



NATIONAL  
POLICE  
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION  
DE LA POLICE  
NATIONALE

# 2021-2022 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK

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## **Introduction**

### **About the NPF**

The National Police Federation (NPF) is the sole certified bargaining agent representing ~20,000 Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) across Canada and internationally. The NPF provides strong, fair, and progressive representation to promote and enhance the rights of RCMP Members. We are committed to negotiating fair and respectful compensation and resources to maximize the safety and security of all our Members and the communities they serve. The NPF was founded in 2016 and was certified by the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board in July 2019.

### **RCMP Policing in New Brunswick**

The New Brunswick RCMP (NB RCMP) has a long history of serving the province, dating back to 1932 when the RCMP assumed the responsibilities of the Provincial Police Force. Our 840 Members serving in the province are committed to enforcing federal, provincial, and municipal statutes, curbing organized crime, ensuring public safety, border integrity, national security, and more.<sup>i</sup>

The NB RCMP polices 97% of the landmass and 70% of the population of New Brunswick, with 41 detachments across the province<sup>ii</sup>. Our Members provide policing service to 14 of the 15 First Nations Communities in the province<sup>iii</sup>. In 2019, our Members answered over 124,500 calls for service, including over 8,500 well-being checks and *Mental Health Act* related calls, an over 7 percent increase from 2018<sup>iv</sup>. Front-line NB RCMP Members have faced new and unforeseen challenges that continue to evolve as their mandate continues to grow and broaden beyond community policing. The COVID-19 pandemic has put added pressure on our Members to ensure the safety of the public and themselves, and they are now being asked to do more with less.

Over the past few years, the NB RCMP has experienced significant cutbacks, including wage freezes, which has impacted staffing, training, the well-being of Members and other resources. However, even under these challenging circumstances, our Members, have not only maintained their professional commitment to ensure the safety and security of all New Brunswickers, but have deep personal, family, and social connections to the communities they serve. The 2018-19 RCMP Client and Partner Surveys shows that 98 per cent of New Brunswickers feel safer because of the RCMP and 87 per cent agree that the NB RCMP demonstrates professionalism in its work.<sup>v</sup>

Despite insufficient financial and human resources, the NB RCMP continue to modernize and find new ways, tools, resources, and methodologies to ensure our Members remain capable of adapting, responding, and effectively improving police services to meet growing demand while continuing to ensure the safety of all New Brunswickers.

## **NPF Recommendations**

### **1. Ensure full scope of RCMP contract is utilized**

The NB RCMP continues to grow and innovate to meet the increase in demand for police services. However, the demand has far outstripped any increase in the number of police and adequate resources. Between 2014 and 2018 the population in New Brunswick grew around 1.6 percent; however, the number of police officers per 100,000 population decreased by almost 6.5 percent<sup>vi</sup> to an average of 160 officers per 100,000 population across this timeframe, which is below the national average of 185 officers per 100,000 population<sup>vii</sup>. Staffing and other resource shortages have become increasingly difficult to manage and mitigate while continuing to provide the level of service New Brunswickers require and expect.

During 2018/19, 70 police officers in the province were hired. However, during the same timeframe 72 police officers departed (considering retirement, annual leave, parental leave, injured on the job, stress leave, etc<sup>viii</sup>) showing that our Members are, more than ever, being asked to do more with less resources. NB RCMP Members are often requested to cover large geographical areas with little or inexistent backup, which puts in jeopardy not only their safety, but also the public's.

Due to years of stagnant budgets, lack of resource growth, and attrition, some detachments in the province are currently facing vacancy rates of 40 per cent - meaning that only 60 per cent of their complements are available to work. As an example, the Codiac detachment, one of the largest detachments in the province, was at 75% deployability in 2019. As a result, the Codiac RCMP Superintendent recognized the need for additional officers and came up with a multi-year plan that resulted in four officers being hired in 2020, budgetary approval for four officers to be hired in 2021 and forecasts another five officers to be hired in 2022<sup>ix</sup>. The demand for police services in the province continues to increase, but the number of police officers are being constantly recalculated to attain minimum hiring levels. Shifts are understaffed, public and Member safety is a growing concern, and hiring new officers is – a necessary - part of the solution.

