

# Report

**City of Merritt**  
**REGULAR Council Meeting**  
**February 5, 2025**

**File Number: XXXX**

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Cynthia White, Chief Administrative Officer  
**Date:** February 5, 2025  
**Subject:** RCMP Costs and 2025-2029 Financial Plan Preparation

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT Council direct staff to include \_\_\_\_\_ in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan preparation.**

**Background:**

As budget discussions have proceeded it has become very clear that the cost of municipal policing will continue to place a significant burden on rate payers. Currently, approximately 40% of our annual operating budget is related to policing costs. This is unlikely to change if policing is contracted to the RCMP or if a municipal police force is developed. In fact, it is more likely that policing costs will rise with a local municipal police force (as seen in Surrey).

Since 2019 the annual budget for the RCMP has doubled, going from \$1,792,637 to \$3,449,694.

Currently the City contracts 17 members for municipal policing, including the Staff Sergeant (Detachment Commander), 3 Corporals, 2 General Investigation Section Constables, 1 Community Policing Investigator Constable and 10 General Duty Investigator Constables. Currently there is one unfilled position and two members on extended leave. Also housed in the detachment are 6 provincial members, comprised of 1 Sergeant (Ops NCO) and 5 general duty Constables. The provincial allotment has one vacancy. There are also 4 Federal First Nation Policing members, and an 8-member Highway Patrol section.

As per the outcome of the community forum held in 2018 to increase the municipal detachment's ability to provide 24-hour policing, the allocation of members went from 15 to 17 in 2020. It is important to note that with the current authorized strength there are still insufficient members (10) to accommodate 24-hour policing and that the provincial general duty members augment the watches to a suitable staffing level to respond to the needs of the community and ensure officer safety. As a result of this, municipal members respond to calls outside the municipal boundaries and provincial members respond to calls within the municipal boundaries. Due to the current vacancies, the CPI Constable and GIS Constables are also augmenting the watches to maintain 24-hour policing.

Civilian support within the detachment consists of 5 municipally funded clerks and 2 federal public servants. There are also prisoner guards who are funded by the municipality.

The cost of members assigned to the municipal detachment are cost shared at 70% funded by the municipality and 30% funded by the federal government. Other costs such as prisoner guards and accommodation are not cost shared.

The City budgeted policing costs for 2025/26 are:

Item	Cost	Notes
Total Policing Cost 70% per capita & overtime	\$3,092,173	Per member \$181,892
Prisoner Guard @ 100%	\$184,470	
Accommodation Estimate @ 100%	\$151,481	As this is a shared detachment the municipality pays for 53.66% of the total costs
Annual Payments per Settlement Agreement Green Timbers Severance	\$7,946 \$13,624	
Total	\$3,449,693	

The RCMP provide an annual budget to the City based on their fiscal year (April 1 to March 31 annually).

The RCMP is undergoing an equipment modernization process, which will add additional costs to the municipal budget. The 2025/2026 costs are currently included in the member cost per capita. The below table shows the annual costs of this modernization process.

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Portable Ballistic Shields	\$8,898	\$8787			

Breaching Tools	\$694	\$712			
Hard Body Armour	\$17,559				
Extended Range Impact Weapons	\$4,382	\$4,328			
Pistol Modernization	\$48,620				
Conducted Energy Weapon	\$14,566	\$14,587	\$14,603	\$14,613	\$14,616
Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Tactical Gas Mask Carry Bag	\$107	\$107	\$107	\$107	\$107
Blue Force Tracking	\$1020	\$1020	\$1020	\$1020	\$1020
Police Vehicles	\$72,000	\$75,000	\$78,000	\$81,000	\$87,000
Vehicle Fit Up	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000
Body Worn Cameras	\$25,030	\$27,037	\$26,761	\$26,597	\$26,543

Other financial pressures are occurring related to collective bargaining between the RCMP and the National Police Federation, which is the union for non-commissioned members of the RCMP. In Q1 of 2025 the City will be invoiced \$400,074 for back pay as a result of the last round of collective bargaining. As it relates to wages, arbitration was required during the last round of bargaining which was completed in 2024 (covering 2021 to 2025). The next round of bargaining will occur forthwith as the current agreement will expire in 2025. At this time, we are uncertain about additional costs to the City as a result of this bargaining.

The City also staffs 5 municipal clerks that provide administrative support to the detachment. The cost of these positions for 2025 will be \$439,653, which has increased over \$135,000 from 2019.

### **Financial/Risk Implications**

The City has no influence on the cost of services, which have doubled from 2019 to 2025.

The City has no influence on whether the contracted positions will be filled. Currently there is a 20-25% vacancy rate across the province. Our municipal detachment is currently staffed at 16/17 members; however, 2 members are on extended leave, and we are uncertain if they will return to active duty. There are also 3 members who have been transferred but not released by the detachment commander until there are members available to replace them. In discussions with the detachment commander he indicated to Administration that it is unlikely staffing levels of the municipal detachment will exceed 15 members in the foreseeable future. Currently, there are 14 active

members in the municipal detachment. Members joining our detachment means that those awaiting transfer will be released to their new posts.

We do not have a clear understanding of the requirements for transcription for the new body cameras, which may result in additional clerk hours.

### **Options**

As a part of the process for the 2025 budget, Council was presented with 25 packages that could be considered to reduce the tax rate below 12%. Many of these packages included reducing the number of contracted municipal RCMP members. Upon further input from the detachment commander, it was determined that reducing the actual contracted number may not be in the best interest of the community. Alternatives to this are presented below to help guide the preparation of the budget bylaw:

1. Reduce the number of contracted members by an amount identified by Council. This may have a greater than anticipated impact on the actual number of filled positions based on the provincial vacancy rate.
2. Only budget for the number of members currently on strength. The recommendation would be for 15 members for a buffer in the budget should positions be filled. If the number of active members in the detachment remains at 14, this is an approximately 20% vacancy rate. For each member reduction Council would see approximately 1.6% decrease in the tax rate. Any surplus to be placed in a restricted reserve for protective services.
3. Continue to budget for an amount greater than 15 and any surplus in the budget to be placed in a restricted reserve for protective services. If additional positions are going to be staffed during the year, the detachment commander can make a request to the CAO for a budget amendment to be brought forward for Council consideration.
4. Continue to budget for 16 members and any surplus would be placed in a restricted reserve for protective services. With the funds from the 17<sup>th</sup> RCMP position, return the Economic Development position to the budget for 2025 and remain at 12% tax increase.
5. Continue to budget for 17 members and any surplus would be placed in a restricted reserve for protective services. Remain at a 12% tax increase.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Cynthia White**  
**Chief Administrative Officer**