Resource Review of the Penticton RCMP Detachment,
Penticton Fire & Rescue, & Penticton Bylaw &
Community Safety Officer Program

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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October 2022

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This resource review focused on the RCMP, Fire & Rescue Services, Bylaws and Community Safety Officers in the city of Penticton. The project was conducted during the period November 2021 and May 2022. It involved the administration of a community survey, focus groups sessions with community stakeholders, and interviews with key resource persons. Documentation on the operations of these agencies was also accessed and reviewed. The review proceeded on the basis of two fundamental principles: (1) that police, fire and rescue, bylaw and community safety officer services should ensure that existing resources are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible; and, (2) that any new resources be targeted for specific areas where analysis has revealed there are gaps in service delivery, with metrics to assess the impact of additional resources. The overall objective of the project was to generate materials that will assist municipal council and the City in their efforts to ensure the safety and security and quality of life for all community residents.

### The Community

The results from the community survey (N = 815) and contributions from community members in focus groups revealed a high level of concern about crime and safety in the community. Most persons do not feel that it is safe to be downtown in Penticton at night. Women feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night. There are concerns about the efficacy of the Community Safety Officer (CSOs) program and about a misalignment between what community residents would like the RCMP to be doing, e.g., high visibility policing and community policing, and what they feel police are actually doing.

There is, among community residents, considerable expertise that could be mobilized to address the challenges in the community. This would best be accomplished with the creation of a Community Safety and Well-being plan (CSWB).

### The Police

The project team found that the Penticton (also referred to as ‘the City’) detachment has a strong senior management team as well as dedicated and professional sworn and civilian members. An overall impression of the project team, however, is that time and events have caught up with the municipality. Today the City is considered to have what has been traditionally referred to as “big city” challenges. A review of the materials gathered for this report in interviews, focus groups, and statistical analysis of the detachment’s data resulted in the identification of several significant gaps in the detachment’s capacities. This includes the ability to adequately respond to demands for service, engage in proactive community engagement, develop strategic partnerships, and to implement effective crime prevention, crime attack, and crime response strategies. Chronic understaffing of sworn officers is also placing the mental health of officers at risk.

The civilian units in the detachment are well managed. This mitigates, somewhat, the increased workloads and stressors that are being experienced by personnel. A review of the units revealed the need for three additional positions.

At present, the Penticton Detachment has near zero community policing capacity and does very little proactive, problem-solving policing. Over 50% of the calls for service have a mental health component and many of these do not require the presence of a law enforcement officer. A major challenge for the detachment is calls for service related to issues in the downtown area of the City.

A key feature of the policing environment is the growing number of at risk and vulnerable persons, particularly in the downtown core of the City. The absence of a strong infrastructure of residential and community-based treatment facilities, programs and services is a disconcerting feature of the current landscape and this has a significant impact on the demands being made on the police.

The effective use of resources requires that the detachment develop a community policing plan. This would be a component of more broad community safety and a well-being plan. These plans can provide the framework for the delivery of police services as well as set parameters for police involvement in addressing the larger quality of life and social issues in the community. The community safety and well-being plan would identify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in addressing the challenges facing the municipality and facilitate the development of proactive, problem-solving approaches.

A tiered policing model, within which there is interoperability among bylaw officers, CSOs, and RCMP members provides the best opportunity to reduce the demands on patrol officers, improve their capacity to effectively respond to calls for service and investigate case files, and provide broader coverage in the community.

Any request for additional resources should be firmly grounded in data that indicate specific areas where there are gaps in the ability of the police service to fulfill its mandated and assumed responsibilities. It is incumbent upon the detachment to ensure that existing resources are being utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible and to demonstrate the impact of any additional resources via report backs to municipal council. It is not a best practice for municipal councils to provide “generic” resources. As one observer has noted, “The days of the blank cheque are over.” To this end, any additional resources provided to the Penticton RCMP detachment by the municipality should be targeted to specific areas.

The at-risk / high needs / vulnerable population in the area is growing. It will require a coordinated response involving all levels of the municipal and provincial governments. It also requires the development of a community safety and well-being plan that would identify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in addressing the challenges facing the municipality within a long-term, problem-solving framework.

### Fire & Rescue

In Penticton, as in other communities across North America, there has been a significant decrease in the number of structural fires. In 2021, they accounted for 1% of calls for service. Despite this, Fire and Rescue services continue to be focused on fire suppression. This is reflected in recruitment, training, equipment, and requests for additional resources. The majority of calls for service to the Penticton Fire and Rescue Service are medical, and a large majority of these are overdoses. Given the provincial underfunding of ambulance services, this is unlikely to change and may even accelerate with the adoption of safe drug supply policies and the decriminalization of possession of small amounts of drugs.

