



Minister's Office
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

April 6, 2020

Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard
Commanding Officer
RCMP "M" Division
4100 – 4th Avenue
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H5

Dear Chief Superintendent Sheppard,

Re: Yukon's Policing Priorities for 2020–21

I am writing to communicate Yukon's Policing Priorities for 2020–21.

The Policing Priorities I set for the territory each year as the Minister of Justice are based on feedback gathered by the Yukon Police Council along with advice contributed by the Department of Justice.

The Yukon Police Council engages a wide range of Yukon citizens and organizations throughout the year to ask about Yukoners' perceptions, experiences and concerns regarding policing in Yukon. Over the past year, the Yukon Police Council routinely heard about:

- the positive impact made through strengthening communication, collaboration, and information-sharing between organizations and services; and
- the continued need to address root causes that contribute to a sense of fear and mistrust of the RCMP within our population.

It is also of paramount importance to ensure that RCMP rely on objective data and evidence-based decisions to guide their engagement efforts and resource requests. This will enable our police service, supported by the Government of Yukon, to build a firm, evidence-based picture of current realities, trends, and the effectiveness of new programs implemented in our territory. As the RCMP "M" Division enacts the following five Policing Priorities for 2020–21, I urge you

to initiate tracking mechanisms and data gathering practices that directly connect the Division's needs for training and additional resources to objective data and statistics.

In last year's Policing Priorities letter, I emphasized the overarching objective to, "create the foundation for effective policing in Yukon." This year's priorities build on that objective by focusing on harm reduction, increasing supports for vulnerable persons and victims, supporting healing and the community reintegration of offenders, and working in collaborative partnership with First Nations and Communities.

1. Improve engagement to increase public trust

One of the strongest recurring themes heard by the Yukon Police Council over the past year is that there is, "an undercurrent of fear and mistrust of the RCMP among certain populations, both adult and youth, in Yukon."

We know that there are many examples of RCMP members in the territory who provide exceptional services. However, in order to address issues of public trust in our policing service we must ensure that there is consistency in the RCMP translating its core values of integrity, honesty, professionalism, compassion, respect and accountability into "ways of being" that inform their everyday interactions. I am directing our police service to consider this, and to keep in mind that the expression of these values underlie all of the Policing Priorities for 2020–21.

The primary objectives for this priority include:

- Trust – so that RCMP members are visible and approachable to the public.
- Proactive engagement – so that RCMP members commit to outreach, interactions with partner agencies, and collaboration with First Nations resulting in meaningful engagements that are focused on the needs of all Yukoners.
- Response – so RCMP members are able to contribute to a trauma-informed focus that supports unbiased, respectful and culturally sensitive police response.
- Wellness – since police are exposed to some of the most challenging and traumatic events in the course of their work, the RCMP must advance self-care, mental health and member wellness strategies as being essential for all members of the RCMP.
- Public awareness – the RCMP must contribute to public education related to individual rights and responsibilities when interacting with the RCMP. This will help to promote safety and comfort during RCMP interactions. Education sessions should include information on how to make an effective complaint and how to offer comments about RCMP conduct.

2. Strengthen supports for vulnerable persons and victims of violence, and continue the implementation of SART services

The prevalence of sexualized violence, gender-based violence, and racially-motivated violence is a reality that calls for continuous, serious, and informed attention. As the territory's police force, the RCMP's "M" Division provides important services when interacting with victims of violence and those more vulnerable to violence because they are Indigenous, elderly, women/girls, children/youth, members of the LGBTQIA2+ community, low-income, dealing with addictions, and/or dealing with mental health challenges.

The primary objectives for this priority include:

- Continuing to implement the Government of Yukon's Sexualized Assault Response Team (SART) in Yukon communities, including training for front line RCMP members who are investigating sexualized assault.
- Strengthening Yukon's existing support network for vulnerable persons through increased coordination and cooperation with relevant government departments and non-government organizations. Possibly implementing a case management or situation table approach (in the spirit of FOCUS, the Forum for Collaboration and United Services) as a tool to this end.
- Engaging with youth and working collaboratively with partners to recognize and increase support for children and youth who may be vulnerable to violence, child exploitation, or the influence of organized crime.
- Fostering recognition within the RCMP that a consistent culture of compassionate and trauma-informed interaction with vulnerable persons and victims is necessary to address the undercurrents of fear and mistrust related to the RCMP.

