



February 18, 2018

Hon. Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

On the eve of an historic budget, I am writing to you today on behalf of the Board of Directors, Governors and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Veterans' Association, to convey to you and your Cabinet colleagues the expectation that our Association has concerning the funding imperatives that exist today for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Published reports acknowledge that the RCMP are operating with significant staff shortages in virtually every region of the country. Statistics shared by RCMP with CTV News in August 2017 identified 1,339 funded vacancies out of 20,214 funded positions for a vacancy rate of 6.6%. When sick leave vacancies of 3.9% and parental leave vacancies of 1.6% were added to that total, the actual staffing shortfall reaches a shocking total of 12.1%. Those statistics were effective in the summer of 2017. It is doubtful that the situation has improved, and may well have degraded since then.

These staff shortages are being felt across the country by the citizens in the communities policed by the RCMP, by the other agencies collaborating with RCMP in national security and public safety investigations and enforcement, and most certainly by the men and women of the RCMP – both sworn officers and civilians alike – who, in order to compensate, are obligated to work extended overtime, and to be available 'on call' for hours prior to and following their scheduled shifts, to respond to the full range of calls on the 24/7, 365 day a year watch.

The breadth of these staff shortages run coast to coast to coast, and the headlines speak to concerns of residents and community leaders who raise relevant concerns about the effect these shortages have upon the safety of the municipalities, towns, villages and hamlets they live and work in;

"Get more police officers out there" – RCMP vacancy rate in Manitoba hits 8%"; CBC News – April 26, 2017

"RCMP shortages leave Mounties in 'crisis' officers say"; CTV News – August 14, 2017

"RCMP shortage forces Gravelbourg to surrender bilingual police positions"; CBC News – October 8, 2017

"Community safety officers a model for dealing with RCMP shortage in northern Manitoba"; CBC News – December 12, 2017

"RCMP shortage in Alberta affects how officers handle crime"; CBC News – December 20, 2017

"Temporary shortages of RCMP emergency operators leads to patchwork of solutions"; CBC News – January 11, 2018

"Outlaw motorcycle gangs growing in Halifax area, more officers needed: RCMP"; The Canadian Press – January 18, 2018

The effect of these staggering staff shortages upon RCMP personnel still on the job are as predictable as they are demoralizing. The results are exhaustion, depression and frustration, creating a work environment predisposed to making staff more susceptible to physical injuries, operational stress injuries, irritability, substance abuse and relationship challenges that deprive them of those values we all hold dear; a healthy balance of work and personal life; pride in a job well done; confidence in knowing that they are valued and that their employer sincerely cares about their welfare.

To be certain, as fatigued officers respond to calls, their capacity to effectively manage complex, tense, emotion-filled situations is compromised. Their response times, their judgement, their situational awareness are all affected. This has implications for their ability to serve and protect, and for officer safety.

To be sure, as the public is rightfully aware of these severe staff shortages within the RCMP, this will most certainly affect the RCMP's capacity to recruit new employees. Strong, qualified candidates will be less inclined to apply to work for an organization that is understaffed, and where they will be expected to work longer hours with inadequate support.

And, of course, another essential factor in attracting, recruiting and retaining new employees is fair compensation.

In January 2015, the RCMP Pay Council's report, *Fair Compensation for the RCMP* reported that "the RCMP ranks fifth out of nine comparator police forces, with its total compensation value falling 9.61% behind that of the top three services." It also noted that "In terms of salary alone, the RCMP first class constable salary ranks 57th out of the 82 Canadian police services with 50 members or more", and "the RCMP first class constable salary is \$8,108 below the median salary, which is a lag of 9.87%." The report concluded that "the RCMP are no longer competitive with those of other departments in the police universe".

That notwithstanding, the salary increases approved for RCMP members up to the rank of Superintendent in 2017 were anemic at best, with increases of 1.25% (effective January 1, 2015), 1.25% (effective January 1, 2016) and a 2.3% market adjustment (effective April 1, 2016) for a total of 4.8%; less than half of the 9.87% salary lag with the median salary as determined by the RCMP Pay Council.