A challenge is to ensure that the city has proper fire protection while at the same time adapting the service to the reality of the demands for service. It is not a good return on investment (ROI) to send a pumper truck with three firefighters to a nosebleed or drug overdose. Fire and rescue services are adapting to the new reality and the recommendations in this report are designed to reflect this.

### Bylaw Officers & Community Safety Officers

Penticton Bylaw Services is a best practice, evidence-based agency that is exceptionally well-managed, makes a significant contribution to community safety, and provides an excellent ROI for the municipality. The municipality should continue funding support for the agency. No major changes are required in how officers are recruited, trained, and deployed.

The CSOs program was implemented in the absence of a business plan. As of Spring, 2022, the officers had no legal authority and were attempting to be both enforcement agents and to build relationships with vulnerable and at-risk persons. Reconciling these two roles may not be possible. The absence of any legal authority may have liability implications for the municipality. The results of the community survey revealed that residents have little idea of the mandate and role of the CSOs, and they have little confidence in these officers having an impact on the issues facing the community, particularly in the downtown core.

## REVIEW FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project’s findings and recommendations from the resource review are set out in the following tables.

RFR Table 1. Review Findings & Recommendations – The Municipality

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| The City does not currently have a Director of Community Safety who would coordinate the agencies, programs, and initiatives related to community safety. At present, there are five separate reporting lines to the Chief Administrative Officer. This can lead to siloing and the absence of a coordinated plan and effort. | Create the position of Director of Community Safety, modelled on the position of this title in Kelowna, Prince George, and other municipalities. The person in this position would be responsible for coordinating the City’s multi-faceted approach to community safety and lead the development of a community safety and well-being (CSWB) plan. |
| The City does not have a CSWB that would provide a framework for a collaborative effort by the municipality and the province to address changes in the community and to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently.  | The City, in collaboration with community stakeholders, including persons who are at-risk and vulnerable, should develop a CSWB plan. This initiative should be led by a newly appointed Director of Community Safety. |
| It appears that, at times (and in the case of the CSOs program) municipal council does not require detailed business plans for community safety initiatives that are requesting funding support. Such plans would include the rationale / objectives / performance metrics / outcome measures, an evaluative component, and a report back to council. | Any request for resources made to municipal council for police, Fire and Rescue, Bylaw officers and CSOs or new community safety initiatives should be accompanied by a detailed business plan, including an evaluative component and a report back to Council requirement. |
| Concerns were expressed by many community stakeholders that there was no plan for how the needs of vulnerable and at-risk persons would be met and how this interfaced with the community planning process.  | The City in collaboration with provincial agencies, should develop a strategic plan that sets out a framework for developing and sustaining programs and services for vulnerable and at-risk persons. This plan should be incorporated into the City’s overall planning process.  |
| There are gaps in service capacity in areas that, legislatively, are within the purview of the provincial government. This includes the provision of services for persons who are experiencing homelessness, addiction, and/or mental health issues.  | The City should consider, on a selective basis, funding initiatives to improve safety and security and the quality of life in the community. This includes funding a Peer Navigator position for the public library and hiring two crisis intervention workers who would respond to non-enforcement mental health calls for service similar to the CAHOOTS program in Oregon. |
| Municipalities across the province have, and are, developing innovative approaches to address the challenges associated with homelessness, addiction, and mental health.  | Review the initiatives taken by other municipalities in the province to address issues, including homelessness, addiction, mental health, and disorder. The municipalities of Kelowna, Vernon, and Maple Ridge have developed innovative approaches that could be studied.  |
| There is considerable potential for the municipality to develop collaborative partnerships with a wide range of community stakeholders to create innovative public safety initiatives.  | Engage in “outside the box” thinking and empower City staff to explore innovative sources of funding and partnerships. Explore collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders, including School District 67, Okanagan College, and the private sector. |
| The challenges facing the community are complex and multi-faceted. A coordinated effort involving the City and provincial agencies provides the best opportunity to successfully address the challenges and maximize opportunities for innovative initiatives.  | Every effort should be made to improve collaboration, coordination, and communication with provincial agencies, including Interior Health (IH) and BC Housing, while at the same time asserting the interests and priorities of the community. The creation of a CSWB plan would crystallize the priorities and capacities of the City. |
| The municipality does not have a plan to strengthen neighbourhoods so that residents can be involved in a substantive way in improving the quality of life in the community.  | The City should consider developing a plan to strengthen neighbourhoods. This plan could be a component of a CSWB plan.  |
| Community residents are a vital stakeholder in community safety and their experiences and perceptions are important considerations in the formulation of City policies and programs.  | Continue administration of annual community safety surveys to record and facilitate a response to trends in community perspectives and experiences.  |
| Provisions in the province of British Columbia Municipal Police Services Agreement give municipal councils a role in setting policing priorities for the community.  | Municipal council should ensure there is an ongoing dialogue between the city and the Officer in Command (OIC) of the detachment regarding policing priorities for the City. |
| Although beyond the scope of the review, private security can be a component of the Continuum of Public Safety in the community. | The City should develop a strategic plan for the effective and efficient use of private security and ensure interoperability with Bylaw officers, CSOs, and RCMP officers.  |
| There is some triaging of calls for service through online reporting, the referral of calls for service to Bylaws, and at the front counter of the detachment. The detachment has the highest level of online reporting in the province. However, the increasing number of calls for service has strained departmental resources and, in the case of the RCMP, officers responding to calls that are not enforcement related. The “See Something, Say Something” campaign has inadvertently contributed to this, with persons most likely to call the police. | The municipality should consider creating a 311 call centre that will refer calls to the most appropriate department or municipal agency. This will reduce the police call load.  |
| A common phrase that was used by many stakeholders in the community was that the municipality should have “the hammer and the heart”: holding persons accountable for their behaviour while at the same time ensuring that the resources were available to address the needs of persons experiencing homelessness, addiction, and/or mental health issues. | The municipality should ensure that there are resources for both enforcement and assistance. |
| A Continuum of Public Safety involving private security, bylaw, and community safety officers, as well as police officers would facilitate interoperability and increase their impact on community safety.  | The municipality, in collaboration with public safety partners, should create a Continuum of Public Safety document that will improve the interoperability, effectiveness, and efficiency of community safety initiatives. |
| There is currently limited interoperability between municipal public safety and service initiatives and the programs and services provided by the provincial government, in particular Interior Health. | The municipality should work with provincial agencies to develop a strategic plan to ensure interoperability of initiatives and the potential for collaborative programs and services. |

