



Town of Rocky Mountain House

Municipal Police Model Study 2025

Prepared by:
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For:
Town of Rocky Mountain House

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Executive Summary

In 2025, the Town of Rocky Mountain House (RMH) embarked on a review of its policing service to assess its effectiveness, efficiency, and fit with the Town's values and needs. WMC (Western Management Consultants) Alberta, assisted by Applications Management and Dubord Consulting, was contracted to support this review. The consultant team conducted an examination of existing practices and evaluated them against similar municipalities and the future needs of the community. A document review was conducted and input from key internal and external stakeholders was gathered via a survey and series of interviews.

The themes from all sources of inquiry were similar in content, and in most cases, were supported by the financial and service analysis conducted.

Key findings include the following:

- Rocky Mountain House residents see policing as an essential service and are supportive of the RCMP, although they worry about the increase in costs.
- The residents of RMH are concerned about the rise of mental health issues, social issues, and housing instability in the community.
- There is a general level of concern over the perceived lack of RCMP resources and the resulting longer response times and lack of visibility in the Town.
- Overall, non-violent crime rates are trending down slightly in RMH, while violent crime is going up to a small degree.
- There is an opportunity utilize the Community Police Officers (CPOs) in ways that can support enforcement within the Town.

The project outcome was to determine whether the current model is the best fit based on financial suitability and meeting the needs of the community. It is not a review of service levels or crime rates per se, although that data is important in assessing the effectiveness of the model.

The consultant team submits the following recommendations for RMH's review:

1. Maintain the RCMP Contract
2. Optimize the RCMP Contract
3. Create an Integrated Public Safety Unit

This report contains a high-level summary of the work and results. Details of the analysis are included in the enclosures.

Introduction & Background

Brief Project Background

Rocky Mountain House posted a Request for Proposal on January 27, 2025, calling for a “Municipal Police Model Study.” WMC responded with a proposal and was later awarded the contract.

During the project kick-off, the project steering committee (SC) explained that there was no underlying agenda for this project, rather, there was an interest in exploring the area of policing and enforcement.

The objective of the project is to review the provision of policing services in RMH and determine whether the present model is the best option to allow the Town to meet the needs of a growing community and allow for financially sustainable services. With the growing costs of the RCMP contract, it is important that the Town do its due diligence to determine if it is still pursuing the best option for taxpayers.

Guiding Principles for the Project

The consulting team made all efforts in this project keep in mind the following:

- Safe spaces and open channels must be established and leveraged;
- All voices are equal; and
- Success is achieved through collaboration.

Community Profile

Rocky Mountain House is a growing community located at the crossroads of Highway 11 and Highway 22. With a population approaching 7,000 and serving a regional area of over 20,000, the Town acts as a hub for emergency response and policing across a much larger geographic footprint. Services such as the RCMP detachment, emergency responders, and social supports are stretched to meet the needs of its residents, as well as a vast rural population that includes farms and acreages and the O’Chiese, Sunchild, and Big Horn (Stoney Nakoda) First Nations. These demands increase significantly during the summer months, when a large influx of visitors travel to the area to explore the Rockies, provincial parks, and campgrounds, placing additional pressure on infrastructure, law enforcement, and local services.

Rocky Mountain House is guided by a vision of being “a proud, progressive community that embraces its heritage and natural surroundings,” with a mission focused on delivering quality services and enabling responsible growth. However, like many rural centres, the Town is facing increasing challenges tied to a growing diversity of social needs, including rising rates of mental health issues, substance use, and housing insecurity. These evolving pressures require integrated responses and partnerships that support both enforcement and community-based supports.

Process Overview

As outlined in the project proposal, WMC designed a thorough, fact-based process to identify key trends, themes, and opportunities.

A six-phase process was used:



This work culminated in the preparation of this report, including recommendations.

During these stages, a document review was completed, current models of policing were researched, a survey was launched, interviews were conducted, and a thorough financial modelling process was undertaken.

Policing in Rocky Mountain House

Governance

Policing services are provided to RMH through a Municipal Police Service Agreement with the RCMP. The plan started on April 1, 2012 and covers 20 years. The plan formalizes the provision of municipal policing services by the RCMP, establishes the financial responsibilities of the Municipality, and sets out the operational and administrative responsibilities of both parties. The Agreement also includes mechanisms for adjusting police resources as needed and resolving disputes that may arise.

Rocky Mountain House has a Municipal Police Committee. The group advises the Town on local policing matters, as per Policing Committee Bylaw 2018/26V.

A detailed outline of federal and provincial authorities and responsibilities is attached in [Enclosure I](#).

Document & Desk Research Summary

The document and desk research include documents/data received from RMH together with external documents, including Statistics Canada, the Government of Alberta, and other relevant public sources. It is important to note that the document review surfaced that a number of key pieces of information, specific to policing in RMH, were not available and so are not included in this review. These are identified as part of the summary.

Summary of Key Findings

Several key themes emerged from the document review and analysis.

- **Funded Positions & Workload Analysis:** The RMH Municipal Detachment currently operates with 12 municipally funded positions, a reduction from a previous authorized strength of 14. This adjustment was implemented in response to significant RCMP contract cost increases stemming from a national collective bargaining agreement. These 12 municipal officers are integrated within a detachment that also houses provincial and federal RCMP members.

There is not a recent, detailed workload analysis publicly available that would allow for more complete reporting regarding severity of incidents and time spent on calls. However, it is noted that the workload is heavy, and the analysis supports retention of the existing staff numbers and suggested improvement of operational procedures.

- **Operational Model (POST):** The current POST (Police Officer Shift Team) model integrates municipal and provincial RCMP resources operating from a single Crown-owned detachment building. This collaborative structure is designed to facilitate 24-hour police coverage and allows for the sharing of personnel and resources across the detachment's service area, which includes RMH, the surrounding Clearwater County, and neighbouring First Nations communities. A key feature of this model is the inherent access it provides to the RCMP's extensive suite of specialized services, such as major crime investigation units, emergency response teams (ERT), forensic identification services (FIS), police dog services (K9), traffic collision experts, and public order units. This offers operational scalability and specialized capabilities that would be difficult for a municipality of RMH's size to replicate independently. Specific data on the frequency of use of these specialized units by the RMH detachment is not readily available in public reports or from the RCMP.
- **Social Complexity:** Policing resources in RMH face considerable pressure due to increasing social complexities, notably related to mental health crises, homelessness, and substance addiction issues. Mental Health Act (MHA) related calls for service have reportedly seen a dramatic increase, cited as 112% between 2020 and 2024. Apprehensions under the MHA often require transporting individuals to designated psychiatric facilities in Ponoka or Red Deer, a process that can take officers away from their patrol duties in the detachment area for several hours, further straining available resources. The establishment of a Regional Police and Crisis Team (RPACT) based in RMH, which pairs an RCMP officer with an Alberta Health Services (AHS) mental health professional, represents a significant initiative aimed at providing a more specialized and appropriate response to such calls, potentially diverting individuals from the emergency room or justice system and reducing demands on general duty officers.

- **Large Geography & Response:** The RMH RCMP detachment holds responsibility for policing one of the largest geographic areas among detachments in Alberta. This expansive territory includes the Town itself (approximately 13 sq km), the vast expanse of Clearwater County, and the O'Chiese, Sunchild, and Big Horn First Nations. The sheer size of this operational area inherently creates logistical challenges, particularly concerning travel time to respond to calls in more remote parts of the territory, which can impact overall efficiency and potentially lead to variations in service levels across the region.

Data quantifying average police response times specific to the different zones within the detachment (Town, County, First Nations) is not currently available in public datasets or from the RCMP but represents a crucial metric for evaluating service delivery effectiveness.

Stakeholder Consultation

Interview Summary

As part of WMC's municipal police model study, an information gathering engagement was conducted with select stakeholders. 21 interviews were conducted between February and April 2025. Interviewees represented:

- Mayor & Council
- Town of Rocky Mountain House Chamber of Commerce
- Family & Community Support Services
- Wild Rose School Division
- Business owners
- First Nations
- Town of Rocky Mountain House administration
- RCMP Officers
- Community Police Officers

The interview data collected included perceptions related to:

- How the current policing model is working – strengths, gaps, opportunities, and threats
- Policing priorities
- Strategic issues that must be prioritized

The following summarizes the key observations and reflections from this engagement.

Research Questions

Stakeholders were asked for their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What is working well with the current policing model (RCMP)?
2. What gaps in service are you aware of/hearing about?

3. What is important for WMC to consider in developing their report?
4. If you could change/add/delete one thing to the policing service in RMH, what would it be?
5. Anything else you would like to add?

Thematic Analysis

Several key themes emerged from the interviews related to:

1. Staffing Shortages & Response Times

Across community members, elected officials, and internal policing staff, concerns were expressed around long response times, especially at night. Several interviewees reinforced that the current model does not guarantee 24/7 coverage, even though the POST model theoretically allows for it.

2. RCMP Deployment & Visibility

Stakeholders consistently flagged that RCMP officers are often responding to calls outside the Town, leaving residents with limited in-Town presence. Several interviewees cited that the visible presence is sporadic, especially during peak summer season.

3. CPO Role & Perception

While many see CPOs as filling essential gaps, concerns were raised by many interviewees around role confusion, overreach, and public perception. Several examples of unnecessarily strong tactics from CPOs were given.

4. Cost of Policing & Limited Municipal Influence

Many interviewees expressed concern and frustration around the high policing costs, particularly RCMP salaries and the associated billing model. The sustainability of the current payroll and benefits structure was questioned by several individuals.

5. Mental Health & Social Disorder

Many interviewees pointed to the lack of appropriate responses to drug use, homelessness, and mental health crises. They noted that the RCMP are often the default responders despite lacking the time or tools to address root causes effectively.

6. Community Engagement & Trust

Presence and engagement are highly valued by residents. The lack of proactive community policing, school resource officer engagement, and restorative justice approaches was frequently cited. Some interviewees described the RCMP's work as largely reactive, not embedded in the community. Officers living outside of town (e.g., Sylvan Lake) were seen as weakening community ties.

7. Interagency Collaboration & Communication

There was support among community-focused interviews for improved collaboration between RCMP, CPOs, schools, FCSS, and health/social agencies.

Survey Summary

An online survey was made available to interested citizens, and responses were received from **359 individuals**. The questions were intended to assess the perceived effectiveness of the current model, its fit with community values, and the degree of influence citizens feel they have over how the services are provided.

Not every participant answered every question, so there is variation in the total number of responses recorded for each question. Additionally, age-stratified analyses were conducted to examine how responses varied across different age groups. It is important to note that the number of respondents in the age-stratified graphs may differ from the total question responses, as these analyses only include participants who both answered each question and provided their age. Consequently, the sample size for age-based breakdowns listed may be smaller than the overall question participant count.

The survey revealed several key insights and themes:

- Many quantitative survey questions revealed a nearly even split in opinions, with slight majorities reporting positive views.
- Nearly half of respondents reported that their assessment of public safety has declined. Respondents identified both increased crime and underlying social issues including mental health challenges, addiction, homelessness, and drug use as significant contributors.
- Older residents (65+) consistently showed the most positive perceptions of police services across multiple questions, while middle-aged groups (particularly 45-54) often expressed the most concerns.
- Younger residents (<18-24) were the least likely to participate in the survey.
- Many respondents expressed frustration about insufficient police presence, resourcing, and response times in town. The perception of disproportional resources directed toward First Nations communities was a recurring complaint.
- Concerns were raised about professionalism, bias, and policing priorities (many respondents felt as if resources were being funneled into minor ticketing offenses rather than more serious crime).
- Respondents also reported concerns about the judicial system's handling of offenders, feeling that a perceived "catch and release" approach undermines police effectiveness in town.
- Significant praise was given to the policing services for community engagement and RCMP support.

A detailed report of the survey findings is attached in [Enclosure II](#).

Open House Summary

WMC hosted two open houses. The purpose of the open house was to offer residents the opportunity to validate the survey findings and to provide their feedback on the six WMC-proposed models WMC prepared for Council to consider.

A total of 11 individuals attended the sessions to share their feedback. The overall themes from the feedback gathered were:

- There is a need to address the increasing mental health and social complexities.
- There is a strong desire to keep the RCMP. Comments were made about the good job being done by the RCMP and the good value for money they offer.
- Increasing the numbers and role of CPOs was noted as being something to consider.

Comparative Municipality Analysis

Financial Analysis

A useful way to assess the RMH model is to compare it to similar municipalities both in terms of financial structures (i.e., expenditures and revenues) and the crime patterns of the community. The 10 selected comparable municipalities are Coaldale, Drayton Valley, Drumheller, High Level, Lacombe, Olds, Sylvan Lake, Taber, Wetaskiwin, and Whitecourt.

Detailed charts and information on population trends, per capital police spending, police revenues, financial stability challenges, bylaw expenditures/revenues, and a summary analysis are contained in [Enclosure II](#).

Comparable Municipal Populations

General Trends

- Most communities show gradual population growth.
- A few communities (notably High Level) experienced population declines before stabilizing.
- Sylvan Lake is experiencing the strongest sustained growth, significantly outpacing other municipalities.
- The overall population across these communities is growing modestly but consistently, keeping in line with broader regional trends.

Summary Context

- Communities with stronger population growth (e.g., Sylvan Lake, Coaldale, Olds) are likely experiencing greater demand on municipal services like policing and bylaw enforcement, helping explain some of the expenditure increases seen in this report.
- Slower-growth or flat-growth towns may struggle with cost pressures due to fixed or rising service costs but stable or shrinking population bases.

