



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Ms. Kelly Block, M.P.  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Block:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to respond to the 67<sup>th</sup> Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, titled *Report 5, Equipping Officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, of the 2019 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*.

Officer safety is of utmost importance to the Government of Canada. Ensuring a safe workforce is critical to the RCMP and supports its mandate for a safer Canada. The RCMP is required to provide appropriate equipment and related training to comply with its duty to protect the health and safety of its officers under the *Canada Labour Code* and the *RCMP Act*. Accordingly, the Government accepts the Standing Committee's six recommendations pertaining to the Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) report, as outlined in the committee's report.

The Standing Committee's recommendations align with the work the RCMP is undertaking as part of the detailed Management Action Plan developed to respond to the OAG's recommendations. I would like to take this opportunity to respond to each of the Standing Committee's recommendations to emphasize the work that has been done, and is ongoing, to improve officer safety, oversight, and accountability in this area.

**Recommendation 1: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police should provide the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the status of its national standard to ensure that RCMP command has the best information to ensure adequate carbine distribution and availability.**

Regarding Recommendation 1, on December 7, 2020, the RCMP's national operational standard on Active Threat Training and Equipment was updated to ensure that as many frontline officers are provided with access to a long-gun, as well as trained and qualified on the patrol carbine.

The operational standard targets frontline officers, who account for approximately 50 percent of all RCMP officers. The determination to focus on frontline officers was based on evidence from a review of officer-involved shootings and instances of police drawing and displaying firearms, which indicated that 90 percent of these incidents involved frontline officers. Therefore, the operational standard ensures that the officers at greatest risk receive the equipment and training they need to perform their duties as safely as possible.

The operational standard clearly defines *minimum* standards, including benchmarks and target dates for patrol carbine availability, carbine training, and qualifications. The operational standard takes a sustainable and phased implementation approach. This allows RCMP divisions and detachments to develop long-term strategies and fiscal planning for training, facilities, maintenance, and equipment.

As of March 31, 2021, each detachment is to have one long-gun for every frontline officer, of which at least half will be patrol carbines. Over the following four years (2022-2025), the number of carbines and carbine-trained frontline officers will steadily increase until at least 80% of all frontline officers at each detachment are trained and have access to a carbine.

The operational standard also sets out the roles and responsibilities for officers, supervisors, unit commanders and divisional senior management, and requires the creation of divisional supplemental policy to reflect local needs and risk assessments.

As part of the update to the operational standard, RCMP National Headquarters is required to monitor compliance of this standard nationally to identify trends, issues, and opportunities for improvement. This includes an annual assessment, before April 30 of each year, with recommendations to the Deputy Commissioner of Contract & Indigenous Policing and the distribution of an Active Threat Training and Equipment Compliance Dashboard to divisional senior management on a quarterly basis. The Compliance Dashboard was implemented on March 2, 2021. It is an electronic, interactive mapping system that provides operational leaders in RCMP divisions with the number of shotguns, carbines and carbine-trained officers down to the detachment level, and also indicates whether detachments are compliant or non-compliant. This system supports evidence, risk-based decision-making and compliance on carbine distribution.

The operational standard also sets out requirements for operational leaders in RCMP divisions, which include monitoring the compliance dashboard on a quarterly basis to:

- 1) Ensure that the benchmarks are achieved by the specified date;
- 2) Analyze the compliance data to determine if the trends identify issues and/or opportunities for improvement;
- 3) Address areas of non-compliance and report actions taken to improve compliance annually to National Headquarters; and,
- 4) Conduct and document ongoing risk assessments annually, at a minimum, to ensure supplemental patrol carbine training, qualification, long-guns, ammunition, and hard body armour are delivered or distributed according to risk.

**Recommendation 2: The RCMP should provide Committee with a report a) outlining the progress of its national standard for the distribution and availability of hard body armour; and b) confirming that it has the proper information to ensure its compliance. Additionally, that a final report be presented to the Committee.**

Regarding Recommendation 2, the OAG audit found that the RCMP largely met its requirements for providing hard body armour, which was to maintain one (1) set of hard body armour per operational vehicle, plus 10 percent. This means that one (1) set of hard body armour would be in every operational vehicle, or two (2) sets if the vehicle is normally occupied by two (2) officers, plus 10 percent to mitigate risks from unforeseen circumstances where additional officers are deployed.

On December 7, 2020, to improve distribution and tracking, the national operational standard on Active Threat Training and Equipment was updated to ensure that all frontline officers be *personally assigned* unit-issued hard body armour by March 31, 2022. This distribution method is similar to personally assigned soft body armour and will help ensure that officers at risk have the equipment required to keep them safe. Moreover, the operational standard requires RCMP divisions to develop a risk-based strategy to distribute remaining hard body armour to non-frontline officers (i.e., units or locations with elevated risk), given that there is a surplus of hard body armour.

Compliance metrics on this requirement will be tracked on a quarterly basis via the Compliance Dashboard.

**Recommendation 3: The RCMP should provide the Committee with a report outlining its progress regarding firearm recertification. Additionally, that a final report be presented to the Committee.**

Regarding Recommendation 3, while much effort continues to be made to revise policies, training practices, and enhance compliance reporting, the current COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily delayed annual qualifications in some regions. A temporary national policy exemption has been instated to allow police officers to continue to carry their intervention options in the absence of an ability to perform their annual firearms qualification before expiry. Until COVID-19 measures are lifted, the RCMP is limited in the number of officers that can undergo qualification. Firearms

training compliance and data will be affected for the foreseeable future.