RFR Table 2. Review Findings & Recommendations – The Community

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| 79% of the population believes crime in Penticton has gone up / gone up a great deal. This aligns with the actual statistical increases in crime in the community. | This is a significant finding from the study and should be a priority for municipal council. Fear of crime has a significant impact on the quality of life in the community and to impact the tourism industry, which is a major source of revenue for the City. |
| Most people who completed the community survey feel unsafe / not at all safe in the City’s commercial Main Street area, shopping alone at night in the downtown core, or walking alone in the Lakeshore area. | A community safety plan should be developed involving a tiered policing approach (private security, Bylaw Enforcement Officers (BEOs), CSOs, and RCMP officers) to increase visibility in high trouble areas and to provide reassurance to residents and visitors. A primary objective of this plan is to ensure interoperability between public safety entities. |
| Compared to men (28%), women (62%) feel unsafe walking alone at night in their own neighbourhood. This reveals that it is not just the downtown area that is perceived to be dangerous. | Creating safe neighbourhoods should be a priority of municipal council. The strategies to accomplish this would be a component of a CSWB plan.  |
| Nearly one-third of women (29%) feel unsafe shopping alone downtown during the day and this figure increases to 80% of women who don’t feel safe shopping alone downtown at night.  | A CSWB plan provides the best opportunity to address the high levels of fear of crime and disorder, which are correlated with an increasing crime rate.  |
| The main reasons community residents don’t report crimes to the police is they did not think “anything would happen” (19%), the incident was too minor, or “the police were too busy with more important things.” | This is a common finding in victimization studies. A tiered response, in which there is interoperability between bylaws, CSOs, and RCMP members could increase crime reporting. |
| A high percentage of community residents feel there is duplication of services between fire and ambulance services. This is likely due to Fire and Rescue being dispatched to a high number of medical calls for service. Given the chronic underfunding of ambulance services by the provincial government, this is unlikely to change. | This report recommends that the City fund a Fire and Rescue rapid response unit. This will reduce wear and tear on the larger trucks.  |
| Community residents give the RCMP low marks for proactive engagement with the community. | Concerns about the police not being proactively engaged with the community should be taken seriously, as this can undermine police legitimacy and public confidence in the police. |
| Community residents lack information on public safety initiatives, including the community safety officer program. | The City should ensure that there is a robust communications strategy to keep citizens informed about public safety initiatives.  |
| The mental health of persons in the community and homelessness were the top two concerns of community residents going forward.  | For a variety of reasons, including gaps in provincial service delivery, the municipality should explore ways to increase its capacities to address these two issues. The recommendations in this report that the City fund a two-person mental health crisis team and a Peer Navigator for the library reflect this approach.  |