Municipal Police Expenditures Per Capita

General Trends

- Overall, per capita police spending has risen across almost all municipalities, with more noticeable increases after 2018.
- The average expenditure among comparables has consistently increased at a moderate pace.
- Some municipalities like Taber, Coaldale, Lacombe, and Sylvan Lake are spending well above the average by 2023.

Summary Context

- Rising police expenditures per capita are a clear trend across small- and mid-sized municipalities.
- Population growth alone does not fully explain these increases; other factors (such as service model changes, inflation in policing costs, and public safety demands) are likely major drivers.

Municipal Police Revenues Per Capita

General Trends

- Police revenues per capita have generally decreased since peaking between 2014-2016 for several municipalities.
- Towns that once had very high police revenues (Wetaskiwin, Lacombe) are now closer to the average or below it.
- A few towns (RMH, Taber) are holding steady or slightly improving revenue per capita, but they are the exception.

Summary Context

- Compared to rising police expenditures, police revenues are flat or declining – meaning the gap between costs and revenues continues to widen.
- Some municipalities that once relied heavily on police-generated revenues (e.g., Wetaskiwin, Lacombe) have shifted to funding policing more through general taxation as fines and enforcement revenues decreased.

Municipal Police Financial Sustainability Challenges

Implications

- Municipalities are paying more every year to deliver police services, but recovering less, creating a structural funding gap that will require strategic action to manage.
- Municipalities are increasingly subsidizing police services through property taxes and general revenues.
- The rising cost pressures without corresponding revenue growth **threaten the long-term sustainability** of current policing models.
- Without structural adjustments – such as alternative revenue sources, cost containment measures, or revised policing approaches – municipalities will likely face **difficult budget choices** in the coming years.

Municipal Bylaw Expenditures Per Capita

General Trends

- Overall, municipal bylaw expenditures per capita have increased modestly over the period, especially after 2015, for several municipalities.
- Bylaw spending is much lower than police spending across all towns.
- The average bylaw expenditure per capita across comparables is relatively flat and lower compared to the rise in police costs.

Summary Context

- Bylaw services remain a much smaller municipal cost center compared to policing.
- Certain municipalities (High Level, Sylvan Lake, Coaldale) have invested more aggressively in bylaw services in recent years, potentially reflecting local service demands, community growth, or strategic enforcement shifts.
- Most municipalities are seeing only modest increases or relatively stable spending on bylaw services.

Municipal Bylaw Revenues Per Capita

General Trends

- Overall, bylaw revenues per capita remain low compared to bylaw expenditures.
- Only a few municipalities (Coaldale and Sylvan Lake) show significant increases in bylaw revenue collection.
- Most municipalities recover a small fraction of their bylaw enforcement costs through revenues.

Summary Context

- Bylaw services are largely subsidized by general municipal funds.
- Bylaw revenues have not kept pace with even modest increases in bylaw expenditures.
- Revenue spikes (such as Coaldale's) are exceptions rather than the norm.
- This reinforces that, much like policing, bylaw enforcement is increasingly a cost center, not a self-funding service.

Summary of Financial Analysis

From 2009 to 2023, municipal expenditures on both police and bylaw services have steadily increased, outpacing population growth and inflation. At the same time, revenues from fines and enforcement activities have declined or remained flat, creating a widening funding gap. Police expenditures rose by 60-80% over the period, while bylaw expenditures also grew moderately, though both service areas now rely heavily on general taxation for financial support. Only a few municipalities, such as Coaldale and Sylvan Lake, have seen notable increases in enforcement-related revenues. Without changes to service delivery models, revenue strategies, or cost structures, municipalities will continue to face rising fiscal pressure to sustain public safety services.

Police Services

- Police expenditures per capita have steadily and significantly increased across most municipalities, rising by 60-80% over the period.
- Police revenues per capita have declined or flattened since peaking around 2013-2014.

- The gap between expenditures and revenues has widened sharply, meaning a growing share of policing costs are being funded through general municipal taxation rather than fines, fees, or external revenues.
- Municipalities such as Taber, Sylvan Lake, and Coaldale have particularly high per capita policing costs relative to their peers.

Bylaw Services

- Bylaw expenditures per capita have increased more gradually, with a noticeable but smaller upward trend compared to police services.
- Bylaw revenues per capita remain low across almost all municipalities, rarely exceeding \$20 per capita, with the exception of recent growth in Coaldale and Sylvan Lake.
- Most municipalities recover only a small fraction of their bylaw enforcement costs through revenues, making bylaw enforcement similarly reliant on general municipal funding.

Overall Financial Pattern

- In both policing and bylaw enforcement, municipalities are spending more but recovering less through direct revenues.
- Service costs have risen faster than inflation and population growth.
- Revenue streams tied to enforcement activities have weakened, likely due to shifts in enforcement practices, lower fine collection rates, legal limits on fine amounts, or broader policy changes.
- As a result, municipalities are facing increasing fiscal pressure to fund essential safety services through property taxes and other general revenues.

Crime Severity Index

Total (Comparable Municipalities)

General Trends

- Some communities (notably High Level, Wetaskiwin, Coaldale, Drayton Valley) have seen significant increases in crime severity since 2015.
- Others (like Lacombe, Sylvan Lake) maintain low or stable crime severity levels.
- Overall, the comparable group average has edged upwards, indicating a modest but general increase in crime severity over the past decade and a half.

Summary Context

- Rising crime severity in certain municipalities may be contributing to increased police and bylaw expenditures, as communities respond to greater service demands.
- Municipalities with lower crime severity still face rising policing costs, suggesting that service delivery models, provincial standards, inflation, and other factors are driving costs, not just crime rates.
- Strategic resource planning must balance crime realities with fiscal realities, as not all expenditure growth is tied directly to local crime severity.

Violent Crime (Comparable Municipalities)

General Trends

- Violent crime severity increased significantly in several municipalities after 2015, particularly in High Level, Wetaskiwin, Coaldale, Drayton Valley, and RMH.
- Other municipalities (Lacombe, Whitecourt, Olds) show more stable or only modest changes in violent crime severity over time.

Summary Context

- The sharp rise in violent crime severity in select municipalities likely places additional pressures on policing resources and contributes to rising policing costs.
- Municipalities facing both rising violent crime and rising expenditures may experience compounding financial and public safety challenges.
- The broader increase in violent crime severity, even if modest in many communities, underscores the importance of sustained investment in public safety infrastructure.

Non-Violent Crime (Comparable Municipalities)

General Trends

- Non-violent crime severity rose sharply in several municipalities after 2015, especially in Wetaskiwin, Coaldale, High Level, and Drayton Valley.
- More recently (post-2020), many municipalities show plateauing or slight decreases in non-violent crime severity.

Summary Context

- The rise in non-violent crime severity complements the earlier findings around rising policing costs.
- Even when overall crime trends stabilize slightly, elevated non-violent crime, such as thefts, break-ins, and property offenses, likely continue driving demand for municipal policing resources.
- Addressing property crime issues remains critical in managing both public safety expectations and municipal budget pressures.

Financial Analysis

Transition Costs for a New or Regional Police Service Are Significant

Options involving the creation of a new municipal or regional police service (Models 1, 1A, 2) require multi-million-dollar transition costs (e.g., \$2.6M-\$3.2M), in addition to ongoing operating costs. During the transition period, RMH would still be obligated to pay for RCMP services, effectively doubling costs over the transition period.

Associated Risks

- Budget overruns due to unforeseen expenses during the transition.
- Duplication of costs (RCMP + new service concurrently).
- Community backlash if costs are not clearly communicated or deliverables are unclear.

RCMP Contract Costs Are Rising – But Still Cost Competitive

Although the RCMP contract cost was reported at \$2.4 million annually, rising costs (from salaries, collective bargaining, inflation) were acknowledged. Even with increases, the optimized RCMP model (Model 5) had the lowest projected cost over a 5-year span (\$3.3M → \$3.8M annually), and lowest total cost over six years (~\$1.4M transition-adjusted total) compared to all other models. Despite known issues, the RCMP often can be the most financially viable option for small and mid-sized municipalities.

Associated Risks

- Future cost escalation may erode the value proposition.
- Limited municipal influence over RCMP budgeting and staffing decisions.
- Officer shortages may create service delivery gaps, despite cost savings.

Smaller Municipal Forces Lack Economies of Scale

Independent police forces with 12-14 officers face challenges achieving 24/7 coverage, specialized units, or cost-efficiency without significant additional staff. External agreements for specialty services (e.g., K9, forensics) can be costly and uncertain. Sustaining small municipal police forces is difficult without regional partnerships or significant funding, as they lack the economies of scale needed for efficiency.

Associated Risks

- Under-resourcing and burnout among a small officer base.
- Expensive or unavailable access to specialized services (e.g., forensics, major crime investigation).
- Liability risks from inadequate internal capacity or oversight.

Hybrid & Regional Models May Offer Promise – But Are Complex

Options like Model 2 (regional force with Clearwater County) can share costs and provide service alignment but can require significant administrative overhead: detailed governance agreements, equitable cost-sharing formulas, willing partners, and joint operational planning. Regional models can work, and work effectively, but their complexity often delays implementation or limits political feasibility.

Associated Risks

- Negotiations, and possibly stakeholder conflict, over responsibilities.
- Conflicting priorities between rural and urban service delivery.
- Difficult-to-manage governance and accountability structures.
- Dispute resolution mechanisms may be challenged.

Financial Analysis Must Include Contingencies & Hidden Risks

Reports highlighted that legal, insurance, and investigative costs can spike unpredictably with new services. Vacancies, recruitment delays, and training requirements significantly affect feasibility. Financial models are challenged to account for risk buffers over and above baseline cost estimates.

Associated Risks

- Underestimating real or emergency costs (e.g., lawsuits, serious crimes).
- Shortfalls in insurance or investigative funding.
- Delays or disruptions from unanticipated services being unavailable from sourced service providers.

Contract Optimization & Oversight Provide Short-Term Gains

Model 5 includes hiring a Public Safety Manager and strengthening oversight through the Municipal Policing Committee, improving local control without major structural change. Recommendations may include stronger data transparency, performance metrics, and advocacy for better RCMP accountability. Effective contract management can yield significant operational improvements.

Associated Risks

- Insufficient follow-through or commitment to contract oversight reforms.
- Dependence on key personnel (e.g., new oversight manager).
- RCMP resistance to increased scrutiny or public reporting.

Policing Options

This analysis examined six different policing options, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages for the Town, as well as varying financial implications for the cost of delivering policing services. Each option examined the estimated full cost to the Town of delivering police services, and where appropriate, the start-up costs that could be expected where the option involves the establishment of a new municipal police service.

A Summary of Policing Models

Model 1 – Independent Municipal Police Service

This model proposes the establishment of a police service solely for RMH, offering the highest degree of local autonomy. An independent police service would allow policing strategies to be customized to the Town's specific priorities. However, this option carries the greatest financial burden and operational complexity. A key concern is that a small force of 12 officers would be insufficient to ensure sustainable 24/7 coverage and officer safety, with high start-up costs presenting a significant financial barrier. This model would require 18 or more sworn officers. With 12 sworn officers, the transition costs for this option are estimated to total \$2.6 million. The transition period would also require the Town to pay for policing under the current RCMP model.

Following transition, the total costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$4.0 million in the first year of operation and increasing to \$4.7 million in 5 years.

Model 1A – An Independent Municipal Police Service with Enhanced CPOs

Model 1A proposes a "hybrid" approach, where RMH establishes its own municipal police service with an authorized strength of 12 that is enhanced by an increase in the CPO deployment to 8. The key feature of this structure is designed to provide the Town with direct local control over law enforcement while creating a more financially sustainable framework, as the CPOs are more cost efficient than sworn officers. With 12 sworn officers, and an increase in the CPO compliment by 2 in each of the first 3 years, the transition costs for this option are estimated to total 2.6 million. The transition period would also require the Town to pay for policing under the current RCMP model. Following transition, the total costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$4.3 million in the first year of operation and increasing to \$6.2 million in 5 years.

Model 2 – Regional Independent Police Service

This option involves creating a unified regional police service in partnership with Clearwater County. By consolidating the Town's RCMP contingent and the County's CPOs, this model aims to improve service efficiency and deploy officers according to both urban and rural needs under the governance of a regional board. It leverages a combined public safety investment of over \$4.3 million annually and is eligible for various provincial grants, making it a high-impact option for integrated public safety. Model 2 would need, at a minimum, 16 sworn officers with CPOs (including one managing CPO). The transition costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$3.2 million, of which the Town's share is estimated to be \$1.6 million. This assumes that current police workload between the Town and the County – approximately 50/50 – would remain and be used to allocate the full cost of the shared service to each municipality. Following transition, the Town's share of total operating costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$2.9 million in the first year of operation and increasing to \$3.4 million in 5 years.

Model 3 – Enhanced Community Peace Officer (CPO) Program

Model 3 suggests expanding the Town's CPO program to supplement the 12-officer RCMP detachment. This "tiered policing" approach would use CPOs to handle bylaw enforcement, traffic control, and minor property crimes, freeing up RCMP officers to concentrate on more serious criminal investigations. This is more cost-effective than additional sworn officers. Model 3 would increase uniformed visibility and responsiveness to community concerns like property crime without altering the fundamental RCMP contract. The total costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$3.6 million in the first year of operation and increasing to \$4.5 million in 5 years.

