

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL
POLICING AND SECURITY BRANCH
DECISION BRIEFING NOTE**

PURPOSE: For **DECISION** of Mike Farnworth,
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

ISSUE: South Island E-Comm funding model.

DECISION REQUIRED/ RECOMMENDATION:

RCMP-policed municipalities in the South Island to pay 100% of police call-taking and dispatch costs effective April 2026; PSSG to request transition funding at 100% from 2021/22 – 2025/26 and plan for discussions with other local governments to address inequities in funding for this service across the province.

SUMMARY:

- On May 17, 2021 Cabinet approved the Cabinet Committee on Social Initiatives recommendation to proceed to Treasury Board (TB) to request transitional funding to ensure service continuity and support impacted municipalities to fully assume their funding responsibilities.
- Further discussions with municipalities have resulted in a review of funding model cost sharing ratios and transition options. The original transition plan included the eight South Island RCMP policed municipalities funding 100% of police call-taking and dispatch costs effective April 2024 (Colwood, Ladysmith, Langford, North Cowichan, North Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, View Royal).
- Key drivers in assessing other options include fairness and inequity in policing costs in other regions of the province, the impact these additional costs will potentially have on public safety in the affected municipalities, and financial impacts to municipalities as they recover from COVID-19
- Direction is required to inform the Ministry's funding request in the TB submission for *Budget 22*, which tentatively require signed submission by October 8, 2021, and to reconvene discussions with municipalities in September 2021.

BACKGROUND:

- On March 25, 2021, South Island Mayors requested a meeting to express concerns and further discuss the decision communicated by Policing and Security Branch (PSB) in December 2020 to transition funding for police call-taking and dispatch services provided by E-Comm to their respective jurisdictions.
- Prior to the West Shore Operational Communication Center (OCC) consolidation into South Island Police Dispatch Centre, the Province had been able to fund police call-taking and dispatch as part of the services provided by the Provincial RCMP OCCs at a 70/30 cost share with Public Safety Canada. However, with the change in service

provider from the RCMP to E-Comm in the South Island in early 2019, Public Safety Canada argued that dispatch services no longer fall under the Policing Service Agreements, and that municipalities would be 100% responsible for police dispatch costs.

- The South Island funding transition is a larger transition of service provisions and responsibilities under the Municipal Police Unit Agreement (MPUA) where telecommunications are the responsibility of the municipality.
- On March 31, 2021, PSB staff sent E-Comm's cost estimates to the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) of the eight affected municipalities, while the Ministry had been taking steps internally to secure transitional funding prior to communicating additional information.
- PSB had established a transition plan that included the Province paying 100% of costs in 2021/22, and contributing 70% in 2022/23, 35% in 2023/24, with municipalities being responsible for 100% of costs starting April 2024. Costs will be allocated based on an ECOMM formula which is based on established resources in each municipality, which provides a fair and transparent cost allocation.
- At the end of the transition period, the RCMP-policed municipalities on the South Island would be in line with independent municipal police departments which currently pay for these services at 100%. However, South Island rural and unincorporated areas will continue to fall under the Provincial Business Line and paid for by the Province at the 70:30 cost share.
- A May 10, 2021 meeting between Minister Farnworth and the Mayors from the eight RCMP-policed municipalities in the South Island highlighted the following key issues with the funding transition:
 - timing of the transition and economic and fiscal impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on municipal budgets as well as other policing cost increases; and
 - governance and South Island representation on the E-Comm Board; and revenue sources for local governments e.g., Cannabis revenue.
- Following the May 10th meeting, PSB staff were requested to meet with the municipalities to discuss options.
- On June 25, 2021, a meeting was held with the municipal CAOs, where PSB staff explained the following:
 - Throughout the transition the RCMP did not raise cost implications as a forthcoming issue when the service provider changed to E-Comm.
 - Both the Province and RCMP Westshore were under the impression that the 70/30 Provincial/Federal cost share would continue.

- Explaining Public Safety Canada's stance that a change in service provider for call-taking/dispatch services become the responsibility of the municipality as per the Police Service Agreements.
- Acknowledging the Ministry's delays in communicating all relevant information, and
- Discussing municipal concerns raised including the initial transition plan and inequities in municipal policing costs, which resulted in a commitment by PSB and all CAOs to work through the issues and reconvene in September.