RFR Table 3. Review Findings & Recommendations – The Policing Environment

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| A distinguishing feature of the policing environment is tourism, which in the aftermath of COVID-19, will double the municipality’s population during summer months. This contributes to the already heavy workload of the officers and civilian support staff. | To ensure the safety of community residents and visitors, there must be interoperability between private security, Bylaw Officers, CSOs, and sworn officers. Uniform visibility and reassurance policing will increase feelings of safety and security.  |
| The challenges of homelessness, addiction, and persons with mental illness are placing increasing demands on the detachment, its officers, and civilians. | The detachment should continue its efforts to expand its capacity to engage in collaborative partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs) and other agencies and services to effectively respond to the needs of this vulnerable and at-risk population. The detachment should resist being drawn into resource-intensive areas that are within the mandate of the provincial government. |
| During the period 2017–2021:* Penticton had (and continues to have) a much higher level of calls for service and Criminal Code occurrences than other RCMP-policed municipalities.
* Total Criminal Code occurrences in Penticton increased by 37%.
* Officer criminal caseloads increased by 10% annually.
* There was a 34% increase in workload per member (case burden) when compared to an 8% average increase for all E Division (BC-RCMP) municipal detachments over 15,000 population.
* There was a 63% increase in violent crime case burden per member in Penticton between 2017 and 2021, compared to the BC-RCMP average of 36% for municipalities over 15,000 population.

The trend line provided by this report suggests that at this rate, Penticton municipal RCMP needs may continue to significantly outpace rural policing needs for the detachment, highlighting the needs for additional police resources if current policing practices continue, including no change to social-mental health related issues. | A multi-faceted approach is required to address the challenges being faced by the detachment. This report makes several recommendations designed to reduce the demands for service on the police, including the development of alternative response options. |

RFR Table 4. Review Findings & Recommendations – The Detachment

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| The sworn members and civilian employees in the Penticton Detachment are dedicated professionals who, in many instances, are unable to meet the service demands placed on them.  | Every effort must be made to provide the sworn members and civilian employees with the resources and strategies to be successful. Most notably, the detachment needs to regain its capacity for proactive community engagement and community policing. Recommendations set out in this report are designed to accomplish this. |
| A lack of resources to effectively respond to increasing service demands is having a significant impact on the mental health of sworn members and civilian staff. Approximately 20% of the sworn officers are on leave, 10% of whom have mental health related issues. Civilian staff are also challenged with the demands of their positions. | Sworn members and civilian support staff should be provided with the necessary resources to respond to the demands for service that have been documented in this report. Particular attention should be given to ensuing the mental wellness of sworn and civilian members of the detachment. |
| Although the detachment enjoys the support and confidence of the community, this may be at risk if crime rates keep increasing. All communities have a “tipping point” where residents feel unsafe and are concerned about the ability of the police to keep them safe. | There are several initiatives that the detachment, in collaboration with community stakeholders, can implement to increase citizens’ feelings of safety and security and their trust and confidence in the police. These are included in recommendations in this report. |
| The detachment is currently under-resourced and has difficulty meeting shift minimums. Officers are reluctant to take shifts on an overtime basis due to mental fatigue. This impacts the ability of the detachment to respond to service demands from the community, to development strategic partnerships with the community, and to implement and sustain effective crime prevention, crime suppression, and crime response strategies.  | This report contains specific recommendations to reduce the call load on officers. reduce the call load of officers. There are alternative response measures that can lessen the call demand on the detachment, including a 311 all centre, interoperability with bylaws, CSOs, and private security; and a robust restorative justice program.Innovative municipal approaches are required to address persons who are experiencing crises. |
| Civilian units in the detachment are experiencing increasing workloads which, if not effectively managed, can impact police operations and employee mental health.  | Four additional positions are recommended for civilian units in the detachment: two Operational Team Leads, one Records Clerk, and one Disclosure/Transcription Administrator.  |
| In contrast to the civilian members of the detachment, the Regular Members (sworn officers) have lower levels of morale and are less satisfied with the workplace culture. | The implementation of alternative call response options should lessen the workload of the sworn officers and provide them with more proactive time to do community-focused policing. |