RCMP Member pay has been frozen for the past four years and remains low compared to municipal policing counterparts which further exacerbates recruitment and retention challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated staffing challenges. Earlier last year the RCMP Academy (Depot) closed due to the pandemic and has since reconvened cadet training, but at a much lower rate. Prior to the pandemic, Depot was targeting about 1,200 new recruits in 2020, and was only able to graduate about 600. Limited recruit training at Depot has continued into 2021 as the pandemic continues, but the backlog of new cadets will be felt for years. Without the necessary resources to hire more officers and provide appropriate equipment and services, RCMP Members can and are becoming overworked, stressed, and exhausted, leading to burn-out and safety issues which will further impact available resources.

The provincial government needs to take all internal and external factors within policing into consideration to ensure that the NB RCMP have the resources they need to fulfil all increases in

police demand. The NPF strongly encourages the government look at all areas within the current Provincial Police Service Agreement to ensure its full scope is being met. It is imperative that the NB government address these shortfalls and increase resources for the RCMP to meet both current and future demand.

**We recommend:**

- I. Increase funding and programming to meet current and future RCMP staffing levels in New Brunswick.
- II. Ensure that the federal government prioritizes cadet training levels at Depot with increased funding to escalate training capacity to decrease backlog.
- III. Ensure all levels of government have planned accordingly with respect to financial impacts of competitive RCMP pay, including the financial impacts of a new collective agreement.

**2. Increase funding for police and mental health crisis teams**

NB RCMP Members have been increasingly called on to fill the gaps resulting from significantly decreased funding for mental health and social services. New Brunswickers, and our Members, want to see more funding for front-line services that help alleviate pressures on vulnerable Canadians and, by extension, the police.

Between June 17 and 22, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted a survey for the NPF of over 2,000 Canadians that shows 82% of Canadians agree that properly funding social services would significantly help alleviate thousands of potentially dangerous interactions between police and citizens every day.

In 2010, the NB RCMP received 3,298 *Mental Health Act* related calls for service. In 2019, this number increased by almost 88 per cent, with 6,175 occurrences<sup>x</sup>. Police calls responding to someone in crisis, are not always routine and can vary in complexity. Crisis Response Teams have been proven to be successful in many provinces. The RCMP already works closely with mental health professionals, including Mobile Mental Health Crisis Units (MMHCU) operated by the Vitalité and Horizon Health authorities in several New Brunswick communities<sup>xi</sup>.

However, the ongoing success and expansion of these programs relies on increased provincial and municipal government support and funding, as mental health calls continue to increase year over year.

We urge the New Brunswick Government to continue investments and expand Crisis Response Teams, and their partnerships with the NB RCMP and other health partners.

**We recommend:**

- I. Invest in additional Crisis Response Teams, where RCMP Members can collaborate with community partners, including mental health providers and social workers.

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- <sup>i</sup> About the RCMP in New Brunswick [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/nb/about-rcmp-new-brunswick>
- <sup>ii</sup> 2019. Annual Report, NB RCMP, page 6 [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/4843/original/06d24b26f7f40a6d09aefc593f163d67.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> Quick facts about RCMP in N.B. [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/nb/quick-facts-the-rcmp-nb>
- <sup>iv</sup> RCMP Occurrence Report [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/transparenc/police-info-policieres/calls-appels/occurrence-incident-eng.htm>
- <sup>v</sup> 2018-2019. Client and partner survey results [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/nb/2018-2019-client-and-partner-survey-results>
- <sup>vi</sup> 2014. Police resources in Canada [Online] Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/150330/dq150330b-eng.pdf?st=AvBlyb3E>
- <sup>vii</sup> 2018. Police officers by level of policing, by province and territory [Online] Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00015/tbl/tbl04-eng.htm>
- <sup>viii</sup> 2019. Police resources in Canada [Online] Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00015-eng.pdf?st=BuTQx0HR> page 29
- <sup>ix</sup> CBC, 2020. Codiac Regional Policing Authority member says more police officers are needed [Online] Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/codiac-police-more-officers-1.5421685>
- <sup>x</sup> 2020. RCMP Occurrence Report [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/transparenc/police-info-policieres/calls-appels/occurrence-incident-eng.htm#text-1>
- <sup>xi</sup> 2019. Annual Report, NB RCMP [Online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/4843/original/06d24b26f7f40a6d09aefc593f163d67.pdf>