DISCUSSION:

- In correspondence and discussions with the Mayors and CAOs, UBCM, Local Government Contract Management Committee (LGCMC), and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, PSSG has acknowledged:
 - The unexpected position taken by Public Safety Canada;
 - Local government concerns and the impacts of other public safety related initiatives that have cost implications for municipalities, such as response to homelessness, and RCMP unionization implications;
 - Local government feedback on timing of the transition, and concerns with lack of early notice;
 - The fairness and inequity of other RCMP-policed municipalities still falling under the 70/30 cost-share with the federal government (OCC's in Courtenay, Prince George, Kelowna) as well as Squamish;
 - The federal government's indication that they will continue to contribute to the cost-share for RCMP OCC police dispatch services elsewhere in BC and there are currently no plans to consolidate the remaining RCMP OCCs, meaning that existing RCMP OCCs will remain in operation and continue to be funded by the Province and Federal government.
- Given concerns raised, this note includes two additional options for consideration. These options will result in additional cost implications for PSSG identified below and the approved option will form the basis for the request to Treasury Board for transitional funding

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONSIDERATIONS:

- The following FN communities are located in the identified municipalities: Songhees FN and Esquimalt FN (Westshore detachment); Cowichan FN (North Cowichan); Chemainus FN (Ladysmith); Pauquachin FN, Tsartlip FN, Tsawout FN and Tseycum FN (North Saanich); T'Souke FN (Sooke).
- Rural areas with populations under 5,000 will continue to fall under the Provincial Police Service.

OPTIONS:

Option 1:

Delay transition to 2024/25 [Recommended]

- PSSG to continue to fund 100% of dispatch costs until March 31, 2025. Transition of funding to the eight South Island municipalities will commence 100% on April 1, 2025.
- This option will require year-end Contingencies access for 2021/22 and the following Treasury Board (TB) funding request as part of the *Budget 22* process.

in \$Millions	FY 21/22	FY 22/23	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Year-End Contingencies Access	4.031	-	-	-
<i>Budget 22</i> Reqeust	-	4.754	4.954	5.165

- The South Island funding transition would be the first step in a larger transition of service provision and responsibility under the terms of the MPUA in the province and will form part of future government decision-making and discussions with stakeholders going forward.

Pros:

- Indicates governments commitment and support to affected RCMP-policed municipalities that are already facing increased costs.
- Aligns with implementation of recommendations from the Special Committee on reforming the *Police Act*
- Allows PSB the time needed to plan and advance discussions on inequities in police funding of OCC's province wide.
- Expected buy in and positive reaction from the eight South Island RCMP- policed municipalities
- Aligns with PSSGs (DSG's office) work to examine E-Comm service delivery.

Cons:

- Significant financial pressure as PSSG will be responsible for subsidizing police dispatch for five years.
- Negative reaction expected from the remaining municipalities that receive services from RCMP OCCs and Squamish.
- No ability to risk manage if TB funding request is not approved.

Option 2:

Province transitions to the following: paying 100% until March 31, 2024 and starting fiscal 24/25 (April 1, 2024) South Island municipalities agree to pay 30%

- This option will require year-end Contingencies access for 2021/22 and the following TB funding request as part of the *Budget 22* process.

in \$Millions	FY 21/22	FY 22/23	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Year-End Contingencies Access	4.031	-	-	-
<i>Budget 22</i> Reqeust	-	4.754	4.954	s.16; s.17

Pros:

- The financial impact on the eight municipalities may be more palatable.

Cons:

- No ability to risk manage if TB funding request is not approved.
- Inequities in the remainder of the province will remain, and the South Island municipalities will express concerns.
- Municipalities may not sign contract with ECOMM unless the province can guarantee future initiative to transition all municipalities over 5000 population paying for dispatch services.

Option 3: Original transition plan

- The Province would contribute 100% in 2021/22, 70% in 2022/23, 35% in 2023/24, with municipalities being responsible for 100% of municipal costs in 2024/25. Municipal contributions will be 30% in 2022/23; 65% in 2023/24; and 100% as the transition completes in 2024/25
- This option will require year-end Contingencies access for 2021/22 and the following TB funding request as part of the *Budget 22* process.

in \$Millions	FY 21/22	FY 22/23	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Year-End Contingenceis Access	4.031	-	-	-
<i>Budget 22</i> Reqeust	-	s.16; s.17	s.16; s.17	s.16; s.17

Pros:

- Allows PSSG to implement a phased transition plan to support municipalities.
- Financial impact on PSSG less than in options 1 and 2.

Cons:

- Does not provide municipalities with sufficient notice to budget for these costs
- Municipalities will escalate concerns and continue to view this approach as downloading and as unfair.
- Will compound cost impacts of other public safety related initiatives that have cost implications for municipalities.
- s.13

OTHER MINISTRIES IMPACTED/CONSULTED:

- Municipal Affairs

DECISION:

OPTION NUMBER 1 APPROVED



Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

September 17, 2021

Date

PREPARED BY:

Sandra Sajko
Executive Director, Police Services
Policing and Security Branch
778 974-4302

APPROVED AUGUST 16, 2021 BY:

Billy Castillo
A/Executive Director, Finance
Policing and Security Branch
778 974-4718

APPROVED AUGUST 17, 2021 BY:

Wayne Rideout
Assistant Deputy Minister
and Director of Police Services
Policing and Security Branch
250 384-1100

APPROVED AUGUST 18, 2021 BY:

Mary Sue Maloughney
Acting Deputy Solicitor General