RFR Table 5. Review of Findings & Recommendations – Community Policing

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| The detachment currently has virtually no capacity to do community policing, including proactive community engagement, police-community partnerships, crime prevention and problem-solving. Previously existing programs and units have been discontinued and officer resources directed to front-line call response.  | The detachment should develop a community policing strategy that would include prevention, enforcement, and the identification of current and potential collaborative partnerships. This strategic plan would be a component of a larger CSWB plan. The additional resources recommended in this report should be used in support of this effort. |
| The previous Community Support Response Team was disbanded.  | Funding should be provided for four sworn officer positions for a Community Policing Team. These officers would focus on community engagement and community policing. There are several models that could inform this, including the Neighbourhood Empowerment Teams used in the Edmonton Police Service and the Toronto Police Service Neighbourhood Police Officer program. These officers should be assigned to specific geographic areas of the City for sufficient periods of time to facilitate the development of police-community partnerships and neighbourhood-specific programs and interventions.  |
| Research studies have found that School Resource Officer (SRO) programs can have a significant impact on the quality of life in the school community, improve student and teacher morale, have a positive impact on student behaviour, and are valuable in identifying at-risk youth. A key feature of best-practice SRO programs is that the same officers remain in the program for an appreciable period of time. Best-practice SRO programs involve officers who have a special interest in youth and families.The detachment’s previous SRO program was highly valued by school administrators, teachers, and students.  | Funding should be provided for one SRO position to cover both high schools. An SRO officer should be selected who intends to remain in the program for several years and who is not intending to transfer in the immediate future. An effort should be made to select an officer for the SRO program who has a demonstrated interest in working with youth and families. During the summer months, the SRO would assist the Youth Liaison Officer (YLO).In addition, every patrol officer should identify a school which they will attend when available under an “adopt a school” program. The creation of alternative call response options should create the opportunity for patrol officers to have more proactive time in the schools.  |
| The detachment previously supported the position of Youth Liaison Officer (YLO). However, this position was collapsed and the officer assigned to frontline patrol. | Funding should be provided to re-instate the position of YLO.  |
| The detachment operates no community police offices, having closed one that was previously located downtown. There is a need for the detachment to develop a community outreach / engagement capacity. Police services have had success with mobile vans that can locate at events and provide high visibility. Some vans dispense hot chocolate in the winter and ice cream during the summer months. In many instances, these vehicles are donated by a service club or local car dealership. | Bricks and motor community police offices do not provide a good ROI. These offices are stationary, rely on walk-in traffic, and do not reach the larger community. The municipality in collaboration with the RCMP should explore acquiring a community policing van that would situate at events, in neighbourhoods, and in high pedestrian traffic areas.  |

RFR Table 6. Review of Findings & Recommendations – Police Response to Calls for Service

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| The detachment is experiencing increased calls for service.Given the growth projections for the City and the increasing numbers of tourists who come to Penticton, it is likely that the demands on the detachment will continue to increase. | The City should support efforts to develop alternative call response capacities to divert calls away from sworn officers that are best responded to by other trained professionals. The detachment currently responds to a high number of mental-health related calls that would be better managed be managed by a municipally funded mental health crisis intervention team and a PACT patrol unit. |
| Currently, all calls for service are dispatched by the communications centre. There is little or no triaging of calls for service. Officers are being dispatched to calls for service that do not require an enforcement presence and could more efficiently be responded to by non-enforcement personnel. A consequence is that patrol officers have little or no opportunity for proactive, community-focused policing.  | The detachment should establish a system for triaging calls for service, including developing interoperability with bylaw and CSOs and establishing a telephone response capacity. This tiered model of policing will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of bylaws, community safety officers, and sworn officers. |
| There is currently a restorative justice program that operates out of the RCMP detachment. The program has been beset by challenges that have limited its effectiveness as an alternative response option, including a high turnover of coordinators and a lack of referrals from sworn officers.  | Every effort should be made to strengthen the restorative justice program, including taking the necessary steps to increase officer referrals to the program. A former RCMP member has recently been hired as the RJ Coordinator and their efforts to increase officer and referrals from other sources should be supported.  |

RFR Table 7. Review of Findings & Recommendations – Addressing Needs of At-risk & Vulnerable Populations

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| Similar to their municipal and detachment counterparts across the province, Penticton RCMP are responding to an increasing number of calls for service involving at-risk and vulnerable persons. This includes persons who are homeless, mentally ill, and/or addicted. These increasing demands are due, in part, to downloading that has occurred due to the provincial government not providing adequate funding for mental health and social services, housing, treatment, and other services.  | The role of the detachment in responding to at-risk and vulnerable populations should be clearly set out in a CSWB plan. The police should not be the default for the failure of other agencies to provide sufficient resources to fulfill their legislated mandate.  |