Model 4 – Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS)

This model considers a future transition to the proposed Alberta Provincial Police Service; a new provincial agency intended as an alternative to the RCMP. While it could offer an alternative to rising RCMP costs, this option is currently hypothetical. The enabling legislation has not passed, and there are significant unresolved questions regarding cost, service standards, and how municipalities would opt-in. For now, it remains an uncertain and unavailable choice for RMH. If the APPS has a similar cost structure to that currently in place for the Ontario Provincial Police

(OPP) service, the cost of this option to the Town could range from \$4.1 million in the first year of operation to \$4.6 million in 5 years. It should be noted that, in the absence of detailed information about the service proposed by the Province of Alberta, these cost estimates are subject to change.

Model 5 – Remain with the RCMP & Optimize the MPSA Contract for Greater Efficiency & Control

Model 5 recommends retaining the existing RCMP contract but calls for the municipality to take a more assertive role in managing the agreement. This approach focuses on using the current MPSA to demand greater transparency, performance monitoring, and clear protocols for officer deployment to ensure RMH receives dedicated service. Like other cities and towns with the RCMP as their police service, this would require RMH to hire a Public Safety Manager that could oversee the Police Committee, the RCMP contract, and the CPOs. This role would serve to optimize the service delivery of the RCMP and coordinate the work of CPOs with the RCMP. The only additional cost would be the addition of the Public Safety Manager. The total cost of Model 5 would be the RCMP contract with 12 authorized sworn police officers, 3 authorized CPOs, and the newly created Public Safety Manager. The total costs associated with this option are estimated to total \$3.3 million in the first year of operation and increasing to \$3.8 million in 5 years.

Comparative Chart

For ease of comparison amongst the models, the following chart is included for review.

# of Officers	Pros	Challenges/Risks	Financial/Conclusion
MODEL 1 – INDEPENDENT MUNICIPAL POLICE SERVICE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 Officers ▪ 3 CPOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local control ▪ Tailored service ▪ Grant eligibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understaffed at 12 officers ▪ Expensive start-up ▪ Liability ▪ Tech and Legal burden ▪ No specialty services (i.e., K9, Forensics) 	<p>High autonomy, but likely not viable without major funding and staffing increase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition Cost: \$2.6m ▪ Annual Cost: \$4.0m to \$4.7m
MODEL 1A – INDEPENDENT MUNICIPAL POLICE SERVICE + ENHANCED CPOS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 Officers ▪ 8 CPOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More local control and visibility by CPOs ▪ Lower cost than an RCMP Officer ▪ Builds on existing program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited enforcement authority ▪ Risk of role creep ▪ Training, oversight, and coordination with RCMP challenges 	<p>Scalable solution provides more local control, and no increase in sworn officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition Cost: \$2.6m ▪ Annual Cost: \$4.1m to \$6.2m

# of Officers	Pros	Challenges/Risks	Financial/Conclusion
MODEL 2 – INDEPENDENT REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE WITH CLEARWATER COUNTY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 Officers 7 CPOs (1 managing CPO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared funding and governance Tailored urban/rural enforcement (e.g., OHV, West Country) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex transition and cost-sharing formula May require up to 20 sworn officers for sustainability 	<p>Strong regional potential with cost and service alignment if governance is equitable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition Cost: \$1.6m Annual Cost: \$2.9m to \$3.4m <p><i>(Note: Assumes the Town and County would share total costs 50/50.)</i></p>
MODEL 3 – RCMP WITH ENHANCED CPO PROGRAM			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Officers 8 CPOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased patrols and local enforcement Builds on current CPO framework Lower cost than additional RCMP officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited enforcement authority Risk of role creep Training, oversight, and coordination with RCMP challenges 	<p>A scalable solution to strengthen public safety, without increasing RCMP staffing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition Cost: N/A Annual Cost: \$3.4m to \$4.6m
MODEL 4 – TRANSITION TO ALBERTA PROVINCIAL POLICE			
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative to RCMP Potential rural response improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public business case or funding model Downloaded costs likely Overlaps with RCMP unclear 	<p>“Watch and wait” – not a current option for RMH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition Cost: N/A Annual Cost: \$3.7m to \$4.1m <p><i>(Note: Based on current OPP expenditures.)</i></p>
MODEL 5 – OPTIMIZE THE EXISTING RCMP SERVICE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Officers 3 CPOs 1 PSM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains RCMP benefits Customizable with targeted enhancements Optimization will provide RMH more data and input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still limited local control Add-ons equals added cost and no control on escalations 	<p>Cost-effective middle ground – optimize RCMP contract in the short- to mid-term, viability with flexibility to adapt to future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition Cost: N/A Annual Cost: \$3.3m to \$3.8m

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Maintain the RCMP Contract

It is recommended that the Town of Rocky Mountain House maintains the existing Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) contract (Model 5) and optimizes the MPSA as outlined in Recommendation 2.

After a thorough review and comprehensive analysis of the various policing models available to RMH, encompassing financial implications, operational feasibility, and alignment with community needs, the most strategic and prudent recommendation at this juncture is to maintain the existing RCMP contract (Model 5). This decision is predicated on optimizing service delivery within the established Municipal Police Service Agreement (MPSA) framework, further enhanced by robust local oversight.

Maintaining the RCMP contract (Model 5), while investing in oversight, CPO support, and data transparency, is the most cost-effective and feasible strategy has some significant upside potential for service improvement while doing so for the smallest incremental investment. This illustrates a broader reality for smaller municipalities in Alberta: incremental reform and contract optimization are often more sustainable than full structural change – at least until regional models or provincial alternatives arise.

Maintaining the RCMP contract provides stability within a known framework and leverages existing investments, avoiding the significant one-time transition costs, operational complexities, and inherent uncertainties associated with establishing new policing entities. While the current MPSA framework faces challenges such as escalating costs, persistent officer vacancies, and perceived limited local control, these are manageable through proactive and assertive contract management.

While the status quo with the RCMP presents challenges, it offers a foundational stability and access to broad resources that the other models currently lack in terms of proven feasibility and defined costs for Rocky Mountain House. The recommended path represents a paradigm shift towards proactive engagement and assertive contract management within the existing RCMP framework, bolstered by dedicated local oversight through the Police Committee and the strategic leadership of a Public Safety Manager. This multi-pronged approach offers the highest probability of achieving enhanced public safety, improved service levels, and a demonstrably better value proposition for RMH without incurring the substantial financial burdens and operational uncertainties of a transition to an alternative policing model.

The following is a comparative analysis of the models considered. This study reveals the significant challenges and uncertainties with the alternatives.

- **Independent Municipal Police Service (Model 1):** While offering greater local control, this model presents substantial initial transition costs. Furthermore, operational costs for a department of 12 officers are estimated at over \$3 million annually. Critically, the sources strongly suggest that it would be difficult, if not next to impossible, to operate an

independent municipal police department for RMH with a strength of only 12 police officers, and smaller departments generally struggle to maintain internal capacity for specialized services like major crime investigations or tactical response, often relying on costly or uncertain external agreements.

- **Independent Municipal Police Service with Enhanced Community Peace Officer Program (Model 1A):** Although this model will provide great control and uniformed presence in the Town, there remains significant start-up costs and operating expenses with a sworn officer compliment of 12 and a CPO compliment of 8. The sustainability of this model is questionable with vacancies, staffing challenges, and the mandatory training required for both sworn officers and CPOs.
- **Regional Independent Police Service (Model 2):** This model proposes integrating the Town's current RCMP payment of \$2.4 million and Clearwater County's \$1.35 million Police Funding Model (PFM) contribution, along with the County's 4 CPOs. While potentially leveraging existing CPO assets, establishing a new regional service would entail complex governance structures, equitable cost-sharing agreements for its projected sworn officers compliment and CPOs, and detailed operational planning across diverse urban and rural environments.
- **Enhanced Community Peace Officer Program (Model 3):** This model is a valuable supplementary measure, enhancing local visibility and addressing specific bylaw and traffic concerns, as demonstrated by Clearwater County's CPO program. However, an enhanced CPO program is designed to supplement RCMP services, not to replace them. While it can increase local control over certain enforcement priorities and provide a cost-effective resource for lower-risk activities, it does not fulfill the comprehensive policing mandate required of a primary police service.
- **Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS) (Model 4):** This proposed provincial alternative faces significant legislative uncertainty, with Bill 49's precise status and timeline remaining ambiguous. Financial projections for a provincial transition have varied wildly, with a 2021 PwC study estimating one-time costs at \$366 million and an annual loss of \$170 million in federal subsidies. Critics, including the National Police Federation, consistently raise concerns about high costs, potential underestimation, and the lack of a comprehensive, transparent business case for the current proposal.
- **Maintaining the RCMP as the Police of jurisdiction & Optimizing the MPSA (Model 5):** In contrast, maintaining the RCMP contract provides stability within a known framework and leverages existing investments, avoiding the significant one-time transition costs, operational complexities, and inherent uncertainties associated with establishing new policing entities. While the current MPSA framework faces challenges, such as escalating costs, persistent officer vacancies, and perceived limited local control, these are manageable through proactive and assertive contract management.

Recommendation 2 – Optimize the RCMP Contract

It is recommended that the following steps be taken to improve outcomes from the RCMP contract.

1. Strengthen the Municipal Policing Committee

This committee is the cornerstone of local civilian oversight. By adequately resourcing it with funding, oversight, administrative support, and training, and by establishing clear policy manuals, RMH can empower them to engage proactively to set and monitor annual policing plans and priorities effectively.

2. Demand Data-Driven Performance Reporting

Municipalities must insist on detailed, transparent, and meaningful performance metrics from the RCMP. This includes data on officer activity and deployment, response times, vacancy and staffing levels (including action plans to address them), proactive policing efforts, and community engagement metrics. Crucially, RMH must demand clear data on how municipally funded resources are allocated under the POST model, including time spent on municipal versus provincial calls and any cross-boundary deployments, to address concerns about potential subsidization and ensure fair value for money.

The section within [Enclosure II](#) of this report titled “Performance Metrics” details some of the metrics that should be considered in regular quarterly reporting to optimize the service delivery of the RCMP.

3. Advocate for Enhanced Service Delivery

This involves exploring strategies such as Continuous In-Town Coverage (CIC) to optimize response times and enhance visibility. Additionally, promoting and partnering in community-centric policing models, as exemplified by Beaumont’s initiatives, can foster stronger community ties and proactive problem-solving. If RMH was to consider increasing the staffing level of the RCMP from the current 12 authorized positions, it could be predicated on a formal agreement for continuous in-town coverage.

4. Strategic Engagement & Advocacy

The upcoming 2032 MPSA expiry provides significant leverage for future negotiations. RMH should proactively engage in collective advocacy through organizations like Alberta Municipalities to address systemic issues related to RCMP contract policing, including costs, human resource management, and transparency in national budgeting.

Recommendation 3 – Create an Integrated Public Safety Unit

It is recommended that RMH strengthen the management and support of public safety services by creating a Public Safety Manager position and integrating public safety staff and activities under that manager's directions.

A critical enhancement to this optimized Model 5 approach is the establishment of a **Public Safety Manager** position. This role would provide a centralized point of oversight for the RCMP contract, the Municipal Policing Committee, and the Town's own CPOs. This integrated management approach offers several advantages:

- **Cohesive Strategy:** A Public Safety Manager can ensure a unified and consistent approach to public safety across all municipal assets, including the RCMP relationship and the CPO program. This role would bridge the oversight gap between the committee's mandate and the day-to-day operational realities, fostering a more effective and coordinated public safety strategy for the Town.
- **Accountability & Value Proposition:** This position would directly oversee the fulfillment of the MPSA, diligently scrutinize RCMP performance data, support the Police Committee and manage the CPO program, thereby enhancing the Town's capacity to hold the RCMP accountable and ensure it receives optimal value for its \$2.4 million annual investment.
- **Strategic Integration of CPOs:** By directly overseeing the CPOs, the Public Safety Manager can ensure their duties strategically complement RCMP efforts, optimizing resource allocation and addressing specific local needs, effectively integrating the benefits of an enhanced Model 3 program within the primary RCMP framework.

Conclusion

The Town of Rocky Mountain House embarked on a review of its policing model, expenditures, and effectiveness to determine the best way to ensure the safety of its residents and visitors. Considerable time and resources were devoted to gathering reliable information about the community, the existing service, and possible alternative models. Citizens were invited to participate, and many did, bringing their experience and wisdom to the review. In the end, a solution was proposed to build on past successes and prepare the community for quick and effective responses to changes that will arise in the next few years.

Enclosure I: Policing Background Information

Policing in Canada

Federal

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is Canada's national police service and the largest single policing agency in the country. It enforces federal laws, investigates financial and organized crime, protects national security, and ensures the safety of state officials and foreign dignitaries. The RCMP also provides policing services under contract to all territories and provinces, except Ontario and Quebec. In addition, it provides policing services to more than 150 municipalities and 600 Indigenous communities. In total, the RCMP is the primary policing provider for 20% of Canada's population.

The RCMP is also mandated to provide technical or support services to all Canadian public police forces. This includes the Canadian Police College and the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). Other specialized services include Laboratory Services, the Canadian Firearms Program, and the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre.

Provincial

The provinces are responsible for public policing. Independent provincial police services exist in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In all other provinces and territories, the RCMP, through contract provide policing services to areas that don't have municipal police forces, provide policing services.

