



Deputy Commissioner
Pacific Region

Sous-commissaire
région du Pacifique

Commanding
Officer

Commandant
divisionnaire

Guided by Integrity, Honesty, Professionalism, Compassion, Respect & Accountability

February 15, 2010

Mr. Fred Banham
Box 810
Peace River, BC V1G 4H8



Dear Mr. Fred Banham:

Re: **Accountability, Oversight and Communications**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with direct responses to questions I have heard from some of our contracting partners and also to ensure that you clearly understand the position of the RCMP on some recent issues misreported in the media. Finally, I want to make some comments with respect to communication issues and to talk about ways we can be better connected to the communities we serve. I will apologize at the outset for the length of this letter, but these are important issues which you need to have a clear understanding of to ensure that our partnership is as effective as possible.

In recent years, we have witnessed ever-increasing demands for more effective communication and accountability processes with respect to how we deliver police services. This phenomenon is being observed throughout society and is not unique to policing and I do understand that public safety and policing consumes a significant part of your budget. I understand as well, that the communities we serve want the relationship between them and their police force to be a true partnership as opposed to police simply being a service provider in a contract relationship. This distinction is important and has been made a key component of the new RCMP contract currently under negotiation.

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Accountability:

I know that you understand this but there is one particular myth with respect to accountability which bears mention and that is the often repeated line that the RCMP reports to Ottawa and is not accountable to anyone in BC. I can assure you that I, and every employee of this Division are indeed accountable to the Government of BC, to you and ultimately to the people we serve. The Commanding Officer and the Criminal Operations Officer are selected by the Provincial Government and there is no doubt in my mind that should the Government want either or both of us to leave, that would happen. As you know, there is a significant degree of consultation in selecting Detachment Commanders for larger Detachments, a process which can be improved upon and I will expand on that shortly.

With the single exception of National Security investigations, our National Headquarters has virtually nothing to do with the day to day operations of the Division other to offer support when it is needed. I know that there are irritants with respect to financial authorities which often do require approvals at our Headquarters level. Good progress is being made on these issues through work being done on the Brown Task Force recommendations and some levels have already been changed. Part of my job, as Commanding Officer, is overseeing the Federal Force here and you can appreciate that this aspect would require direct involvement with National Headquarters. There are significant benefits to this arrangement both in terms of additional resources and of operational effectiveness. We run a truly integrated Municipal, Provincial and Federal operations model in this Province which permits the Criminal Operations Officer to easily move resources between the three business lines to optimize operational effectiveness. We need to do a better job in communicating exactly what this means for your community and will be doing so in coming weeks.

The other role for the position I currently occupy is the Deputy Commissioner for Pacific Region which also means that my position is a member of the Senior Executive Committee (SEC) for the Force. This is a significant benefit to British Columbia and to your community in the sense that there is direct input to SEC on issues of importance to British Columbians. These links are important because they connect the various levels of policing in a way that maximizes the effectiveness of everything that we do from the community level, to the Provincial level, to the National level and ultimately to the International level where we have nearly 500 personnel around the world.

For you, as the Mayors and public officials of the communities we serve, your primary point of contact is your Detachment Commander and the success or the failure of the relationship that you have with the Force is highly dependent upon the relationship with your commander. For many years now, we have been engaging Mayors of the larger cities in the selection process of the Officer in Charge of your Detachment. That process varies from place to place simply due to the fact that there has never been consensus as to what that process should involve. As a result, we have kept it flexible and tried to craft it to meet individual needs. We recognize the need to further develop that process and are currently engaging in steps to do so and will be seeking advice from Mayors around the Province as to how this should be shaped. We want to engage you earlier in the selection process to ensure that meaningful consultation is accomplished with a

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result that you get a commander best suited for the needs of your community. I recognize as well that some communities prefer to leave selection to the Force and we will continue to do that as well where needed.

At the UBCM conference last year, where I had the opportunity to connect with many of you, I let you know that we would be reaching out to our communities for further engagement in our planning process.

A few years ago, under our overall Annual Performance Plan (APP), we initiated Detachment Performance Plans (DPP) which are completed by detachments in contract provinces to ensure consultation with the community stakeholders and partners by identifying issues and concerns that will become community and policing priorities. Those priorities are acknowledged by impacted community stakeholders and partners. Your Detachment Commander will be accountable to provide the most effective police service possible in the circumstances. These circumstances include many environmental variables, including population to police officer ratios. The consultative process required today between Detachment Commanders and their communities is much more complex and involved than meeting with partners and seeking their concurrence in our planning process. It needs to involve detailed discussions with you on issues impacting communities and comprehensive input into plans and priorities with ongoing review and discussion and, if necessary, adjustment of those plans and priorities throughout the year. As part of this process you will be asked to “sign off” on the DPP to ensure that you both agree with, and have had meaningful input and indeed, direction, into the policing priorities to be addressed in the upcoming year. The sign off is simply a management tool to ensure consultation is being done and, more importantly, is being done appropriately.

The final part of this consultative process cycle will be for District Commanders and their staff to reach out to you, as our partners, towards the end of planning cycles or, when appropriate, to invite feedback on the performance of your detachment in addressing the stated priorities and to invite comments and input generally on the performance of the Detachment Commander. This input will be included in the Detachment Commander’s annual performance appraisal. I view this as an important and an effective accountability measure which gives you meaningful input.