RFR Table 8. Findings & Recommendations – Bylaws & Community Safety Officers

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| Penticton Bylaw Services is a best practice, evidence-based agency that is exceptionally well-managed, makes a significant contribution to community safety, and provides an excellent ROI for the municipality.  | This report makes no recommendations on how Bylaw Officers are recruited, trained, and deployed. |
| The CSOs program was implemented in the absence of a business plan. As of Spring, 2022, the officers had no legal authority and were attempting to be both enforcement agents and to build relationships with vulnerable and at-risk persons. Reconciling these two roles may not be possible.  | The City should consider pausing the hiring of any additional CSOs until the completion of a business plan that sets out the rationale for the program, the mandate and role of the CSOs, the parameters of their activities, and how the effectiveness of the program will be measured. |
| The CSOs’ absence of any legal authorities may have liability implications for the municipality.  | The City, in collaboration with the Manager of the Bylaw Services, should develop a proposal to the provincial government requesting Special Municipal Constable status for the CSOs. The document should set out the competencies and skill sets required of officers with that designation.  |
| Despite BEOs and the CSOs sharing the same building, there is limited interoperability between the two entities, which is having a significant impact on their effectiveness and efficiency.  | The Manager of Bylaw Services should develop an action plan to address the division and friction between the BEOs and CSOs and to foster interoperability.  |
| The results of the community survey revealed that residents have little idea of the mandate and role of the CSOs and little faith that the CSOs would have an appreciable impact on the issues in the community. | A communication plan should be developed in collaboration with the Manager of the Bylaw Manager to educate the community on the mandates and roles of BEOs and CSOs. This could be a component of the CSWB plan.  |

RFR Table 9. Findings & Recommendations – Fire & Rescue

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| The large majority of calls for service to which Penticton Fire and Rescue Service (PFRS) responds are not fire related but involve a medical occurrence, very often drug overdoses. On average, 1% involve a structural fire. That said, the PFRS must have the capacity to respond to low frequency, high impact events. The PFRS service has a duty of care to the community.The increasing demands for service being made on PFRS are in large measure the result of inadequate provincial emergency health services (EHS), most notably BCAS resources. This results in the municipality subsidizing a provincial responsibility.There is a seasonality dimension to the demands on PFRS, with the increased numbers of visitors to the community during the summer which is also the time of greatest risk of wildfires and increased marine-related calls.The increased demand load on PFRS is impacting the ability of the service to maintain a high standard of training and other service delivery, including building inspections. It is also impacting the mental health and well-being of fire and rescue personnel. | The PFRS should develop a strategic plan for resources and resource deployment that reflects the demands for service that are being made on the agency. The PFRS should collaborate with the municipality, Bylaw Services, the RCMP, and the ambulance service in the development of a framework that will increase interoperability among all the agencies.Municipal council should make representations to the provincial government to increase ambulance capacity in the City. One option would be for the municipality to invoice the provincial government for the expenses associated with PFRS responding to calls for service that are within the mandated purview of EHS and BCAS. |
| PFRS is dispatching large fire apparatus to medical calls, many of which are minor in nature or involve drug overdoses. This is not a best practice and does not provide a good ROI for the municipality.Many fire and rescue services deploy Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs) staffed by firefighters with paramedic or EMR training and this has proven to be more cost effective than dispatching large fire apparatus to non-fire calls. Although WorkSafe BC requires that there be four firefighters on scene to enter a burning premises, the regulations do not stipulate how these firefighters are to arrive on scene. | The municipality should provide funding for the creation and deployment of a RRV that can respond to non-fire and medical calls. This unit would be staffed by two firefighters with EMR training and be available on a 24/7 basis. This would also eliminate the need to fund an additional firefighter position for the large fire apparatus, as these personnel would be available to attend large structural fires requiring a minimum of four firefighters to enter a burning premises.The PFRS should submit a business plan to municipal council for funding a rapid response unit, including initial staffing requirements. |
| A major trend in Fire and Rescue services is cross-training firefighters to the EMR level.  | The municipality should consider providing funding for the Fire and Rescue Department to train all firefighters to the EMR level. The costs would be minimal and this additional capacity would provide a good return on investment. PFRS should submit a funding request to municipal council to support training all personnel to an emergency medical responder (EMR) level. |
| The primary focus of PFRS resource acquisitions and expenditures is on fire suppression, despite the decrease in the frequency of fire and the increase in other demands on the department. | PRFS should engage in a process of “re-identification” wherein it examines the actual demands being made on the department in comparison with how its resources are being expended. Best practices in other Fire and Rescue services in North America that have adapted to the new reality of demands for service should inform this process.  |

