



NATIONAL
POLICE
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION
DE LA POLICE
NATIONALE

STUDY ON LABOUR SHORTAGES, WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE CARE ECONOMY

Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human
Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons
with Disabilities

April 2022



Photo sources: NPF / RCMP
social media

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Introduction

The National Police Federation (NPF) is the sole certified bargaining agent representing approximately 20,000 Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) across Canada and internationally. The NPF is the largest police labour relations organization in Canada; the second largest in North America and is the first independent national association to represent RCMP Members.

The NPF is focused on improving public safety in Canada by focusing on increasing resources, equipment, training, and other supports for our Members who have been under-funded for far too long. Better resourcing and supports for the RCMP will enhance community safety and livability in the communities we serve, large and small, across Canada.

For nearly 150 years, the RCMP has been Canada's national police service. Our Members have federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal mandates and provide policing services in over 700 detachments, as well as in more than 600 Indigenous communities from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Over the past few years, the RCMP has experienced new and unforeseen challenges that continue to evolve due to significant recruiting challenges, which have impacted staffing levels, human resources and more importantly the well-being of Members. At the same time, all facets of policing have experienced a significant demand increase that goes beyond crime prevention and law enforcement.

Labour shortages and challenges

Several factors need to be considered in reviewing RCMP labour shortages: growing demand; impacts of COVID-19; recruitment challenges; impacts on core policing responsibilities and identifying root causes underpinning these challenges.

RECRUITING

Recruiting challenges are not unique to the RCMP and impact all police services in Canada. More research is needed to better understand why people may or may not choose a career in policing; however, recent anti-police media sentiment and related movements across North America over the past two years undoubtedly play into this issue.

In recent years, COVID-19 can also be attributed to some of the decline in applicants. However, more in-depth research is needed to understand the root of the decline and initiatives that would be required to address the problems. For perspective, between fiscal year 2021-2022, the RCMP received 9,822 applications. When looking at the previous fiscal year, the RCMP had received 11,800 applications¹. This demonstrates an alarming decline of almost 17%. In addition, the RCMP is projecting an even further decline in applicants for this fiscal year. This increasing decline must be urgently addressed to ensure sustainable police resources and ongoing public safety.

Until 2021, the RCMP was ranked 133 out of 139 in wages, when compared to other police services across Canada. The NPF was successful in negotiating the first-ever Collective Agreement which resulted in a 24% pay increase, making the RCMP again one of the ten best-paid police services in Canada. The NPF

anticipates that this will increase the attractiveness of the RCMP for those considering a policing career and that, in future years, this may contribute to more applicants.

However, wages and monetary incentives are not the only thing potential applicants want. As an example, the Victoria Police Department (VPD) in B.C. has also experienced staffing shortages and a mass decline in applicants. In 2021, the VPD offered a one-time \$20,000 incentive signing bonus to experienced officers joining VPD². While this did help recruitment to some extent, it did not solve the problem.

Recommendation 1

The Government of Canada undertake a study of RCMP labour shortages, with a focus on identifying why applications are declining, the recruiting process and standards and how to improve the image of policing as a career option.

HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY & PLANNING

One of the RCMP’s advantages is its sheer size and the resulting surge capacity, which allows for temporary movement of Members between units or detachments to fill gaps and respond to emergencies in any location in Canada. This is done through the various *Provincial Police Service Agreements* with the provinces who have policing contracts with the RCMP.

On the other hand, the year-over-year demand of contract policing continues to increase as populations and police service needs grow within communities. The pace of demands from contract partners for more RCMP officers is outstripping the RCMPs capacity to recruit and train officers, causing shortages. In his mandate letter, the Public Safety Minister has been tasked to carry out an assessment of contract policing in consultation with its partners.

The recently released 2022-23 RCMP Departmental Plan shows a rather stagnant increase in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) over recent years and projections into future years³.