Provincial policing includes, but is not limited, to:

- Policing rural areas and small municipalities
- Highway patrol
- Multi-jurisdictional investigative teams
- Specialized Services including, but not limited to:
 - Tactical
 - Major crime

Municipal

In Canada, most urban municipalities with a population of 50,000 or more have their own police service. Provincial Police Acts stipulate the requirements for maintaining an independent police service. Most, if not all, municipal police services are overseen by a civilian board or commission. Additionally, the Province will have further standards and evaluation requirements for such services.

First Nations

Most First Nation and Inuit communities are presently policed by the RCMP or a provincial police service; however, there is a growing trend of First Nations and Inuit communities forming their own police services. Funding for these police services is often done through a tri-party agreement between the First Nation or Inuit, provincial government, and federal government.

Once formed, these police services are full-authority policing agencies and meet the same standards as other municipal policing agencies for that province.

Other

Canada also has a few police agencies who carry federal authority to appoint a police officer. Examples of this include CP Rail Police and CN Rail Police. Both agencies employ police officers who have been authorized as such through the *Railway Act*. The Military Police is another such agency. While working within the scope of their duties, these officers have the same or similar authorities as their municipal, provincial, or federal counterparts.

Policing in Alberta

Legislation

In Alberta, policing is community-based. Police services, oversight bodies, the Alberta government, and a number of independent agencies and organizations, civilian groups, and municipal bodies work in partnership across the province to:

- Help keep communities safe; and
- Ensure policing services are effective and performing their duties according to legislated requirements, standards, and community priorities.

Roles and responsibilities for policing and how police services, oversight bodies, and associated policing partners and systems operate are set out in the [Police Act](#), [Police Service Regulation](#), and provincial standards.

Where the RCMP have been contracted to provide the police services, requirements of the [RCMP Act](#) also apply.

Provincial standards are in place for both police services and police oversight. These standards include the [Alberta Provincial Policing Standards](#) and Policing Oversight Standards for commissions and committees.

Civilian Oversight & Governance

Balancing the independence and authority of law enforcement on one hand, and their accountability to the public and the civilian authority on the other, is a vital part of our democratic society. Oversight and governing bodies need to strike this balance between police independence to conduct investigations and maintain order without undue political or other influence, with the need for accountability to the public.

In accordance with the *Police Act*, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General set the standards for effective policing across Alberta, while a municipality is responsible to oversee policing in their community. The forms in which municipal oversight is provided depend on who delivers the policing services. If a municipality has an independent police service or regional police service, they are required to have a police commission. Whereas a municipality that has contracted the RCMP may establish a policing committee. Members of a police commission or policing committee are usually citizens from the local community, but they often include a small number of city employees and/or council members. If no policing committee is established in an RCMP-

policed municipality, the Municipal Police Service Agreement identifies the mayor as the de facto oversight body.

According to the Province of Alberta's *Police Act*, municipalities have the choice to enter a variety of policing agreements. These include:

- Engaging the provincial police as a municipal service (Alberta currently has an agreement with the RCMP to provide provincial policing services for the province);
- Entering into an agreement for the provision of municipal policing services from another police service;
- Establishing a regional police service; or
- Establishing a municipal police service.

Governance and oversight for each of these policing options differ. According to the *Police Act*, The Town of Rocky Mountain House's Council may establish a policing committee with no fewer than 3 and no more than 12 members for a term of 3 years. The role of the police committee, as a civilian group, is to work directly with the police agency (RCMP) to:

- Set priorities for policing in the community;
- Communicate the public and Council's interests; and
- Develop annual plans.

Enclosure II: Financial Analysis & Comparator Information

Comparable Municipalities

Crime Severity Index

Performance Metrics

Analysis of Police Service Options

Status Quo – RCMP

Option 1 – Independent Municipal Police Service

Option 1A – Independent Municipal Police Service + CPO's

Option 2 – Regional Independent Police Service

Option 3 – Expanded Community Peace Office Program

Option 4 – Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS)

Option 5 – Optimized RCMP Police Service

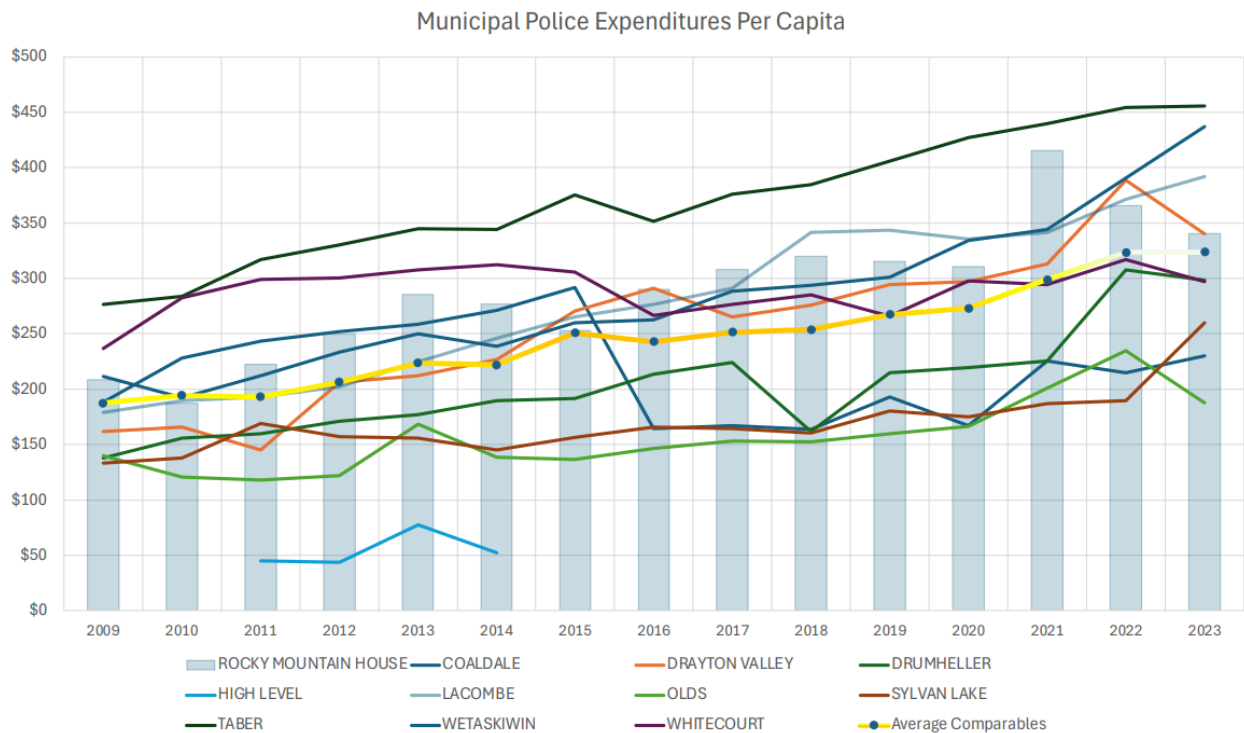
Policing Revenues

Comparable Municipalities

An analysis was completed evaluating 10 'comparable' municipalities to Rocky Mountain House to determine context for the other work around perceptions of community safety and the cost of delivering policing and bylaw enforcement. The comparable used for this analysis include the following:

- Town of Coaldale
- Town of Drayton Valley
- Town of Drumheller
- Town of High Level
- City of Lacombe
- Town of Olds
- Town of Sylvan Lake
- Town of Taber
- City of Wetaskiwin
- Town of Whitecourt

Municipal Police Expenditures Per Capita (2009-2023)¹



¹ The source of the population for all municipalities is the Alberta Regional Dashboard. These population values are estimates provided by the Alberta Office of Statistics and Information, Demography and Social Statistics group. If the estimated population figures for Rocky Mountain House are higher than the actual figures, the corresponding expenditures per capita would be higher than reflected in the chart.

Key Observations

- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows **steady growth** in police expenditures per capita, increasing year over year, with larger jumps after 2020.
- **Taber** (dark green line) maintains **the highest per capita police expenditures** throughout the entire period, with a continuous upward trend.
- **Wetaskiwin** (dark blue line) and **Lacombe** (light blue line) both show **strong increases**, particularly after 2018.
- **Drayton Valley** (orange line) and **Drumheller** (dark green line) demonstrate **significant growth** in expenditures after 2020.
- **Whitecourt** (violet line) shows **minor fluctuations** but remains fairly consistent over time.
- **Olds** (light green line) shows **some volatility**, particularly with an expenditure dip around 2017-2018, followed by growth into 2022 before dropping again.
- The **average across comparables** (yellow dots with blue line) shows **a steady increase** in police expenditures over the 15-year period.

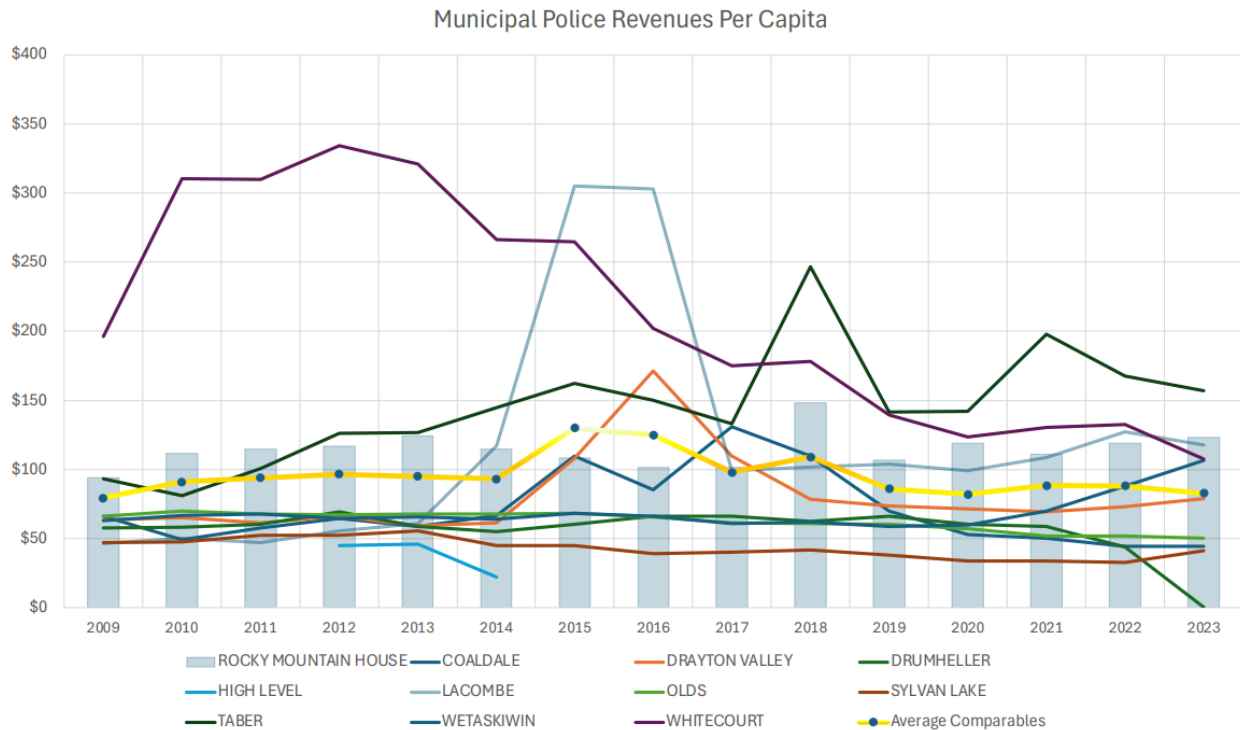
General Trends

- Overall, per capita police spending has risen across almost all municipalities, with more noticeable increases after 2018.
- The average expenditure among comparables has consistently increased at a moderate pace.
- Some municipalities like Taber, Wetaskiwin, and Lacombe are spending well above the average by 2023.

Summary Context

- Rising police expenditures per capita are a clear trend across small- and mid-sized municipalities.
- Population growth alone (seen in earlier charts) does not fully explain these increases; other factors (such as service model changes, inflation in policing costs, and public safety demands) are likely major drivers.

Municipal Police Revenues Per Capita (2009-2023)²



Key Observations

- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows relatively **stable and gradual growth** in police revenues per capita over the period, rising from around \$90 to nearly \$125 by 2023.
- **Wetaskiwin** (purple line) had **very high revenues** early on (2009-2014), peaking around **\$330 per capita**, but has **steadily declined** since then.
- **Lacombe** (light blue line) shows a **spike in revenues** around **2014-2016**, reaching over **\$300 per capita**, before rapidly falling back to lower levels.
- The **average** across comparables (yellow dots with blue line) is **mostly flat**, sitting around **\$80-\$100 per capita**, with a slight decrease after 2016.

General Trends

- Police revenues per capita have generally decreased since peaking between 2015-2016 for most municipalities.
- Towns that once had very high police revenues (Wetaskiwin, Lacombe) are now closer to the average or below it.

² The source of the population for all municipalities is the Alberta Regional Dashboard. These population values are estimates provided by the Alberta Office of Statistics and Information, Demography and Social Statistics group. If the estimated population figures for Rocky Mountain House are higher than the actual figures, the corresponding revenues per capita would be higher than reflected in the chart.

