



NWT POLICING PRIORITIES 2019-2020

PREAMBLE

“A strong, effective and efficient government will help northerners achieve their social, environmental and economic goals.” This statement from the mandate document of the Government of the Northwest Territories 18th Assembly captures the broad priorities of the Government from 2016–2019. The Policing Priorities for 2019-2020 have been developed to support this broad objective.

Some of the key policy initiatives for the Minister during the 18th Legislative Assembly are: to find innovative ways to prevent and reduce crime; to strengthen initiatives and partnerships to prevent and reduce family violence; to support the RCMP and communities in their efforts to prevent and respond to family violence; to improve our social response to crime reduction; and to support the RCMP and communities in their efforts to develop policing action plans in each community that reflect local priorities, including issues relating to youth.

These priorities are consistent with themes of reconciliation that have come from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry, and the voices of our communities heard by RCMP in consultation for Community Policing Action Plans. Common themes identified are community safety planning, culturally relevant policing practices, and effective Justice system responses, prevention and awareness.

With so many voices speaking in unison, it is important that the 2018-2019 policing priorities from the Minister of Justice focus on addressing the safety needs and concerns of NWT communities and their residents. While the broad priorities for 2018- 2019 will look similar to past years, they remain relevant to focusing the vision for policing in our territory.

The 2018-2019 Minister of Justice policing priorities will continue to focus on meaningful RCMP collaboration with communities that is culturally appropriate, accountable, and measurable.

The broad priority areas for 2019-2020 are:

1. Promote public trust and confidence in policing services;
2. Adapt the work to accurately reflect changing legislation, best practice recommendations and data trends.
3. Work collaboratively with partners towards improving the response to vulnerable populations; and
4. Collaborate with the GNWT to find innovative ways to address operational and financial pressures.

PROMOTE PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN POLICING SERVICES

Cultural Competency

The 18th Legislative Assembly Mandate emphasizes the importance of understanding the social context of the NWT. This includes consideration of historical factors such as colonialism, residential schools, and rapid economic and cultural change, and the impact that these may have on the residents of the Northwest Territories. In our roles as representatives of the government and the RCMP, it is critical to reflect on the part that our predecessors have played in the history of NWT communities, and continue to find ways to improve cultural safety in how we do our work, where people feel safe and respected, free from discrimination when accessing services. For the RCMP, this means continuing to take advice from the Commanding Officer's Aboriginal Advisory Committee about providing a culturally relevant and appropriate policing service in the NWT; ensuring new members to the NWT receive NWT- and community-specific orientation, including and especially visiting with local Indigenous organizations and elders to learn about the community in which they will be providing service; and creating an organizational culture of cultural safety, where there is an obvious commitment from leadership to embed these principles in the organization. This also includes making use of community resources in the carrying out of policing responsibilities, including the use community-based restorative justice committees for diversions of matters wherever possible and appropriate.

RCMP Member Screening

It is important for RCMP members transferring to "G" Division to possess the aptitude and skills to provide professional, compassionate policing services in our primarily Indigenous, small, northern, and rural communities. RCMP members transferred into new postings should consistently participate in a local orientation that includes connection with community leadership, elders, Indigenous organizations, community agencies, and other local stakeholders, to ensure they are provided with a cultural context unique to the community they are joining.

Work Collaboratively

Proactive and achievable policing priority action plans will enhance the ability of the RCMP to contribute to meaningful initiatives developed in partnership with the communities. Effective planning leads to increased support at the community and political levels for the delivery of policing services in the NWT. Collaboration with community leaders and residents give RCMP members the best opportunity to succeed in this goal, and it is imperative that RCMP continue to partner with communities wherever possible to be part of the effort to healthier and safer communities.

ENHANCE THE RCMP'S RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FAMILIES

Survivors of Family Violence

Family violence remains consistently high in the NWT. Often one of the first points of contact for people living with family violence in their lives, the RCMP play a critical role in ensuring victims are informed of their rights and that they are connected to community supports for ongoing support. It is essential that

RCMP members and Victim Services workers function collaboratively so that victims' rights are respected in each and every case.

ADAPT THE WORK TO ACCURATELY REFLECT CHANGING LEGISLATION, BEST PRACTICE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DATA TRENDS

Impaired Driving

As the legislative and operational tools change in the effort to improve enforcement of impaired driving, residents in the NWT rely on the RCMP to continue their efforts to help keep our streets safe. RCMP will continue to work closely with stakeholders to determine the operational needs and effectively enforce drug-impaired driving legislation, including working closely with the Department of Justice to ensure RCMP members have the training and tools they need to meet this challenge, and that our organizations jointly have the data and expertise to continue to improve our response and the safety of residents.

Responding to Survivors of Sexual Assault

The RCMP will continue to collaborate with the Department of Justice, and other stakeholders to find options for sexual assault investigations that acknowledge the challenges victims face in reporting these serious crimes, but still allow for a thorough investigation of the complaint.

The RCMP should continue providing annual training for members to improve their interviewing skills as investigators in complex cases such as sexual assault complaints. Priority should be placed on ensuring training for frontline members who are responsible for sexual assault investigations and who work directly with victims of crime, and in exploring trauma-informed investigation techniques as an effort to continually improve the quality of the response to survivors of this type of violence.

Bootlegging

Alcohol is a factor in the majority of crimes that take place in NWT communities, and is especially harmful to youth. Bootlegging and substance abuse have been identified on almost every community's Policing Action Plan. By continuing to foster trust within communities, RCMP will have higher rates reporting with respect to bootlegging and more effective crime prevention strategies.

Taking a Trauma Informed Approach

Implementing trauma informed investigative tools and approaches in policing has been identified as a best practice as it lessens the impact of crime and trauma on victims and their families and assists in healing and recovery. This is particularly important for RCMP members when dealing with gender-based violence such as family and sexualized violence.

COLLABORATE WITH THE GNWT TO FIND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PRESSURES.

The Premier has stated in the mandate letter for the Minister of Justice that "The people of the Northwest Territories have entrusted all of us to manage effectively, prudently, and responsibly over the next four years."

This is a signal for all GNWT departments and their programs to operate within their allotted resource base and budgets. A large portion of the Department of Justice budget goes to policing. Any potential reductions to funding within Justice will result in added pressure to the funding provided to the RCMP. This will limit the RCMP flexibility to adjust resources to emergent funding pressures. Therefore it is paramount that the RCMP “G” Division manages their budget within approved funding levels for 2019-2020 and onward.

The GNWT encourages cooperation and collaboration with their external partners and between departments. This collaborative approach is magnified between the RCMP and the Department of Justice who have to work closely together to build business cases for resources, supplemental funding and growth funding. This collaboration will need to be continued, and combined with innovation in order to balance operational and organizational requirements with the reality of an inflexible financial climate.

Working in silos without situational awareness is counterproductive and time consuming, and all government partners have work to do to in order to ensure we are finding the best ways to serve our residents. To ensure we are working effectively, we must engage in constant evaluation with an eye to determining that we are engaging the right partners in our efforts to respond to community safety needs.