Human resources planning summary for core responsibilities							
Core Responsibilities	2019-20 actual FTEs	2020-21 actual FTEs	2021-22 forecast FTEs	2022-23 planned FTEs	2023-24 planned FTEs	2024-25 planned FTEs	6-year change +/-
Federal Policing	5,176	5,114	5,139	4,982	4,968	4,968	-4%
National Policing Services	3,645	3,711	4,008	4,030	4,002	4,017	+10%
Contract & Indigenous Policing	18,435	18,291	18,483	18,579	18,683	18,716	+1.5%
Total	31,119	31,023	31,562	31,716	31,834	31,922	+2.6%

The chart above, shows an overall 6-year change of just 2.5% in RCMP FTEs. However, it is projected that during this same time the Canadian population will grow by 6%⁴. This demonstrates a growing concern about pressures onto our Members to continue to fulfil increase demands with inadequate human resources to do so.

TRAINING CAPACITY

Another consideration beyond recruiting and FTE constraints is the RCMP's capacity to train new recruits at its Academy (Depot) in Regina, SK, where all RCMP officers are trained. Depot has a maximum training capacity of 2,176 persons per year (68 troops with a maximum of 32 cadets per troop), and this number also includes spaces for other federal government departments, such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, to train their staff/officers. Given Depot's training capacity in past years, the RCMP planned to onboard on average 40 troops with 32 cadets per troop each year or about 1,280 cadets.

The RCMP's attrition rate has also increased from 11% a decade ago to an average attrition rate of 19.8% today. The RCMP is also anticipating an increase in the attrition rate in future years and has been conservative in its future protected rate. This attrition rate, coupled with a decline in recruiting, compounds the challenge to meet future capacity needs.

Nationally, the RCMP has publicly stated it has a 2.1% (or 414 funded positions) hard vacancy rate for funded positions and an annual attrition rate of about 850 officers. These figures do not account for soft vacancies (sick leave, annual leave, training, family related leave), which would put the hard and soft vacancy rate at about 8%.

Anticipated Troop Capacity 2021-2023							
Fiscal Year	# of Troops	Cadets/ Troop	Depot Attrition Rate***	Total Graduates	Annual Officer Attrition	Hard Vacancy Rate of 2.1%*	Net +/-
2019/2020	40	32	18%	1,050	850	414	-214
2020/2021	16	29.75	19.8%	396	850	414	-868
2021/2022	33	29.54	19.8%	782	850	414	-482
2022/2023	40	24	19.8%	770	850	414	-494

*The RCMP categorize vacancies as soft or hard vacancies. A hard vacancy is permanent and can be backfilled (e.g., a member being transferred out, retiring, or resigning).⁵

**Numbers outlined in the chart, after fiscal 2020/21, are based on anticipated troop capacity numbers and can vary.

***The attrition rate of 19.8% for future years is a conservative average and is expected to increase.

As shown in the table above for fiscal year 2021-22 Depot onboarded 33 troops at reduced capacity, which will result in about 782 cadets after attrition. For fiscal year 2022-23, Depot is planning reduced capacity for all 40 troops, as they are currently challenged to fill the troops given the dwindling application rates.

Depot experienced a significant negative impact on training in 2022-21, due to COVID-19 capacity restrictions, which has put a strain on the pre-existing training backlog. Prior to 2020, Depot averaged 1,050 graduates per year after Depot attrition rates, meaning that between 2019-20 and 2022-23, it had

anticipated about 4,200 new cadets. However, given the challenges outlined in the table above, during that same time Depot is anticipating about 2,998 graduates or a decrease of 29%.

National attrition rates and hard vacancy rates for that same period combined creates a deficit of new officers. While FTE positions are forecast to increase in future years, this does not mean the RCMP can staff them. Too often, our Members shoulder additional responsibilities resulting from lack of resources further impacting their own mental health and well-being.

The NPF has been cautioning the Government of Canada about labour shortages since 2020. We have been advocating for the government to provide an additional \$190 million to expand recruiting and training at Depot, as well as increase funding in subsequent years.

We recommend the government implement a phased 3 to 4-year plan to increase the number of troops to, at minimum, 55 per year which would correspond to about 1,760 new cadets per year. However, this would need to be accompanied by a rigorous recruitment strategy to bring training and recruit levels back up.

Recommendation 2

Invest \$190 million to expand training capacity at Depot, as well as additional funding in subsequent years. In addition, develop a 3 to 4-year plan to increase the number of troops to a maximum of 55 per year.