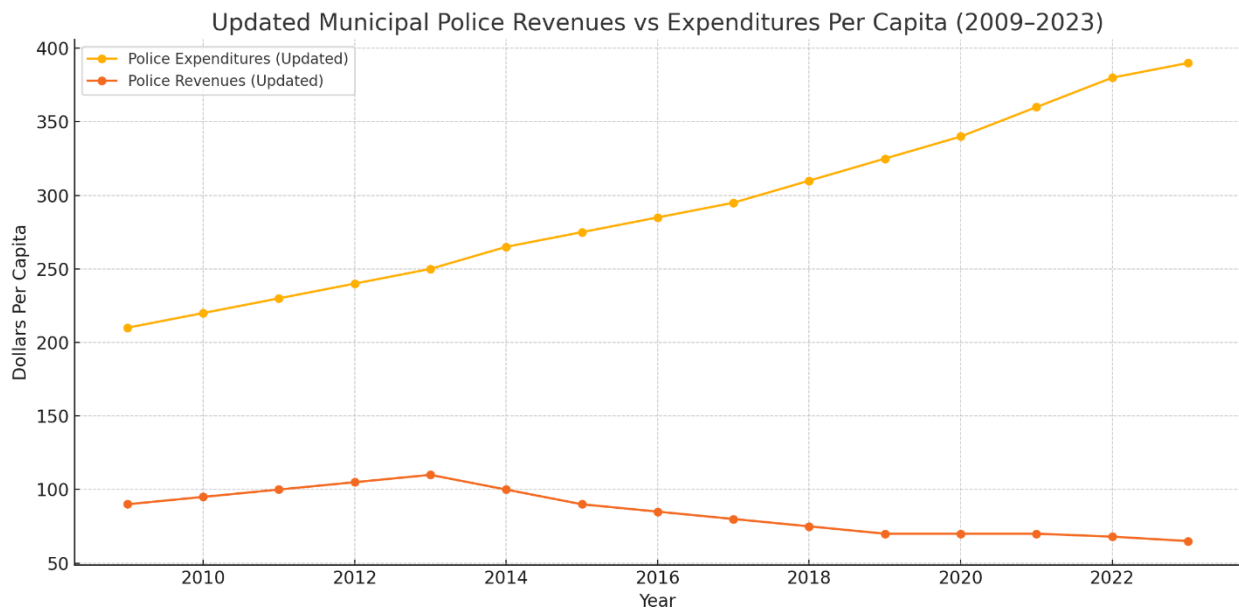
- A few towns (Rocky Mountain House, Taber) are holding steady or slightly improving revenue per capita, but they are the exception.

Summary Context

- Compared to rising police expenditures (seen in the previous chart), police revenues are flat or declining – meaning the gap between costs and revenues continues to widen.
- Some municipalities that once relied heavily on police-generated revenues (e.g., Wetaskiwin, Lacombe) have shifted to funding policing more through general taxation as fines and enforcement revenues decreased.

Municipal Police Financial Sustainability Challenges (2009-2023)

Over the past 15 years, municipalities have faced a growing financial challenge in funding police services.



Key Findings

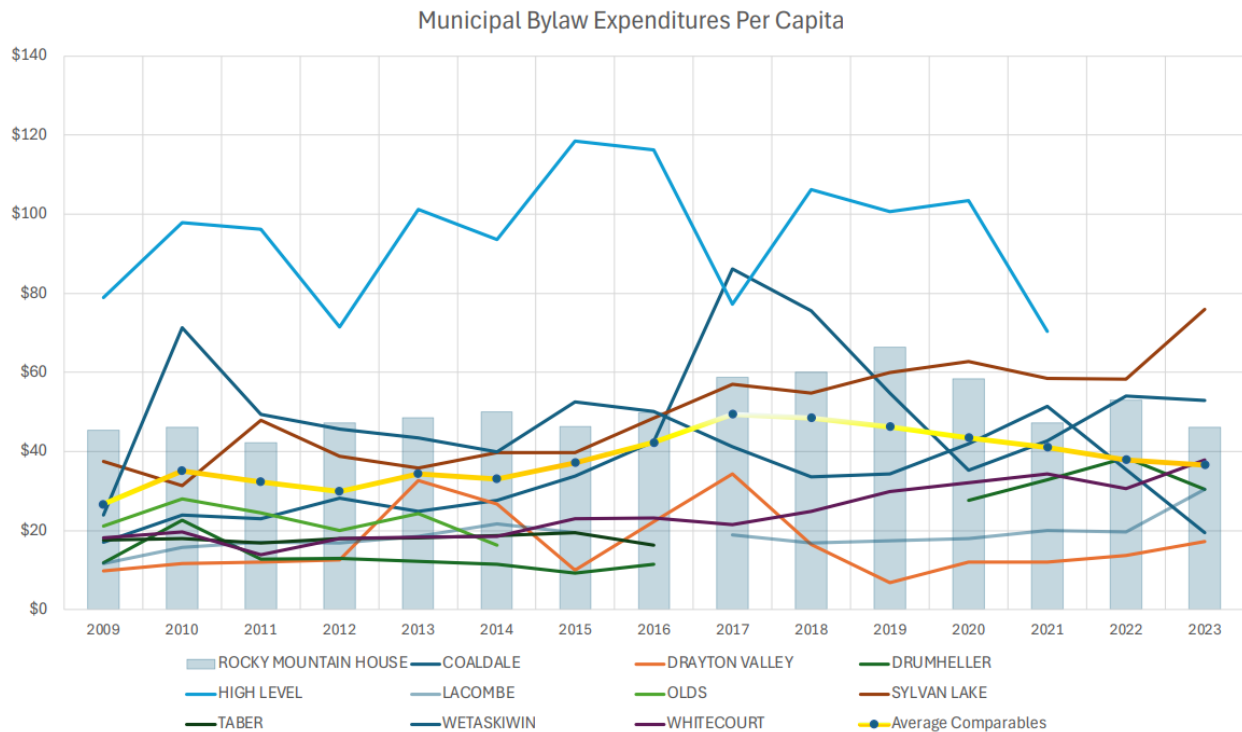
- Police expenditures per capita have steadily and significantly increased from 2009 to 2023, rising by nearly 80% in many communities.
- Police revenues per capita, however, have declined or remained flat since peaking around 2013-2014.
- The result is a widening gap between what municipalities spend on policing and what they recover through fines, fees, and other enforcement-related revenues.
- Communities that once had substantial revenue offsets (such as Wetaskiwin and Lacombe) have seen these sources diminish, leaving a greater burden on general taxation.
- Meanwhile, population growth has been relatively modest in most communities (except for a few, like Sylvan Lake), meaning increased expenditures are not solely driven by

population pressures, but also by rising service costs, inflation, and expanded service demands.

Implications

- Municipalities are paying more every year to deliver police services, but recovering less, creating a structural funding gap that will require strategic action to manage.
- Municipalities are increasingly subsidizing police services through property taxes and general revenues.
- The rising cost pressures without corresponding revenue growth threaten the long-term sustainability of current policing models.
- Without structural adjustments – such as alternative revenue sources, cost containment measures, or revised policing approaches – municipalities will likely face difficult budget choices in the coming years.

Municipal Bylaw Expenditures Per Capita (2009-2023)³



Key Observations

- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows **gradually increasing bylaw expenditures** per capita between 2009 and 2019, peaking around 2019, then slightly declining by 2023.
- **High Level** (bright blue line) has **the highest and most volatile expenditures**, peaking several times (2010, 2015, 2018) and maintaining levels much higher than other municipalities (ranging from ~80 to ~120 per capita).
- The average among comparables (yellow dots/line) remains fairly flat over the period, ranging from about \$30 to \$40 per capita.

General Trends

- Overall, municipal bylaw expenditures per capita have increased modestly over the period, especially after 2015 for several municipalities.
- Bylaw spending is much lower than police spending across all towns (as shown in earlier charts).

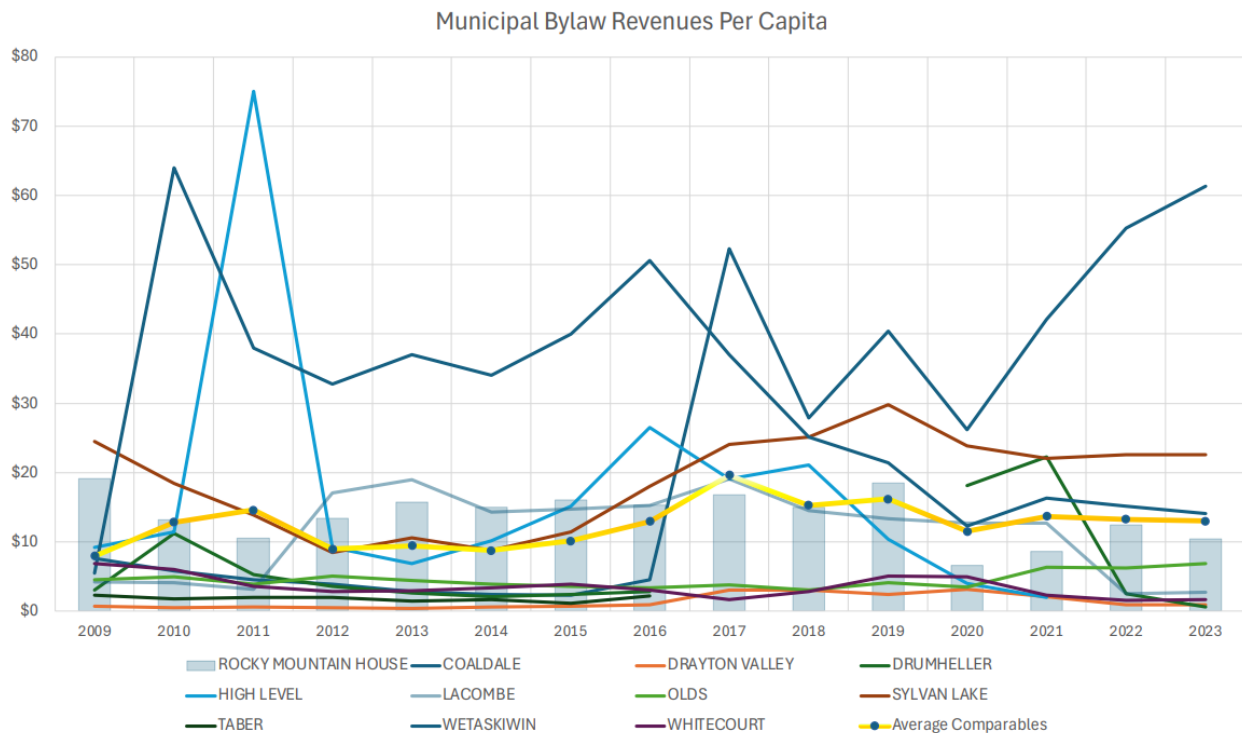
³ The source of the population for all municipalities is the Alberta Regional Dashboard. These population values are estimates provided by the Alberta Office of Statistics and Information, Demography and Social Statistics group. If the estimated population figures for Rocky Mountain House are higher than the actual figures, the corresponding expenditures per capita would be higher than reflected in the chart.

- The average bylaw expenditure per capita across comparables is relatively flat and lower compared to the rise in police costs.

Summary Context

- Bylaw services remain a much smaller municipal cost center compared to policing.
- Most municipalities are seeing only modest increases or relatively stable spending on bylaw services.

Municipal Bylaw Revenues Per Capita (2009-2023)⁴



Key Observations

- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows **stable but low bylaw revenues** over time, around **\$10-\$20 per capita**, with a slight decline toward 2023.
- The **average across comparables** (yellow dots/line) remains **low and stable**, roughly between **\$8 and \$12 per capita** across the entire period.

⁴ The source of the population for all municipalities is the Alberta Regional Dashboard. These population values are estimates provided by the Alberta Office of Statistics and Information, Demography and Social Statistics group. If the estimated population figures for Rocky Mountain House are higher than the actual figures, the corresponding revenues per capita would be higher than reflected in the chart.

General Trends

- Overall, bylaw revenues per capita remain low compared to bylaw expenditures.
- Only a few municipalities (Coaldale and Sylvan Lake) show significant increases in bylaw revenue collection.
- Most municipalities recover a small fraction of their bylaw enforcement costs through revenues.

Summary Context

- Bylaw services are largely subsidized by general municipal funds.
- Bylaw revenues have not kept pace with even modest increases in bylaw expenditures (seen in the previous chart).
- Revenue spikes (such as Coaldale's) are exceptions rather than the norm.
- This reinforces that, much like policing, bylaw enforcement is increasingly a cost center, not a self-funding service.

Summary of Financial Analysis

From 2009 to 2023, municipal expenditures on both police and bylaw services have steadily increased, outpacing population growth and inflation. At the same time, revenues from fines and enforcement activities have declined or remained flat, creating a widening funding gap. Police expenditures rose by 60-80% over the period, while bylaw expenditures also grew moderately, though both service areas now rely heavily on general taxation for financial support. Only a few municipalities, such as Coaldale and Sylvan Lake, have seen notable increases in enforcement-related revenues. Without changes to service delivery models, revenue strategies, or cost structures, municipalities will continue to face rising fiscal pressure to sustain public safety services.

Overall Financial Pattern

- In both policing and bylaw enforcement, municipalities are spending more but recovering less through direct revenues.
- Service costs have risen faster than inflation and population growth.
- Revenue streams tied to enforcement activities have weakened, due to shifts in enforcement practices, lower fine collection rates, legal limits on fine amounts, or broader policy changes.
- As a result, municipalities are facing increasing fiscal pressure to fund essential safety services through property taxes and other general revenues.

