the transition from the RCMP to a municipal police force, while more than a third (38%, +2) agree with it.

- Strong disagreement continues to outrank strong agreement by a large margin (27% to 15%).
- Disagreement with the transition rises with age, from 25% among those aged 18-to-34, to 57% among those aged 35-to-54 and to 64% among those aged 55 and over.
- On a regional basis, opposition to the transition is highest in Fleetwood (53%), followed by Cloverdale (52%), Whalley / Centre (51%), Newton (49%), Guildford (46%) and South Surrey (44%).

Do you believe the municipal government should be able to decide what type of police force will operate in their city so long as they can show it will ensure public safety?

- Two thirds of Surrey residents (68%, +1) think the municipal government should decide the type of police force that will operate in the city, while one-in-four (24%, =) disagree.
- Majorities of residents of all age groups agree with letting the municipal government decide: 71% among those aged 18-to-34, 67% among those aged 35-to-54 and 65% among those aged 55 and over.

There are competing analyses and opinions regarding how much a new police force would cost Surrey taxpayers. Some officials in Surrey say the new police force will cost the City \$235 million over five years, and the City would need to charge residents a one-time 55% tax increase to pay for it. Other Surrey officials say the \$235 million over five years claims are exaggerated to encourage a move back to the RCMP, and that the



municipality could spread the full cost to taxpayers for the new police force over a number of years. Thinking about these statements, which is closest to your opinion?

- Two-in-five Surrey residents (40%) believe the new police force will cost \$235 million over five years, while three-in-ten (31%) think the \$235 million over five years claims are exaggerated and 29% are not sure.
- Agreement with the cost estimate rises to 46% among those aged 55 and over, 42% among women and 48% among residents of Cloverdale.

The newly elected mayor and council have promised to stop the transition and move back to the RCMP. Thinking about this, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Almost half of Surrey residents (49%, +4) disagree with the notion of staying the course and complete the transition because of hirings and expenditures.
- Fewer than half of Surrey residents (48%, -3) think a municipal police force with a locally appointed board will give the municipal government more control.
- Almost three-in-five Surrey residents (57%, -2) disagree with the notion that the RCMP is not doing a good enough job protecting people in Surrey and we should continue with the transition to a dedicated municipal police force.
- Fewer than three-in-five Surrey residents (59%, +2) think the RCMP has done a good job protecting



people in Surrey and it's too risky to the safety of Surrey residents to transition to municipal police force.

- More than three-in-five Surrey residents (62%, +1) refer to the transition as unnecessary and a waste of money and want to stop it and reverse it to prevent wasting more money.
- More than half of Surrey residents (55%, =) think the cost savings going forward of keeping the RCMP outweigh the cost of reversing the transition.

Some people say the provincial government should only approve a decision to reverse the transition if Surrey's City Council can present a plan of how they will ensure public safety. Others say that this is a local decision, and the provincial government should approve what the council decides to do. Thinking about this, which one of these statements is closest to your own point of view?

- More than half of Surrey residents (56%, -2) think the province needs to assess and approve a safety plan, while just over three-in-ten (30%, -1) believe the province should support the council's choice.

CONCLUSIONS

- a) Practically half of residents (49%) now feel that staying the course and completing the transition is the wrong course of action. This is a four-point increase since October 2022.



- b) Residents are more likely to believe that the \$235 million assessment is accurate than to consider it an exaggeration.
- c) There is no significant change on the level of awareness of the transition.
- d) Respondents continue to endorse the idea of the municipal government deciding what to do, but more than half believe the provincial government should assess and approve a safety plan if the transition is abandoned.

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