Recommendation 3

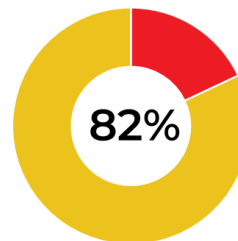
Review and develop a robust recruitment strategy to address future recruiting challenges.

POLICING AND SOCIAL SERVICES

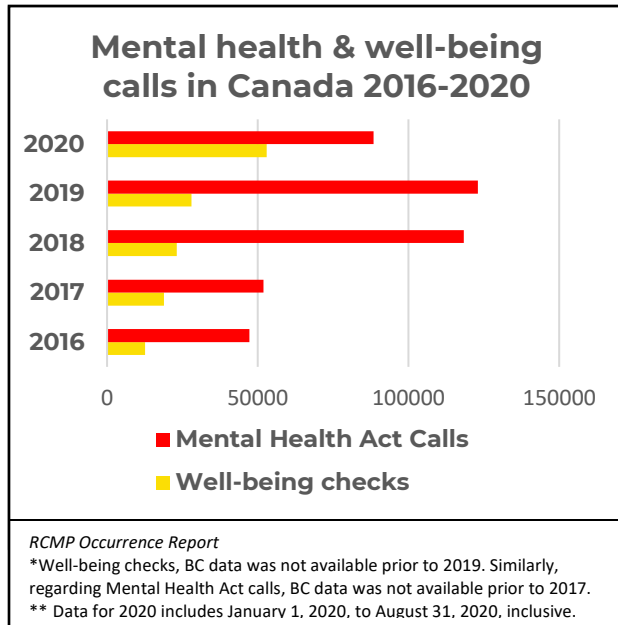
Demand for policing continues to increase beyond core policing responsibilities, because of the ongoing underfunding of social services and vital community supports to assist those most vulnerable who otherwise often experience crises and police intervention as a last resort.

Canadians, and our Members, want to see more funding for much-needed critical services that help alleviate pressures on vulnerable Canadians and, by extension, the police. All governments must do more to ensure that all communities have the front-line public safety and social services needed to support the lives and well-being of all Canadians. For too long, our Members have been called on to fill the gaps in the absence of properly funded mental health and social services.

In 2020, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted a survey for the NPF that shows that Canadians agree that properly funding social services would significantly help alleviate thousands of potentially dangerous interactions between police and citizens every day.



Agree that properly funding social services would help reduce dangerous interactions between police and citizens.



Police officers are becoming, by default, the only available resources to respond to someone in crisis and/or with mental illness and these calls vary widely in complexity and risk. Since 2016 in Canada, there has been an increase in mental health and well-being calls. In most cases, this means officers will spend countless hours sitting in hospital waiting rooms, taking them away from other core police duties. The resource impact is concerning, especially in smaller and rural communities, where police resources are most limited, further impacting general calls for service and response times.

As an example, in 2020, three detachments on Vancouver Island spent over 3,000 hours waiting with people experiencing a mental health crisis⁶.

Recommendation 4

The Government of Canada, with its provincial and territorial partners, ensure that adequate investments are made into crucial social services to Ensure access for all and to alleviate pressure placed on policer services.

¹ 2021. Applicants to become a cop in Vancouver at ‘all-time low’. [Online] Available at: <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/local-news/applicants-to-become-a-cop-in-vancouver-at-all-time-low-victoria-police-rcmp-george-floyd-coronavirus-assaults-4873420>

² 2021. Applicants to become a cop in Vancouver at ‘all-time low’. [Online] Available at: <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/local-news/applicants-to-become-a-cop-in-vancouver-at-all-time-low-victoria-police-rcmp-george-floyd-coronavirus-assaults-4873420>

³ 2022. Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2022-2023 Departmental Plan. [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-gc.gc.ca/en/royal-canadian-mounted-police-2022-2023-departmental-plan#A7>

⁴ 2021. Total population of Canada from 2016 to 2026. [Online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263742/total-population-in-canada/>

⁵ 2018. RCMP Vacancy Report. [Online] Available at: <https://pub-cofs.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=14411>

⁶ 2021. SERIES: Police spend 3,078 hours waiting at two B.C. hospitals, not responding to calls. [Online] Available at: <https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/bc-news/series-police-spend-3078-hours-waiting-at-two-bc-hospitals-not-responding-to-calls-3817626>