RFR Table 10. Findings & Recommendations – Crown Counsel

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| **FINDING** | **RECOMMENDATION** |
| A review of Crown Counsel as a component of community safety was beyond the scope of the present project. However, it is important that there is a constructive relationship between the municipality, the police, and Crown Counsel and ongoing dialogue on how to improve community safety.  | It should be a priority to establish an ongoing dialogue and working relationship between the City and Crown Counsel. |

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED POSITIONS

### RCMP Sworn Officers

The following sworn positions have been identified based on materials gathered in interviews, focus groups, including community stakeholders, and an analysis of the detachment’s Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) data. These additional positions will begin to address the current lack of capacity for the detachment to engage in proactive policing within a community policing model.

Summary of Recommended Sworn Detachment Positions

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| POSITIONS | NUMBER |
| Police and Crisis Team (PACT) patrol unit (co-funded with Interior Health) | 2 |
| Community/Neighbourhood Policing Team | 4 |
| School Resource Officer | 1 |
| Youth Liaison Officer | 1 |
| Traffic Section | 4 |
| **Total Recommended Sworn Detachment Positions** | **12** |

### Detachment Civilian Municipal Employees

The civilian municipal employees (MEs) play a critical role in the operations of the Penticton Detachment and are a vital component in the effective and efficient delivery of policing services. The project team facilitated a focus group with the MEs and, as well, reviewed the responses of MEs who completed an online survey. A review of all the civilian units resulted in the identification of several gaps in capacity and the need for four additional ME positions.

It should be noted that the RCMP is in the process of adopting the use of officer worn body-worn cameras. Municipalities will be expected to assume the costs associated with this technology, e.g. video technicians. This technology is resource intensive and it is likely that, within the next three years, requests are going to be made to council for additional ME positions in the detachment. As of October 2022, it was not possible to determine the specific personnel that will be required.

Summary of Recommended Detachment Municipal Employee Positions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| POSITIONS | NUMBER |
| Operations Team Lead | 2 |
| Records Clerk | 1 |
| Disclosure/Transcription Administrator  | 1 |
| **Total Recommended Detachment Municipal Employee Positions** | **4** |

### New Municipal Employee Positions

#### Director of Community Safety

The project team is recommending that the City develop additional capacities to address current challenges. Most notable is the creation of the position of Director of Community Safety. The Director would be responsible for coordinating the public safety initiatives, ensuring interoperability among the various agencies and units involved in public safety related activities, and for leading the development of a Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

At present in Penticton, responsibility for community safety is split among five members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), all of whom report to the Chief Administrative Officer. There are separate lines of reporting for bylaw / CSOs, Fire and Rescue, municipal police staff, human resources, which includes workplace / occupational safety, and intergovernmental staff. However, the best practice is for oversight and reporting to be consolidated into the position of Director of Public Safety. This model is evident in Kelowna, Prince George, and other municipalities.

#### Peer Navigator for the Public Library

Materials gathered in the focus group sessions revealed that there would be a good ROI to locate a Peer Navigator in the public library. Several libraries in BC, including Kelowna, have Peer Navigators who have proven to be very successful in assisting persons in need. Other libraries across the country have city-funded social workers situated in public libraries in recognition of the fact that libraries are one of the last public, indoor spaces for persons and are often accessed by vulnerable and at-risk persons.

#### High School Mental Health Counsellors(co-funded with School District 67 and/or Interior Health)

Focus group sessions with high school students revealed a strong desire to have full time, on-site mental health counsellors. The existing counsellors are primarily engaged in course planning and may not have the training and expertise to effectively respond to student mental health issues.

There are examples from other jurisdictions. To meet the growing need for support of students living with mental health concerns, Abbotsford School District and Abbotsford Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) jointly fund a school child and youth mental Health Liaison position. The Health Liaison helps provides meaningful and intentional collaboration between CYMH clinicians and school district staff. The Health Liaison attends school-based meetings or care team on behalf of CYMH and provides information about mental health resources for school district staff that are available through CYMH or other services in the community. The Health Liaison works with the District Vice Principal of Learning Support Services, is part of the district Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) and follows up on suicide risk assessments. The Health Liaison also provides a variety of professional development training in the district.