Crime Severity Index

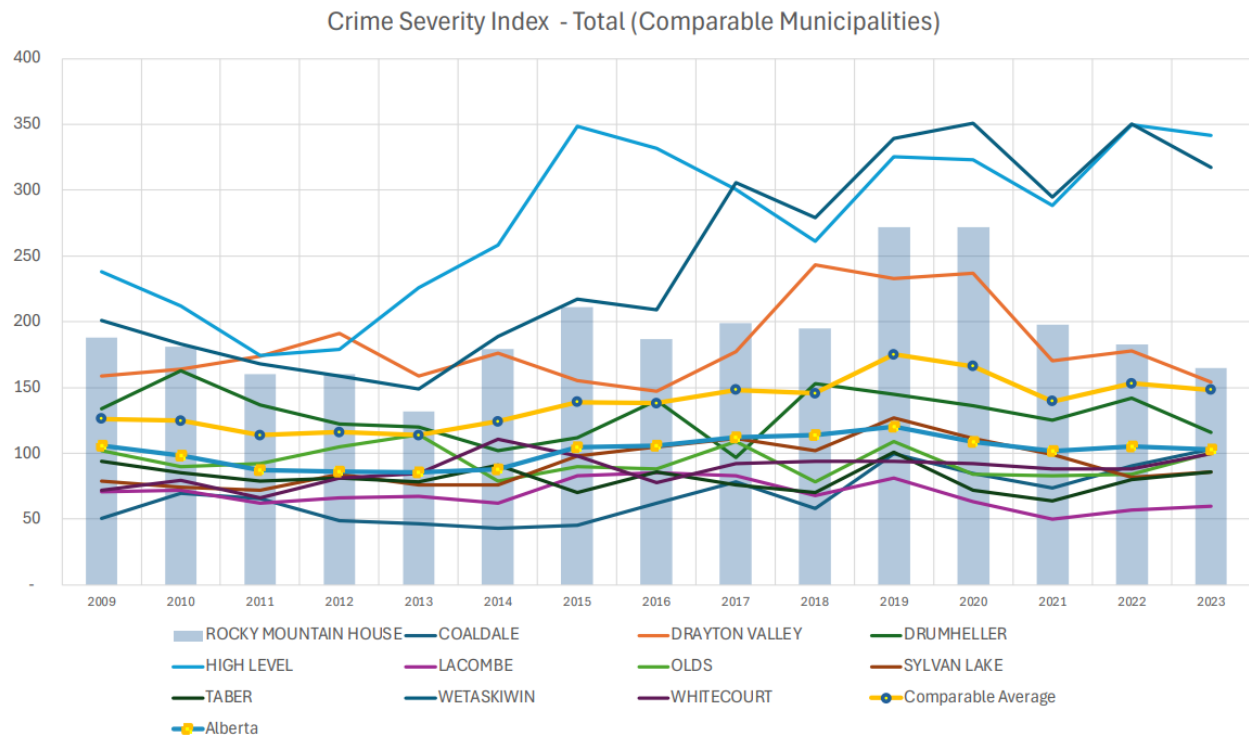
The Crime Severity Index (CSI)⁵ in Canada is a measure used by Statistics Canada to track changes in the severity of police-reported crime from year to year. It is designed to provide a more comprehensive view of crime in Canada than the traditional crime rate. The CSI takes into account both the volume and the seriousness of crimes reported to the police. Here's what is generally included in the CSI:

1. **Range of Crimes:** The CSI includes all Criminal Code violations, including traffic, as well as drug violations and all federal statutes. It covers a wide range of offenses, from minor ones like theft and vandalism to major ones like assault, murder, and sexual assault.
2. **Weighting of Offenses:** Unlike traditional crime statistics, which count each offense equally, the CSI assigns a weight to each type of offense based on the average sentence handed down by criminal courts. More serious crimes like murder are given more weight than less serious ones like minor thefts. This means that more serious crimes have a greater impact on the overall CSI score.
3. **Calculation Method:** The CSI is calculated by multiplying the number of incidents of each offense by the weight of that offense and then summing these products. This total is then divided by the population size, and the result is multiplied by 100,000 to get the CSI value.
4. **Comparisons Over Time & Geography:** The CSI allows for the comparison of the severity of crime across different regions and over different time periods. This helps in understanding whether the nature of crime is becoming more or less serious and how it varies across different areas.
5. **Sub-Indices:** There are also sub-indices for violent crime and non-violent crime, allowing for a more detailed analysis of trends in these specific areas.

The CSI is a valuable tool for law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and the public to understand the nature and severity of crime in Canada, beyond what traditional crime rates can offer. It provides a more nuanced view of the crime landscape, considering not just the volume of crime, but also its seriousness.

⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023041-eng.htm>

Total (Comparable Municipalities, 2009-2023)



Key Observations

- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows **generally rising crime severity** from 2009 to a peak around 2019-2020, then a slight decline by 2023.
- **High Level** (light blue line) consistently has the **highest crime severity index** among comparators, fluctuating but reaching **over 350** by 2020-2023.
- **Wetaskiwin** (dark blue line) has seen significant increases in crime since 2016 and now has the second **highest crime severity index** among comparators.
- **Coaldale** (dark blue line) shows an **increase** starting around 2015, stabilizing at a high level after 2018.
- **Drayton Valley** (orange line) shows a **large increase** from 2015 to 2019, peaking around 240, then declining.
- **Taber** (dark green line) and **Wetaskiwin** (gray-blue line) show **variable but generally moderate** crime severity levels.
- **Sylvan Lake** (brown line) remains relatively **low and stable**, below the average for comparables.
- **Lacombe** (purple line) consistently has the **lowest crime severity** among all towns across the whole period.
- **Whitecourt** (violet line) and **Olds** (light green line) maintain **moderate, stable levels** with small fluctuations.

- The average for comparable municipalities (blue dots) has been slowly trending upwards over time.
- **Alberta's provincial average** (yellow squares and line) is also plotted, showing a **higher baseline** but fairly **flat** over time, with a slight increase after 2016.

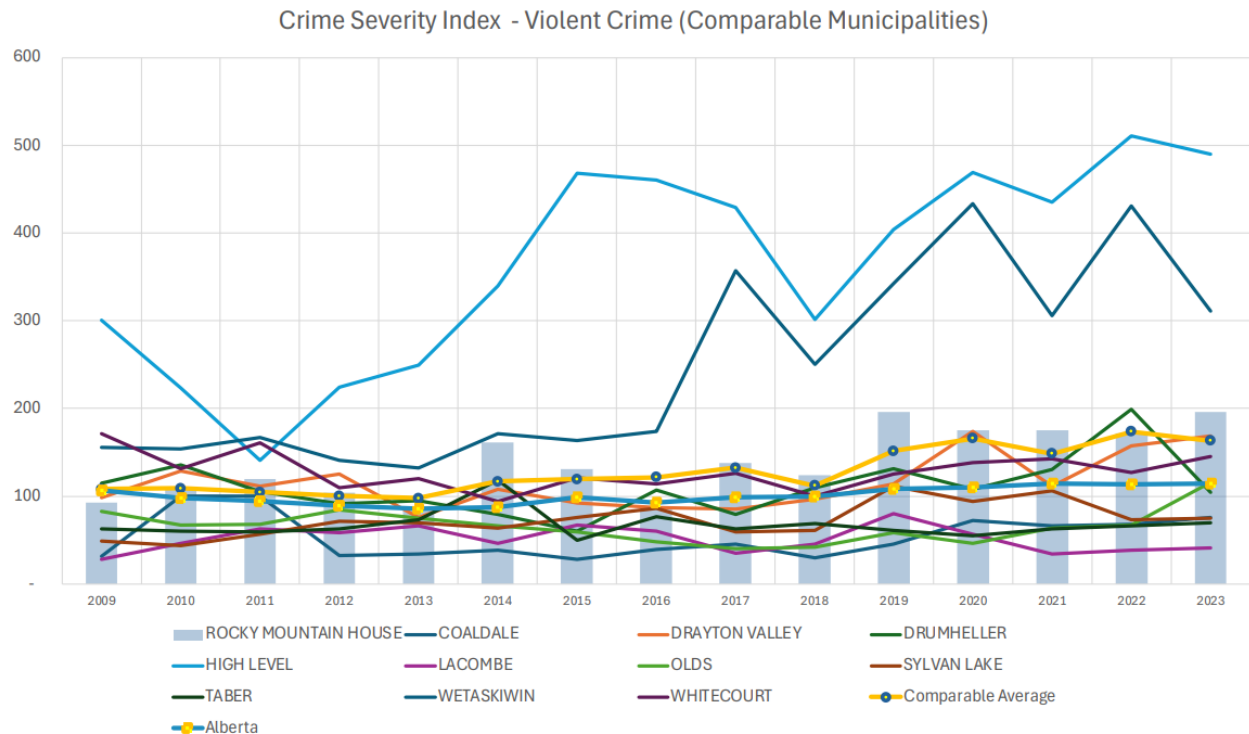
General Trends

- Some communities (notably High Level, Wetaskiwin, Coaldale, Drayton Valley) have seen significant increases in crime severity since 2015.
- Others (like Lacombe, Sylvan Lake) maintain low or stable crime severity levels.
- Overall, the comparable group average has edged upwards, indicating a modest but general increase in crime severity over the past decade and a half.

Summary Context

- Rising crime severity in certain municipalities may be contributing to increased police and bylaw expenditures, as communities respond to greater service demands.
- Municipalities with lower crime severity still face rising policing costs, suggesting that service delivery models, provincial standards, inflation, and other factors are driving costs, not just crime rates.
- Strategic resource planning must balance crime realities with fiscal realities, as not all expenditure growth is tied directly to local crime severity.

Violent Crime (Comparable Municipalities, 2009-2023)



Key Observations

- **High Level** (light blue line) has the **highest and most volatile violent crime severity index** by far, peaking above **500** in recent years (2021-2023).
- **Wetaskiwin** (dark blue line) has the second **highest violent crime severity index**, increasing significantly after 2016.
- **Coaldale** (dark blue line) shows a **major spike starting around 2016**, with violent crime severity climbing and staying elevated above the comparable average.
- **Drayton Valley** (orange line) shows **rising violent crime severity**, especially after 2015, peaking in 2020-2022.
- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) displays a **steady increase in violent crime severity**, especially after 2016, reaching its highest point in 2023.
- **Taber** (dark green line), **Sylvan Lake** (brown line), and **Olds** (light green line) show **modest but noticeable increases** in violent crime severity after 2015.
- **Lacombe** (purple line) maintains **the lowest violent crime severity** among all comparables, with very little movement over time.
- **Whitecourt** (violet line) fluctuate but remain generally below the comparable average.
- The comparable municipalities' average (blue dots) shows a modest upward trend, especially after 2015.

- **Alberta's provincial violent crime severity average** (yellow squares) remains relatively stable but **slightly below** the comparable average in most years.

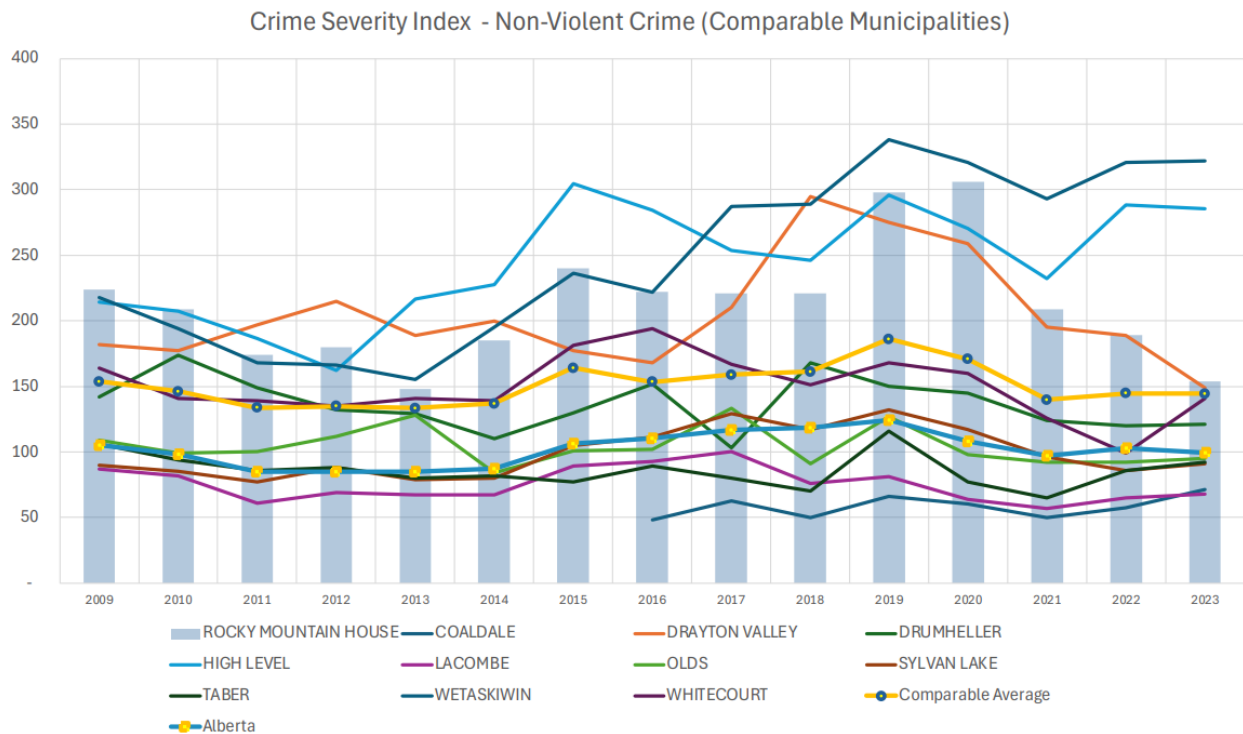
General Trends

- Violent crime severity increased significantly in several municipalities after 2015, particularly in High Level, Wetaskiwin, Drayton Valley, and Rocky Mountain House.
- Other municipalities (Lacombe, Whitecourt, Olds) show more stable or only modest changes in violent crime severity over time.

