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To:
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Subject: RCMP responds to content of BCCLA report

Inspector Tim Shields will be available for media comments at 11:30 AM at E Division Headquarters (5255 Heather St, Vancouver).

RCMP responds to content of BCCLA report

The British Columbia RCMP have reviewed a recently released report by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and, while appreciative of efforts to engage the public in discussions, have identified a number of issues with the report and the process undertaken. In addition, it is difficult to respond to any one incident outlined in the report as they are anonymous complaints made through an outside party that lack specifics we can follow up.

“As British Columbia’s Provincial police force we encourage feedback from all individuals and communities,” says Inspector Tim Shields, “but it is disappointing that the BCCLA did not solicit input from Mayors and Council, community leaders and local Aboriginal leaders, and that the RCMP was specifically asked not to take part in the process. The turnout to the town hall meetings in some communities was very low, and the sentiments expressed in the report do not reflect the sentiments of the community as a whole.”

Shields recognizes that individuals may have concerns about how policing is conducted in their towns but cites feedback from across the province indicating that people are appreciative of policing efforts.

“Feedback provided to individual Detachments tends to be very supportive of the local RCMP,” says Shields. He adds that part of this may be due to the annual planning process in which Detachment Commanders are responsible for meeting with local leaders to identify local policing priorities.

For example, the 2009 Crime Severity Index ranked Terrace number 13 in the country. In response to concerns raised by the community, Terrace Detachment created a Crime Reduction Unit to address chronic offenders in the downtown core. Since the inception of the Crime Reduction Unit, calls for service in the downtown

core have been reduced by 47 per cent; in George Little Park, previously abandoned by the public due to safety concerns, calls for service have been reduced by 90 per cent.

“We know that the majority of people in Terrace appreciate that the community has been returned to the community, but the chronic offenders – the source of the problem – do not welcome police enforcement initiatives,” says Shields.

If people have concerns about policing in their community, they are encouraged to use the processes in place to investigate and address them. The public is encouraged bring their concerns to their detachments or to the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP if they would prefer to not approach the police directly. The RCMP in BC is on record as fully supporting a provincial civilian-led independent investigative body to investigate serious allegations of police misconduct.

“Maintaining public trust is one of the key elements of policing, which is why every complaint brought forward is fully investigated. While we would like every interaction with the public to be positive, the reality is that officers are asked to respond to highly emotional and volatile situations,” explains Shields. “The RCMP in BC responds to about 1,000,000 calls for service each year, plus countless interactions during traffic stops, foot patrols, school visits, and community policing.” “The RCMP in BC averages about 1,000 complaints from the public per year which is well within industry standards and compares very favorably with other police forces.”

While the RCMP did identify issues with the report methodology some positives were found.

“Despite the fact that a relatively small population was asked to bring forward their issues with the RCMP, we are very happy to see that the majority of people that took part see the RCMP as their police force of choice,” says Shields. “We are also encouraged that people taking part in the discussions recognized that drug, alcohol, and mental health issues remain the root cause of the majority of RCMP calls for service. Any efforts to curb these addictions are welcomed by the RCMP.”

If media would like comment on the findings pertaining to specific communities please contact the local detachment.

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