

Transcript of “Alberta Next” RCMP Survey introductory video

Our next topic is the potential creation of an Alberta police service to take over community policing from the RCMP. Today, roughly 80% of Albertans are served by local municipal police services such as the Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge city police services. However, Albertans living in most rural communities and a few mid-sized cities like Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Airdrie are policed by the RCMP under Alberta's policing contract with Ottawa, and as is the case with most federal agreements, Alberta is getting short changed. To be clear, RCMP, police officers and staff aren't the problem. They do all they can to protect us with the resources they have. The problem is Ottawa. Because the federal government is failing to provide the number of promised officers and resources to Alberta communities under the policing contract, response times are slow. Staffing is stretched thin, and officers are often moved across the country at a moment's notice, resulting in little connection to the Alberta communities they serve. Furthermore, because of French language requirements, English speaking Alberta, officers do not qualify for senior RCMP positions, and ultimately, the RCMP policing priorities are chosen by the federal government in Ottawa, rather than the provincial government in Alberta. Even the federal government itself has recently stated the RCMP should transition away from contract policing when current agreements expire in 2032. Ontario and Quebec have had provincial services for over 100 years. Why not Alberta? So, what are the benefits of Alberta withdrawing from the federal policing contract and creating our own provincial police service to provide community policing? One, more local, more accountable. An Alberta police service would be run by and for Albertans, accountable to our province and not to the federal government in Ottawa. Police officers and support staff could build long-term careers in the Alberta communities they know and love, and any current RCMP officers and support staff working in Alberta would be invited to join a new Alberta police service. Two, safer rural communities. With local recruitment and stable placements, rural response times would improve considerably from where they are now, and coverage would become more reliable and tailored to each municipality and region. This is especially important in underserved rural Alberta communities. Three, flexible, made in Alberta solutions. Most Albertans already have local police services. The province would assist larger communities like Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Airdrie to transition to their own police services, while smaller rural communities would be policed by the new provincial police service. And of course, nothing would change for Edmonton, Calgary and other communities that already have municipal police services in place. But there are also potential drawbacks to consider. One, startup costs. Establishing a new police service requires significant initial investment, hiring officers, buying equipment, building, training, infrastructure and training personnel. Ultimately, the start-up costs could reach into the hundreds of millions over several years. Two, loss of some federal operational funding. The federal government currently covers 30% of RCMP contract policing costs. It is therefore likely that there will be additional ongoing operational costs for the province. However, municipalities would not be saddled with those costs. So, should Alberta create an Alberta police service to take over community policing from the RCMP?