Summary Context

- The sharp rise in violent crime severity in some municipalities likely places **additional pressures on policing resources** and contributes to **rising policing costs**.
- Municipalities facing both rising violent crime and rising expenditures may experience compounding financial and public safety challenges.
- The broader increase in violent crime severity, even if modest in many communities, underscores the importance of **sustained investment in public safety infrastructure**.

Non-Violent Crime (Comparable Municipalities, 2009-2023)



Key Observations

- **Wetaskiwin** (dark blue line) shows an increasingly **elevated non-violent crime severity**, making it the highest among the comparables.
- **Rocky Mountain House** (light blue bars) shows **variable but generally elevated non-violent crime severity**, peaking around 2019-2020, then trending down to the comparable average by 2023.
- **Coaldale** (dark blue line) shows a **strong and sustained increase** in non-violent crime severity after 2015, peaking above **340** in 2020-2021.
- **High Level** (light blue line) maintains **high non-violent crime severity** levels, especially peaking between 2015-2020, before slightly stabilizing.
- **Drayton Valley** (orange line) experiences a **sharp rise in non-violent crime** starting around 2015, peaking around 2019, followed by a recent decline.
- **Sylvan Lake** (brown line) shows a **gradual increase** in non-violent crime severity from 2015 onward, although it remains below the highest-risk municipalities.
- **Taber** (dark green line), **Olds** (light green line), and **Wetaskiwin** (gray-blue line) show **moderate increases** followed by some stabilization.
- Lacombe (purple line) and Whitecourt (violet line) maintain lower and relatively stable non-violent crime severity compared to most others.

- **The comparable average** (yellow dots) shows a **gentle upward trend** until around 2019, then leveling off slightly.
- **Alberta's provincial non-violent crime index** (yellow squares) is consistently **lower** than the comparable average through most of the period.

General Trends

- Non-violent crime severity rose sharply in several municipalities after 2015, especially in Wetaskiwin, Coaldale, High Level, and Drayton Valley.
- More recently (post-2020), many municipalities show plateauing or slight decreases in non-violent crime severity.

Summary Context

- The rise in non-violent crime severity complements the earlier findings around rising policing costs.
- Even when overall crime trends stabilize slightly, elevated non-violent crime, such as thefts, break-ins, and property offenses, likely continue driving demand for municipal policing resources.
- Addressing property crime issues remains critical in managing both public safety expectations and municipal budget pressures.

Performance Metrics

While Municipal Police Committees do not possess the authority to direct RCMP operations, their statutory mandate empowers them to rigorously oversee the Municipal Police Service Agreement (MPSA) and hold the service accountable for its performance. To achieve this, it is crucial for committees to demand regular, detailed, and meaningful performance reports from the local RCMP detachment, moving beyond basic crime statistics.

These reports, ideally provided on a **quarterly basis**, should encompass a range of vital operational and administrative metrics, enabling informed evaluation of service delivery and value for money.

Operational Performance Metrics

- Property crime
- Violent crime
- Calls for service
- Files – how many written
- Arrests
- Warrants
- Clearance rates
- Mental health related files
- Major crimes – mental health related files

- Problem solving files/initiatives
- Proactive work – foot patrol/curfew checks
- Community partnership time – working with partners or stakeholders
- Community meetings
- Response times to all priorities in Town
- Number of times the RMH was left without any officers in Town
- Call split between Town, County, and First Nations
- Breakdown of the types of calls for service in town and out of town – looking at complexity of calls
- Traffic – enforcement

Administrative Performance Metrics

- Overtime
- Budget performance
- Vacancies – hard and soft
- Vacancy projections – when will they be filled and how long will they be vacant (this is both the Town and the provincial officers)
- Sick time
- Open positions/job postings
- Workplace injuries
- Time to fill vacancies
- Complaints
- Use of force incidents
- Media releases and social media
- Upcoming training – courses and conferences
- Front counter statistics – how many walk ins
- Community engagement – events attended or proactive initiatives
- Fleet – any issues
- Number of police information checks – criminal record checks

Analysis of Municipal Police Service Options

Summarized below are expenditure and revenue data as reported by Alberta Municipal Affairs Financial Information Reports. This data is collected from all municipalities and provides a basis for in year and historical comparisons. It is noted that there are some irregularities with some of the data in some years.

Status Quo – RCMP

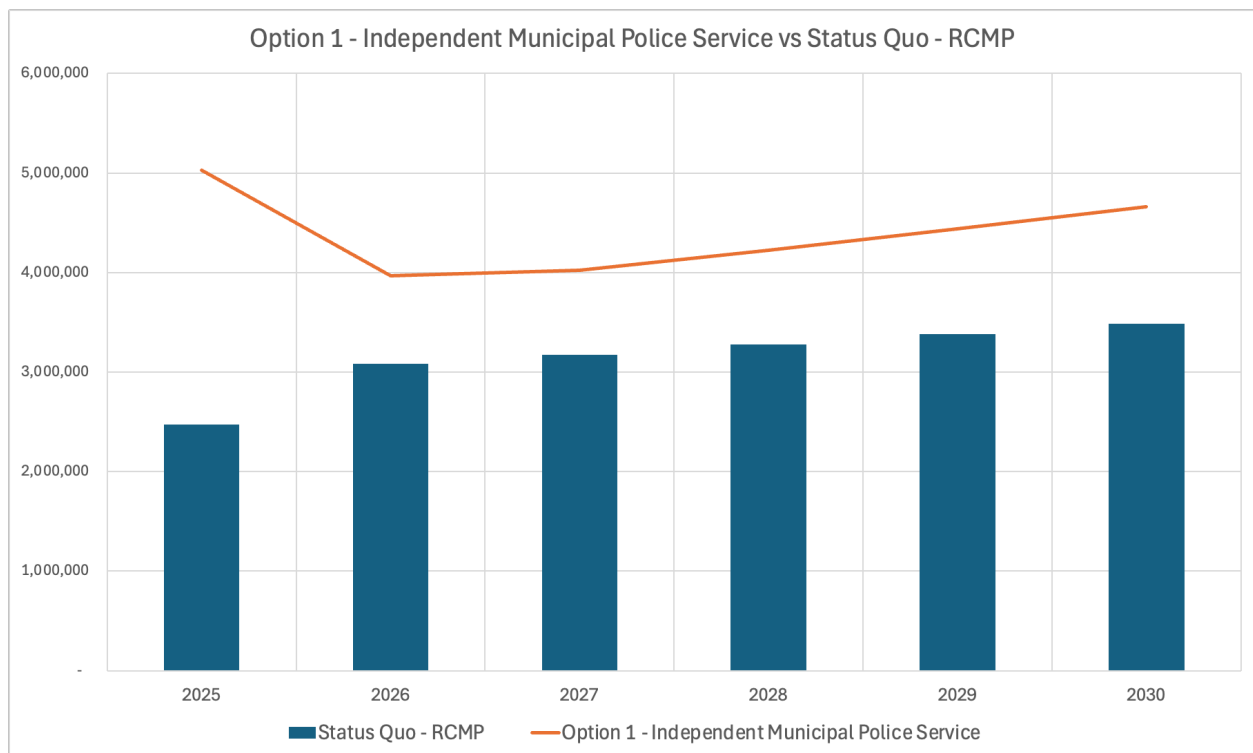
The current service provided by the RCMP has been used as the basis for comparing the financial projections for each of the six police service options. This option uses the RCMP 2025-26 projected costs and Rocky Mountain House Multi-Year Financial Plan provided by the RCMP for the 5 years 2026-2030.

Option 1 – Independent Municipal Police Service

This option includes 12 Officers and 3 CPOs over the 5-year forecast period. The transition costs for this option have been estimated to total \$2.6 million. If transition occurs over one year, the total costs in this year would be \$5.0 million, including the cost of RCMP services.

Following the transition period, annual costs for this option are estimated to increase from \$4.0 million in the first year of operation to \$4.7 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

In total, this option would cost an estimated \$7.5 million over the 6 years analyzed (including the transition period).

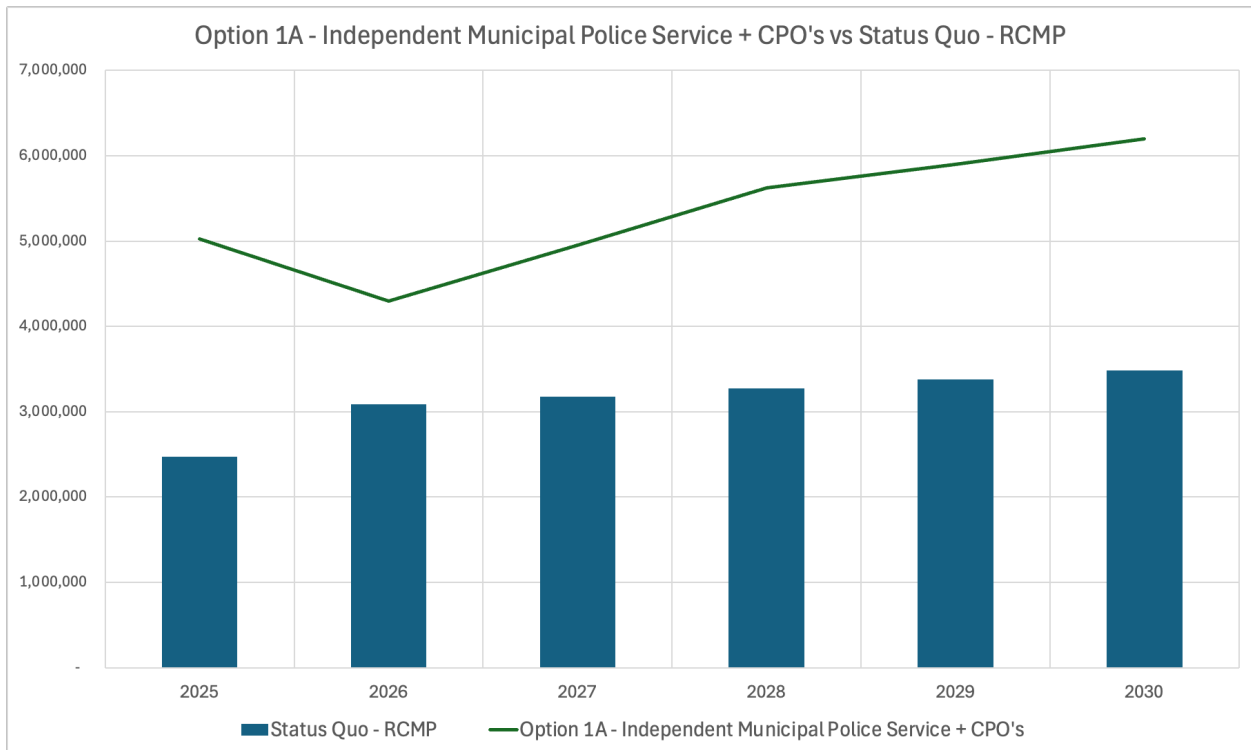


Option 1A – Independent Municipal Police Service + CPOs

This option involves staffing 12 police officers, increasing to 14 over 3 years, and 4 Community Peace Officers (CPOs), increasing to 8 within the same timeframe. Transition costs are estimated at \$2.6 million. If the transition is completed within a single year, the total cost for that year – including ongoing RCMP service costs – would be approximately \$5.0 million.

Following the transition period, annual costs for this option are estimated to increase from \$4.3 million in the first year of operation, to \$6.2 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

In total, this option would cost an estimated \$13.1 million over the 6 years analyzed (including the transition period).