Enhanced business intelligence tools to monitor firearms compliance (i.e. pistol and carbine) were implemented as part of the RCMP's Executive Dashboard and Active Threat Training and Equipment Compliance Dashboard. In addition, efforts are underway to update the current Operational Skill Maintenance Report. The new report will provide increased national and divisional capacity to monitor mandatory skills training. Work to revise firearms training policies and practices continues. RCMP Learning & Development continues to work with internal stakeholders, including the National Mandatory Training Oversight Committee, to advance national policy towards greater compliance levels and accountability.

The RCMP will continue to strive towards the desired compliance rates, and continues to work towards solutions to overcome the various challenges, such as those that come with Canada's geographic and climatic realities, particularly in the North.

**Recommendation 4: The RCMP should provide the Committee with a report outlining its progress regarding the preventative maintenance of firearms. Additionally, that a final report be presented to the Committee.**

Regarding Recommendation 4, the RCMP has clarified its policy on *Preventive Maintenance Program for RCMP Firearms* to clarify that any operational firearm will be serviced within six (6) months of its scheduled preventive maintenance service recall date to improve compliance with policy requirements.

The RCMP implemented a structured plan to meet the requirements of this preventive maintenance policy and was on track to normalize the preventive maintenance cycles for firearms by June 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting physical distancing requirements in the workplace, the RCMP ceased the recall of firearms for preventive maintenance in order to deliver critical repair services only. This interruption has delayed the RCMP in meeting this recommendation. The partial reintegration of resources has allowed the RCMP to return focus to preventive maintenance on a modified schedule. The RCMP will not be in a position to fully meet this recommendation until resource levels in the National Armourer Program are restored to full capacity.

To mitigate risk, preventive maintenance recalls for service have focused on the oldest in-service frontline carbines and pistols. Additionally, the civilian member armourers modified their work hours to shift work and extended shift duration to compensate for workplace restrictions mandated by Treasury Board in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has allowed for increased capacity for preventative maintenance.

**Recommendation 5: The RCMP should provide the Committee with a report outlining its progress with regard to improving its management of acquisition projects, including ensuring that life-cycle requirements, such as training and maintenance, are addressed.**

Regarding Recommendation 5 and the RCMP's progress with regard to improving its management of acquisition projects, the RCMP has strengthened its governance structure through the establishment of the Investment Oversight and Prioritization Committee to ensure that investment decisions factor full life-cycle requirements as part of any approved investment decision. Included in the investment decision would be robust project management capacity to ensure training, maintenance, and ongoing sustainment requirements are addressed in the planning, so the project can be properly implemented.

As part of the RCMP's *Modernization Strategy for Public and Police Safety Intervention Equipment*, the organization is also in the process of life-cycling and modernizing its firearms and personal safety and intervention equipment. This is an enterprise-wide undertaking that will ensure officers of the RCMP are provided a modern suite of operational tools aligned to future needs while considering the diversity of officers who will employ these tools (e.g., gender-based analysis, lighter weight equipment). This project will provide the RCMP program team with the professional

services support they require to develop documents required for the execution of the firearms, personal safety, and intervention modernization initiative effectively. Additionally, this project will apply the newly developed RCMP governance framework to ensure the efficacy of the revised decision-making approach.

The RCMP is currently seeking to establish a clear and comprehensive organization-wide model that will enable the RCMP to assess, approve, track, fund, implement and manage the life cycle of operational policing assets and uniform items. Specifically, to ensure that the RCMP has clear processes, decision-making structures and authorities to inform and direct the activities undertaken to manage equipment and assets, from identification of needs to asset disposal.

RCMP Learning and Development (L&D) also continues to work with RCMP Real Property to provide input on training infrastructure projects to identify national and divisional training facilities requirements and options. As a starting point, L&D consulted with divisional, federal and national partners to identify the facilities needed to provide an effective and safe training environment that meet the current and future requirements of mandatory and specialized training.

**Recommendation 6: The RCMP should provide the Committee with a report outlining the status of any information management systems pertaining to the tracking of inventory and distribution of carbines, pistols, and hard body armour, as well as tracking member certifications for their proper use.**

Lastly, regarding Recommendation 6 and the status of information management systems, on December 7, 2020, the national operational standard on Active Threat Training and Equipment was updated to ensure that:

- 1) Carbine training and qualification records are entered within 30 days of the completion of long-gun training; and,
  - 2) Long-gun physical locations are submitted within 30 days of being issued or transferred.
- This will help ensure the accuracy of the data.

Data from the equipment and training information management systems are then used to populate the Active Threat Training and Equipment Compliance Dashboard on a quarterly basis. The Compliance Dashboard provides operational leaders in RCMP divisions with the number of shotguns, carbines and carbine-trained officers down to the detachment level. This information also indicates whether detachments are compliant or non-compliant. Quality assurance measures and processes have been built-in to the Compliance Dashboard to ensure the accuracy and validation of the data.

Enhanced business intelligence tools to monitor pistol recertification compliance were implemented as part of the RCMP's Executive Dashboard. In addition, efforts are underway to update the current Operational Skill Maintenance (OSM) Report. The new report will provide increased national and divisional capacity to monitor mandatory skills training.

Pistols are personally issued to each officer and tracked by officer in RCMP information management systems. The OAG audit did not identify any deficiencies with tracking of inventory.

To improve tracking of hard body armour, the distribution model has been updated from being vehicle-based (i.e., having one set of hard body armour per operational vehicle), which were not systematically tracked and measurable, to all frontline officers being personally assigned unit-issued hard body armour by March 31, 2022. This distribution method is similar to personally assigned soft body armour and will help ensure that that officers at risk have the equipment required to keep them safe. Pilot projects and planning are in place to facilitate future linking body armour to officers at point of purchase.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for its recommendations aimed at ensure the RCMP continues to meet its commitments, for the improved protection and safety of its police officers and the Canadian public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Blair".

The Honourable William Sterling Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.  
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness