

CITY OF NANAIMO

BUSINESS CASE – Add 12 New RCMP Members (4 per year for 2025-2027)

CURRENT OVERVIEW

The City of Nanaimo (the City) has a population exceeding 107,000 people and has seen significant growth over the last couple of years. Increased growth in population results in higher requests for policing services. The City contracts with the RCMP for policing services and the current contract is for 163 members and one Crime Analyst who provide emergency response and police services 24/7. The RCMP are responsible for responding to all levels of criminal activity within the City including property crime, theft, traffic offences, controlled drug and substances, and various violent crimes.

The Nanaimo Detachment's Annual Performance Priorities for 2024-2025 are focused on:

- Crime reduction, related to repeat violent offenders, controlled drugs and substances, youth gang awareness, and road safety.
- Building trust, inclusive culture and reconciliation within the detachment and the community.
- Community Public Safety through specialized mental health support for individuals in crisis and the partnership between Island Health and Community partnerships.
- Recruitment and retention using employee wellness strategies and supporting the recruitment of a diverse, skilled and capable work group.

All of these detachment priorities align with the *RCMP 2024-2027 Strategic Plan: Our Next Chapter* and support direct community need around public safety.

Over the last couple of years Nanaimo has seen an increase in crimes related to mental health and the addiction epidemic which are best navigated by support from a team with specialized training in mental health strategies. Currently, Nanaimo has one mental health liaison officer and a dedicated mental health nurse who provides this support four days a week.

Foot and bike patrols of the downtown core have been a priority to address issues during high traffic periods. Their focus has been on Special Investigation Target Enforcement (SITE) to address repeat violent offenders through the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (REVOII) program through the BC Government.

Additionally, Nanaimo has seen a significant increase in homicides which require higher resource levels to address the complexity of the crime. The current backlog of investigative tasks related to prior homicides is approximately 3-5 years and does not account for future incidents.

Crime statistics are assessed regularly, and resources are adjusted to address higher priority needs. Due to the severity of crime, resources have been shifted to specialized units which has resulted in an inequity of staffing levels between front-line/general duty members and specialized units.

In the 2019-2023 Financial Plan, Council approved the addition of 15 new RCMP members over a five-year period starting in 2020. This plan allocated three new members in 2020, with a focus on mental health and crime reduction. The remaining twelve were added in the next four years in various assignments including the General Investigative Section (GIS), General Duty (front line policing), Crime Reduction, Serious Crime, Missing Persons, and Downtown Engagement. In addition, Council approved four new geographically targeted RCMP bike patrol members in 2022 as part of the 2022 – 2026 Financial Plan.

A breakdown of 2023 RCMP members, excludes Criminal Analyst, per population is provided below:

Members per Population – 2023

City of Nanaimo Contracted Strength 2023: 160 members	1 member/674 population
City of Nanaimo Actual Strength 2023: 141 members	1 member/764 population
Average of Six Comparable Municipalities 2023	1 member/758 population
National Average Across All Police Services 2023	1 member/562 population

BUSINESS ISSUE

Population growth, ongoing criminal activity and a rise in crime complexity and severity has resulted in burgeoning caseloads and demand for police services in the community. Crime associated with substance abuse and mental health continues to drive ongoing calls for policing support. Additionally, the increase in complexity of crime has also demonstrated the need for additional resources to support file investigation and conclusion, address community concerns and alleviate contingent fatigue.

The process to acquire additional RCMP members is a lengthy process that can take approximately 18 months. Pre-approved positions and additional staffing levels to match growth and pressure are keys to successfully addressing policing needs in Nanaimo. Despite the need for more resources, the current RCMP contract has no allowance for supplementary RCMP members beyond 2024, the last year where additional members were approved in the City’s Financial Plan.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Citizens, businesses and struggling individuals win with visible, engaged, highly trained and compassionate members policing throughout the community and region. The increase in available members will assist in response times to calls, balancing caseload and support quicker file conclusions, and enhance public safety and security throughout the community. Further RCMP resources provides for flexibility in coverage for more initiatives such as those identified in Council’s Strategic Framework and Initiatives, Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan and Strategy Alignment Report, Nanaimo Detachment Annual Performance Plan Priorities, RCMP 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, and City Plan.

Staffing priorities identified for 2025 include four additional RCMP members to support General Duty and mental health support. Three of those new members would be allocated to General Duty to balance out the watch numbers and provide additional front line policing support. The supplement to General Duty members will support an increased law enforcement presence in the community and serve to deter criminal activity, provide quicker response times, and help to alleviate the community’s growing anxiety over personal safety.

The fourth member requested for 2025 would be earmarked for the CAR 54/ mental health team. Additional member resources specializing in mental health will support the trend in calls related to mental health and substance abuse as they work in collaboration with a trained nurse. The Province and Island Health has dedicated an additional nurse for the program and provided all necessary training. The Nurse is ready to bring on board once a Mental Health Liaison officer has been approved and recruited. Having two mental health teams provides for seven day per week coverage, during daytime operational hours, for the direct hands-on approach to our citizens that suffer a myriad of mental health issues that overwhelm our community and medical society.

The RCMP operate in increasingly complex and a rapidly changing environment. Staying ahead of trends influencing community safety will be paramount to adapting and mitigating risks. Crime trends are

monitored regularly and resources adjusted according to the needs of the community and crime areas of higher priority. Additional RCMP member resources considered for 2026 and 2027 would be assigned based on identified policing needs and crime trends in the community and extended region of coverage.

Increases in member resources will likely result in the need to evaluate municipal staffing resources that support the RCMP. The 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan includes funding for a review of municipal staffing. The review is anticipated to result in a future business case for Council consideration for additional staffing.

OPTIONS

Option #1 – Add 12 RCMP Members (4 per year for 2025-2027)

Benefits:

- The additional members would provide sufficient capacity to alleviate overall contingent fatigue from escalating criminal activity resulting in untenable caseloads;
- Additional RCMP staffing levels to match growth and pressures are key to the future success of Nanaimo Policing to support a growing community.
- Contribute to reducing incidents; and
- Reinstate Nanaimo’s livability index as newsworthy, rather than the Crime Severity Index.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to operating budget.

Financial Analysis:

- The City is responsible for 90% of RCMP contract costs. The projected impact to the RCMP contract of four additional members per year for April 1, 2025, April 1, 2026 and April 1, 2027 is:
 - 2025 \$597,145
 - 2026 \$1,437,837
 - 2027 \$2,358,122
 - 2028 \$2,666,350
 - 2029 \$2,766,609
- The 2025 – 2029 Draft Financial Plan has budgeted the City’s share of the RCMP contract at 95% to minimize budget surplus due to vacancies. Based on the Draft Financial Plan and the City budgeting for 95% of our contract responsibilities the projected budget impact of the additional members is approximately:

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Budget Increase	\$ 567,288	\$ 1,365,945	\$ 2,240,216	\$ 2,533,032	\$ 2,628,278
Projected Property Tax Increase	0.38%	0.49%	0.51%	0.16%	0.05%

Option #2 – Council to Provide Alternative Direction

Council to provide a recommendation on additional RCMP members for 2025 – 2029 to address resourcing requirements presented during budget deliberations and direct staff to return to Council with the projected budget impact.

Option#3 – Maintain Status Quo

Benefits:

- No increase to operating budgets

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient capacity is available to address all the needs of the community and result in an overall decrease in services;
- Staff burn out and fatigue
- A realignment of priorities and determine which calls to not respond to;
- Increase in incidents and the Crime Severity Index for Nanaimo

RECOMMENDATION

Option #1 Add 12 additional RCMP members over 3 years starting in 2025