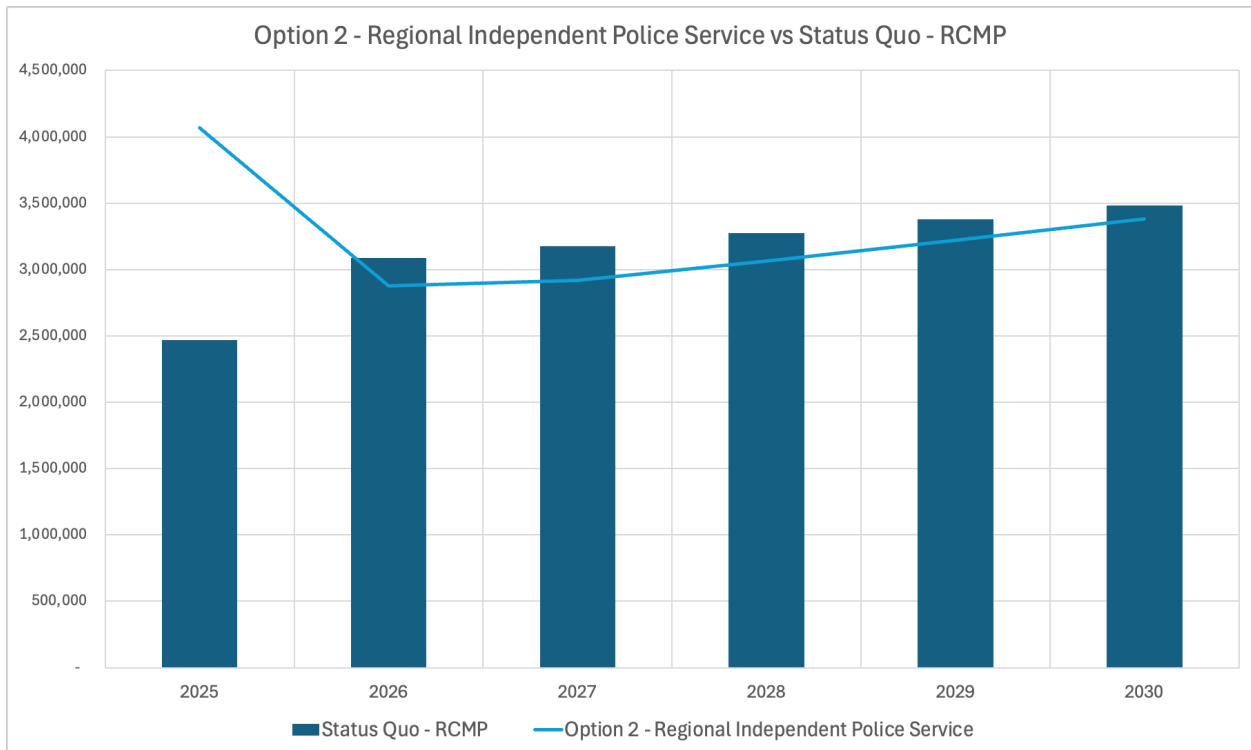


Option 2 – Regional Independent Police Service

This option involves staffing 16 police officers and 8 Community Peace Officers (CPOs), which includes a managing CPO. Transition costs are estimated at \$3.2 million. Based on current workload data available for the Town and County, it would be reasonable to share these costs on a 50/50 basis. This would make the Town's share of these Transition costs \$1.6 million. If the transition is completed within a single year, the Town's total cost for that year – including ongoing RCMP service costs – would be approximately \$4.1 million.

Following the transition period, annual costs for this option for the Town are estimated to increase from \$2.9 million in the first year of operation, to \$3.4 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

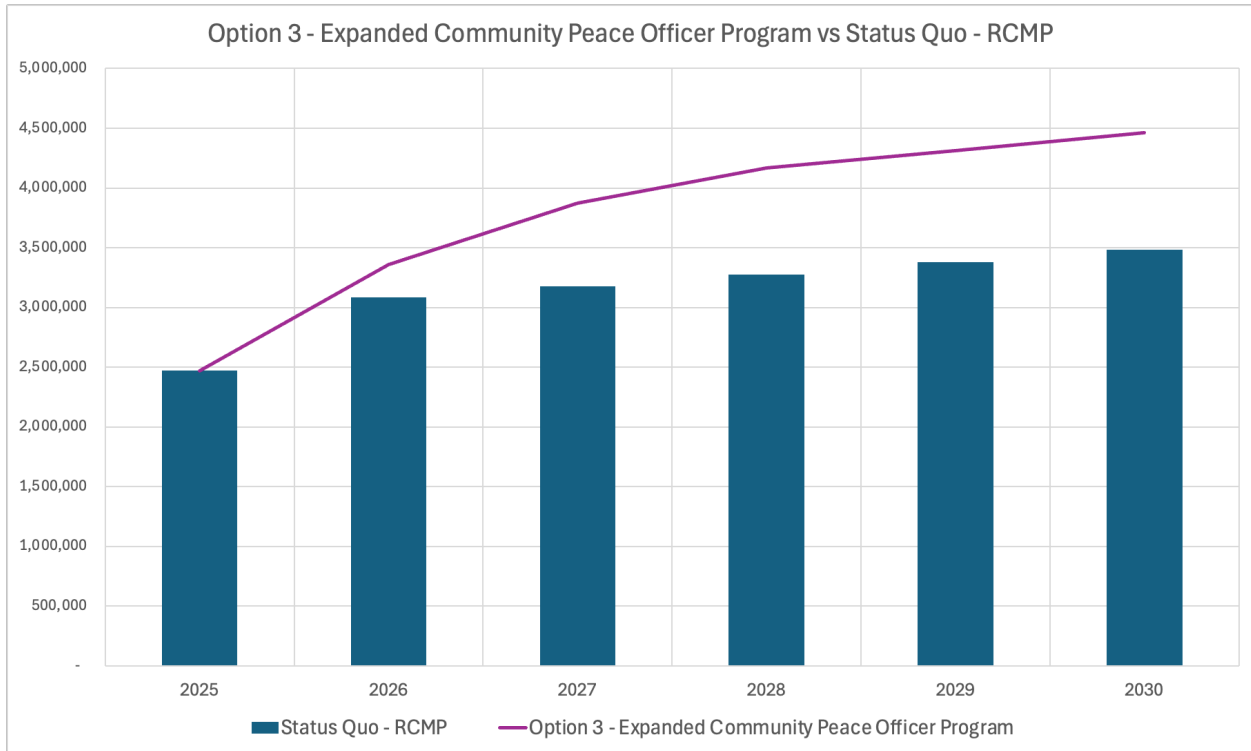
In total, this option would cost the Town approximately the same over the transition and 5-year forecast period, as the Status Quo – RCMP option.



Option 3 – Expanded Community Peace Officer Program

This option involves staffing 12 police officers and 4 Community Peace Officers (CPOs), increasing to 8 within 3 years. Annual costs for this option are estimated to increase from \$3.4 million in the first year of operation, to \$4.5 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

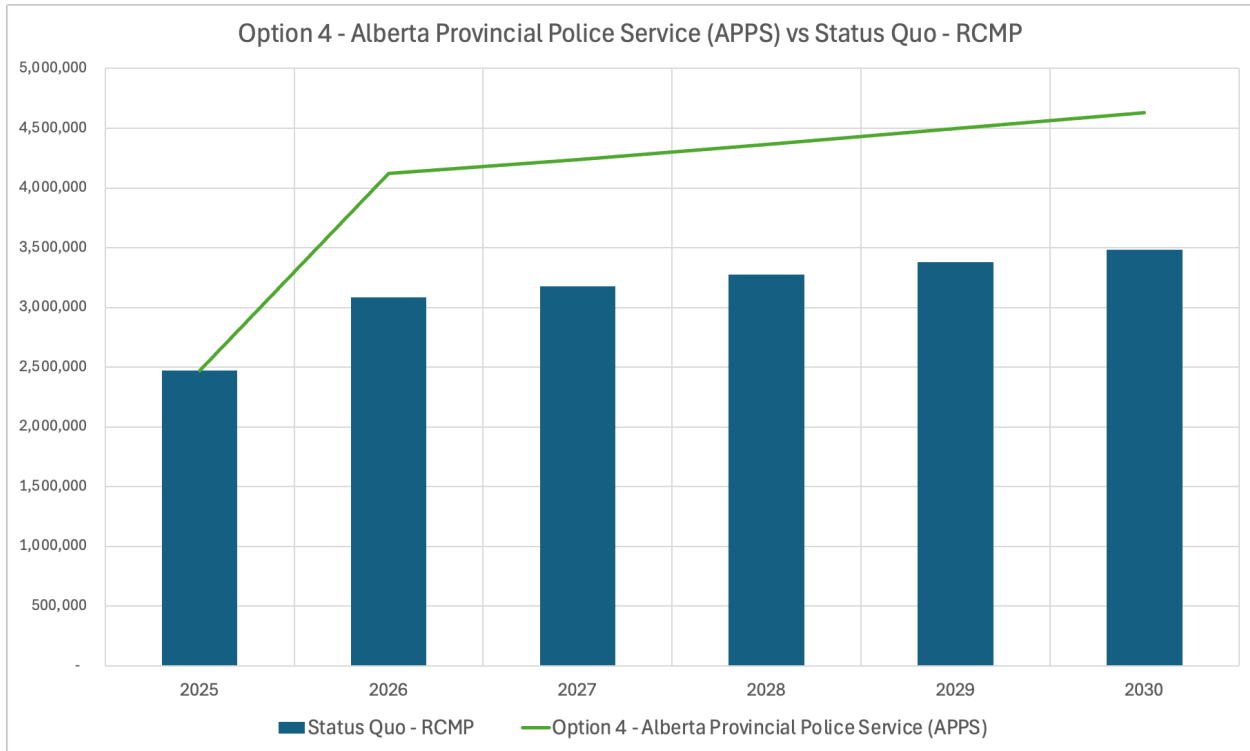
In total, this option would cost an estimated \$3.8 million over the 6 years analyzed (including the transition period).



Option 4 – Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS)

This option involves staffing 12 police officers and 3 Community Peace Officers (CPOs). Annual costs for this option are estimated to increase from \$4.1 million in the first year of operation, to \$4.6 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

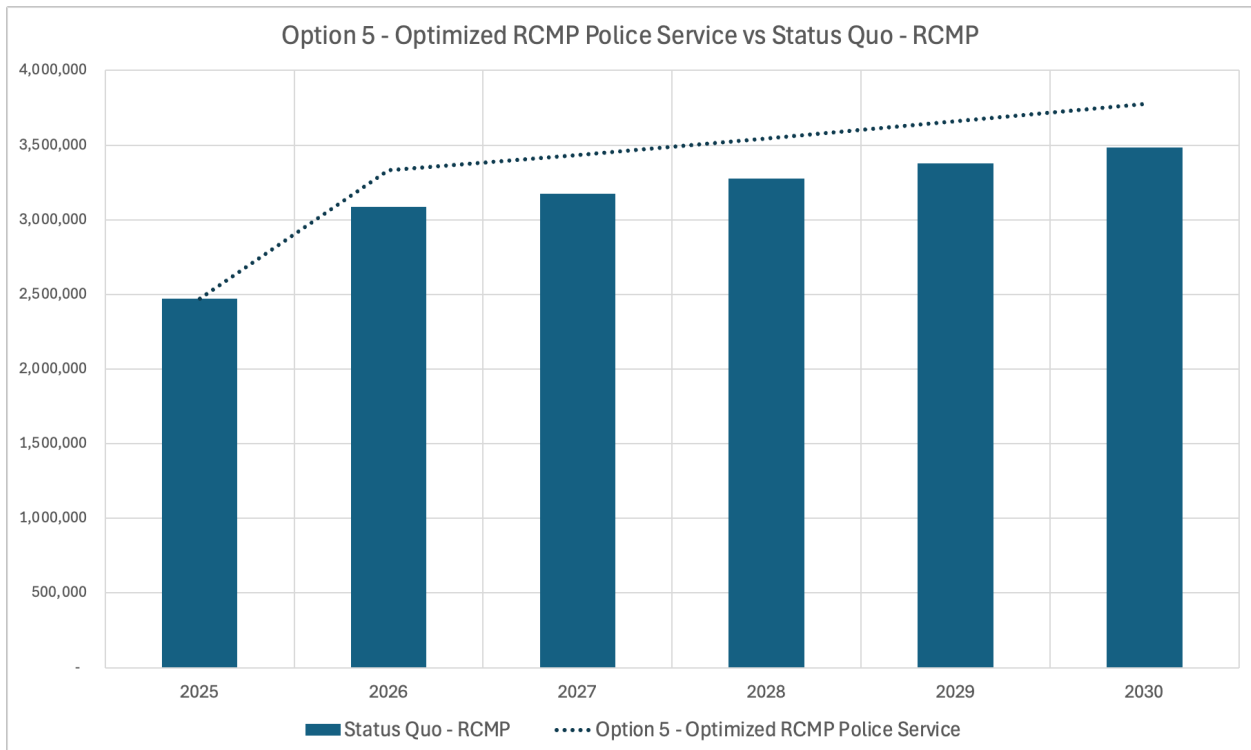
In total, this option would cost an estimated \$5.5 million over the 6 years analyzed (including the transition period).



Option 5 – Optimized RCMP Police Service

This option involves staffing 12 police officers, 3 Community Peace Officers (CPOs), and a Police Service Manager. Annual costs for this option are estimated to increase from \$3.3 million in the first year of operation, to \$3.8 million by the end of the 5-year forecast period.

In total, this option would cost an estimated \$1.4 million over the 6 years analyzed (including the transition period).



Policing Revenues

The cost of providing policing services can be offset by some revenue sources. These sources, and the allocation of revenues from these sources, is summarized in the following table:

Revenue Source Type	Eligible Municipalities	Purpose
Policing Support Grant (PSG)	Municipal police services or RCMP MPSA	Offsets operating and officer costs via per-capita formula.
Traffic Fines Share	All municipalities with enforcement capacity	Provides 60% of fine revenues (18% for PPSA RCMP towns).
User Fees/Charges	All municipalities	Covers direct service delivery e.g., record checks, towing.

Provincial Grants

Municipalities with their own police service (or RCMP under a Municipal Police Service Agreement) are eligible for the Policing Support Grant (PSG), which combines prior MPAG and POG funding.

Traffic & Violation Fines

Municipalities receive 60% of the *Traffic Safety Act* fine revenues for offences occurring on municipal roads. Those under the RCMP Provincial Police Services Agreement (PPSA) currently retain 18% of total fines (because they pay 30% of policing costs and retain that share of the 60%).

User Fees & Service Charges

Includes fees for services such as:

- Towing
- Police-record checks
- Alarm monitoring
- Extra-duty work for events
- School resource officer contracts
- E-911 surcharges