3. Foster meaningful relationships with First Nations, including Elders, and throughout the communities

Moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation with Yukon First Nations is critical. Given the difficult history that exists between the RCMP and Indigenous Peoples, a strong, genuine, and continuing focus on increasing trust and building positive relationships between our territorial police service and our First Nations is essential to successful policing and improved public safety within the territory.

Our government's commitment to reconciliation is reflected in part through the growth of community-based programming, as demonstrated by the implementation of community safety plans in partnership with Kwanlin Dün and Selkirk First Nations. Community safety planning is a facilitated approach to identifying and addressing local safety concerns that puts the safety and well-being of our communities back in the hands of people who live there. RCMP participation in ongoing community safety planning processes offers an excellent opportunity for First Nations leaders, RCMP members and community citizens to work toward a locally tailored, culturally informed, and relationship-based approach to Yukon policing.

The primary objectives for this priority include:

- Strengthening lines of communication between First Nations, community members and the RCMP to ensure that the delivery of policing services is professional, dedicated and responsive to the needs, traditions and cultures of Yukon First Nations.
- Engaging partner First Nations to develop meaningful policing priorities for each community participating in the First Nations Policing Program.
- Including First Nations in the screening processes for RCMP members who are going to communities, and ensuring that new police officers receive a community orientation delivered in collaboration with First Nations, community leaders and other local stakeholders.
- Supporting RCMP members in all detachments to contribute to community safety planning processes undertaken by their communities.
- Refining the RCMP's role to help maintain healthy, safe communities; alongside other community supports such as the auxiliary policing program, community safety officers, community safety guards, and the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods unit (SCAN).

4. Continue enforcement efforts to combat serious, drug-related, and organized crime

Yukon has seen an increase in crime, victimization, and deaths – including homicides – linked to the opioid crisis and the influx of criminal groups into the territory. The growing presence of organized crime and increasing violence related to the drug trade are serious issues that require an effective and specialized response.

The primary objectives related to this priority include:

- Enhancing the response to, and investigations of, violent crime.
- Enhancing the response to, and investigations of, territorial crime connected with the drug trade and/or criminal groups.
- Collaborating with other agencies such as the City of Whitehorse Bylaw Services, the Government of Yukon's SCAN Unit, and First Nations Community Safety Officer programs to develop proactive approaches that combat organized crime.

5. Increase the use of restorative justice practices in Yukon.

There have been recurring calls, in this and previous years' Policing Priorities, to heal historical relationships between the RCMP and First Nations and to address the over-representation of Indigenous people in Yukon's criminal justice system. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls both recommend continued support for community-based approaches such as restorative justice as part of the solution to these

challenges. Yukon communities have also asked for increased access to restorative justice processes.

A restorative justice model shares the responsibility for justice with community leaders and community members. With properly supported implementation, restorative justice has the potential to address community needs and to offer a more compassionate and community-based approach to justice that holds offenders accountable, repairs harm, and reduces recidivism.

The primary objectives for this priority include the following.

- Ensuring that we explore options for pre-charge diversion in all communities, and that the RCMP consider diversion whenever appropriate community supports are in place.
- Engaging with First Nations Community Justice workers proactively, in a manner that enables them to collaborate in community-led restorative justice initiatives.
- Working towards the Government of Yukon's commitment to increasing the use of restorative justice practices by five per cent.

This year's Policing Priorities shift our focus to implementing solutions that reduce violence, support victims, and build community capacity so that all Yukoners benefit from stronger and safer communities.

I look forward to reviewing the Annual Report for 2019–20 in July, and to receiving updates from the Department on how the Policing Priorities are implemented in the upcoming year.

Thank you for your dedication to enforcing the law, serving as our territorial police force, and supporting community safety.

Yours truly,



Tracy-Anne McPhee
Minister of Justice and Attorney General