In 2019, The Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows School District created the province’s first integrated child and youth team as part of proactive measures in place to support the mental health of students. The program includes teaching mental health literacy at the high school level, establishing a program with a wellness and therapeutic skills focus, and working closely with community partners on all initiatives that support vulnerable youth.

#### Municipal Mental Health Crisis Team

Mental health-related calls for service comprise a significant portion of police calls for service. An alternative call response option would be a municipal mental health crisis team, patterned on the Crisis Response Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) program in Eugene, Oregon. Diverting these calls from the police will provide an opportunity for sworn officers to engage in proactive, community-focused policing.

#### Fire & Rescue Positions

Over 50% of the calls to which Fire and Rescue responses are medically related, many of which are related to drug overdoses. These calls have been increasing largely due to the lack of capacity in the BC Ambulance Service. Calls are directed to Fire and Rescue if there is going to more than a 15-minute delay in the dispatch of an ambulance.

Having firefighters and a large apparatus respond to medical calls, which may be as minor as a nosebleed, is not a good ROI for the municipality or an effective use of responses. Municipalities across North America have addressed this issue by deploying RRVs staffed by firefighters / paramedics. These personnel are also available should there be a structural fire requiring a minimum number of firefighters on scene.

Summary of Recommended Municipal Employee Positions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| POSITIONS | NUMBER |
| Director of Public Safety | 1 |
| Peer Navigator for Library | 1 |
| High School Mental Health Counsellors (co-funded with School District 67 and/or Interior Health) | 2 |
| Municipal Mental Health Crisis Team | 2 |
| Fire and Rescue Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) | Staffing to be determined |
| **Total Recommended Municipal Employee Positions** | **6 + Staffing for the RRV** |

## GOING FORWARD

The present project was designed to conduct a resource review of the Penticton RCMP, Fire and Rescue, Bylaw, and CSOs.

The community stakeholders who contributed to the review in interviews and focus groups offered varying perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing the community. There was widespread concern with community safety and the need to effectively address the issues of homelessness, addiction, and mental health.

The challenges facing the municipalities and the opportunities to successfully address them can only be met by a comprehensive plan that is sufficiently resourced on a long-term basis. In the absence of such a plan, the issues will continue to worsen, the resources expended will continue to increase, and long-term solutions will be elusive.

A notable feature of the Penticton landscape is the issue of provincial resources to assist the city in addressing several of the more pressing, and challenging issues, including homelessness, addiction, and mental health. It could be argued that provincial agencies have fallen short of fulfilling their legislated mandates. More specifically, there was widespread concern among the community residents who completed the survey and among service providers and stakeholder groups that insufficient funding has been provided to address the opioid crisis, mental health, addiction, and homelessness. This has not only resulted in the growth of social issues, but also has resulted in downloading onto the municipality generally and, more specifically, onto the police, Fire and Rescue, bylaw, and CSOs.

The municipality alone should not be held accountable for addressing these issues. Moving from reactive mode to problem-solving will require a comprehensive CSWB plan, one in which all stakeholders contribute resources. A fragmented approach, which was evident from the materials gathered for this review, will not suffice. A CSWB plan is required for a coordinated, problem-solving approach to the challenges faced by the City. There are many opportunities to better leverage existing municipal and provincial resources, to identify specific areas where additional funding is required, and to define the parameters of police responsibilities.

The provincial government has a much more substantive role to play in meeting its mandated responsibilities. This is particularly true with respect to addressing the needs of at-risk and vulnerable persons. To date, its efforts have been undertaken without substantive consultation with the community. It is important that the municipal council advocate with provincial authorities to develop partnerships so that the municipality and the detachment do not bear the full cost of developing initiatives for populations whose needs fall under the mandate of provincial agencies. Without substantive involvement, and funding from the province, many of the challenges facing the community will continue to fall to the police, bylaw / CSOs / Fire and Rescue and the resource requirements will increase. That said, this report recommends that the municipal council fund several newly created positions designed to address issues facing the community.

There is an opportunity for the municipal council to be more assertive in supporting innovation and the development of collaborative partnerships in the community. These efforts would ensure that resources that are allocated to various initiatives are effective in contributing to community safety and quality of life in the community. An example is the authority given to the City to ensure that its priorities are reflected in the operations and activities of the police. Similarly, the council can require business cases for proposed initiatives that include an evaluation component.

The recommendations in this report are designed to ensure that the municipality receives value for money for its investment in the police, Fire and Rescue, bylaw and CSOs programs and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these agencies. This, in turn, will improve the safety, security, and quality of life in the community.