Compensation for RCMP Cadets attending training at Depot Division in Regina is meagre by comparison to other police services and is a factor in the Force's capacity to attract new applicants. Presently, RCMP Cadets are paid at the rate of \$500 per week for 26 weeks for a total of \$13,000 during their first six months. If a Cadet is successful and offered a position with the RCMP, they are offered a starting salary of \$53,144, increasing to \$69,049 after 18 months and \$86,110 when they have completed 36 months of post-training service, or 42 months since they began training. Ontario Provincial Police pay their Cadets an annual salary at the rate of \$53,996 from the first day of training; \$26,998 for the first 6 months, more than twice the compensation that an RCMP Cadet receives. An OPP Constable's rate of pay increases to \$68,847 immediately following training. At 36 months, an OPP First-Class Constable is paid a salary of \$98,355 which is 12.5% higher than an RCMP Constable of equivalent service.

Considering that many young applicants are joining the police services while carrying heavy student loan debt, and raising young families, the difference in compensation between the RCMP and the OPP alone is very significant and clearly, inferior RCMP compensation is a strong disincentive for prospective applicants.

Fair compensation is a value that Canadians attach great importance to. Safe and supportive work environments are values that the Government of Canada espouses very publicly.

Consequently, it is hardly fair to ask the members and employees of the RCMP to report to work to understaffed detachments & operations centres, respond to calls of unknown peril without proper back-up, to accept to work overtime hours they don't want, and to accept compensation significantly less than their peers. They deserve better.

We know, of course, that none of this is news to you, Minister. Your aides keep you well informed of the media reporting regarding RCMP staff shortages and compensation issues. The senior Executive of the RCMP ensure that you are fully informed on a regular basis of the administrative and financial challenges of operating our national police force, and of the efforts they undertake to 'do more with less', which unfortunately has been the "go-to" mantra of government for far too long now. We know that you are seized with these issues every day and that you do not take them lightly.

The men and women of the RCMP joined Canada's national police service out of passion to serve and protect the public. Most certainly, they were attracted to the RCMP in some measure due to the iconic history of the Force, and they were proud the day they were issued

their badge, or hired as a civilian to work as a technician, a scientist, a human resources officer or a translator.

These same employees – in unprecedented numbers – have felt compelled in recent times to come forward to speak publicly about the challenges they face due to the shortages of personnel and inferior compensation. In doing so, they have most certainly anticipated that their public stance could affect their careers. This notwithstanding, they have publicly expressed the costs they have borne – alongside their colleagues – upon their emotional welfare, their mental health and their pride in service. It would be easier for them simply to leave the Force and sign on with another police service with better benefits and higher wages. Clearly, they have spoken out because of their continuing dedication to the RCMP, and their keen desire to see it improve. RCMP members also become part of the communities where they are stationed. They shop in these cities, go to church in these villages, raise their children in these towns. They care about their fellow residents and they want to serve them and protect them to the best of their ability.

We hope, Minister, that you have presented the clear needs of the RCMP compellingly to your Cabinet colleagues; those being significant staff increases, and fairer, competitive salaries. We hope that your colleagues also recognize that the future of the RCMP is reliant upon their good and fair judgement, and that in acknowledgement of this, the needed funding and resource allocations will be announced in the federal budget this month, paving the way to a more positive future for the RCMP – and most importantly, for the communities that rely upon the RCMP for their service.

You are about to announce the name of the new Commissioner of the RCMP. We hope, Minister, that you will equip this new Commissioner with the resources he or she will need to succeed. The challenges are significant; the resources to overcome them must be as substantial.

Sincerely,



Al Rivard
President

c.c. Rt Hon Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister
c.c. Hon William Morneau, Minister of Finance
c.c. Hon Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board
c.c. Hon Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs
c.c. Hon Wayne Easter – Chair, Standing Committee on Finance

c.c. Hon Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Opposition
c.c. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
c.c. Senator Gwen Boniface – Chair, Standing Committee – National Security and Defence
c.c. Acting Commissioner Daniel Dubeau, RCMP