Oversight:

There are several myths with respect to our position on police oversight which are critically important for me to comment upon, directly to you. The RCMP is not opposed to independent oversight to deal with serious issues such as in custody deaths or other serious matters involving our personnel. In fact, we have led the way, in this Province for many years, seeking more effective ways to achieve independent oversight, absent the political intervention needed at both the Federal and Provincial levels to take required steps, such as legislative amendments. Here are some of the examples:

2003 – February 28th - BC RCMP invited Shawn Atleo, Assembly of First Nations BC Chief, (as he then was) to oversee the investigation into the officer involved death of a Vancouver Island First Nations woman. This was a stepping stone to a written protocol months later.

2003 - June - The Public Safety Cooperation Protocol, initiated by the RCMP in BC was signed between the First Nations Summit, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs; the BC Assembly of First Nations; and the RCMP with the goal of establishing trusting and reciprocal relationships and to provide for contemporaneous oversight and involvement of first nations leaders as observers in certain investigations. This was modeled, in part on the precedent set in the 2003 investigation on Vancouver Island.

2004 – May 18th—Public Safety Cooperation Protocol signed in Saskatoon with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. This protocol was modeled after the program developed and implemented in British Columbia. This Protocol has since been copied and put into place in several other Provinces and last year, other Municipal Police Forces in BC joined into the agreement.

2007 - March - The Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP (CPC) Observer Program was established as a two year pilot project. At the request of the RCMP, the CPC would have contemporaneous oversight during an officer involved investigation instead of just file review responsibilities. The program was formalized in September 2008 and is now used in other Provinces across Canada as well.

Independent Observer Program – CPC Website
(<http://www.cpc-cpp.gc.ca/prt/rep/opp/index-eng.aspx>)

2009 – September – Motion at the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police (BCACP) urging the Provincial Government to adopt an independent oversight model similar to that in Alberta. A committee has been formed and is working on this issue.

(Motion for resolution made by RCMP and seconded by Abbotsford). The BCACP continues to urge the Solicitor General of BC to move forward with this process and as recently as February 5th, sent another letter to the Solicitor General asking that he move forward with the proposal.

2010 – February – The Commissioner of the RCMP announced new national policy requiring that other police forces and where available, other review agencies, be called in to investigate certain major incidents involving our personnel. Once again, this is not a new practice for “E” Division as this has been a general rule followed for several years here. A major complicating factor here is that Municipal forces often, when asked, do not have the capacity to assist. This is one of the key reasons for the BCACP motion made last year.

As recently as last week, we concluded discussions with the British Columbia Office of Public Complaints Commissioner for them to review certain RCMP involved serious incidents (such as those describe above). I am optimistic that a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed within days. It should be noted that there is no authority for doing this, but more importantly, there are no rules or policy preventing it, so we have moved forward to make it happen.

I would hope that you could see from all of these RCMP led initiatives that the RCMP in BC has shown a consistent pattern of leadership, over a significant period of time, in efforts to improve on accountability mechanisms regarding police involved issues of concern. All of the programs noted above were initiated by the Force, voluntarily, without suggestion. I would suggest that the Force has been more proactive in this respect than any other police agency in Canada. We are doing as much as is possible within our power and at the end of the day, as already stated, oversight is an issue for governments to deal with. When you hear suggestions to the contrary you are welcome to use any of this information to correct the record. I have tried to do so through the media on many occasions, with little or no success which is incredibly frustrating to me and to the employees in the Province.

Communications:

Finally, I want to make a few points with respect to communications. Your day-to-day contact with the Force is through your Detachment Commander, as it should be. We have many Detachments where there are excellent two-way communications and highly effective relationships. We have some where there is room to improve and we intend to do so. From my perspective, there is little more important than effective communications, especially important in the age of instantaneous communications where we now live. It is through strong communications that we connect with you, and ultimately, with the citizens of your community whom we serve.

Day-to-day communications with your Detachment Commander will continue to be the primary method of communication with respect to the policing of your community but there is much more that you need to be aware of so that the overall partnership between you and the Force is as effective as it can be. As you know, we are the Provincial Police Force for BC as well as the Federal Force. There is a great deal of activity that takes place in these other business lines that impacts you and your community and we need to do a more effective job of keeping you advised on those issues whether it involves operational issues such as National Security or Federal policing files such as in the Border Integrity, organized crime and gangs, financial crimes or drugs area. Of equal importance there is information related to administrative matters such as finance, negotiation of the new contract, the Brown Task Force work that I want you to have access to. These other business lines contribute significantly to the policing of your community and we need to find ways to ensure that you are well informed about exactly what that means.

Without doubt, this is a significant challenge given that we provide policing services to over 700 communities in this Province. This is complicated by the fact that community needs with respect to information they want vary significant across the Division. That said, we intend to be as effective as we can be with communications and you will start receiving regular updates on the topics I have mentioned. I expect that there will be growing pains in terms of crafting the delivery mechanism to meet everyone's needs and I welcome your suggestions and comments as we develop the communication process.

I look forward to hearing any other suggestions you may have in finding ways to ensure that we are fully engaged as partners in the protection of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G.D. Bass".

Gary D. Bass, O.O.M.
Deputy Commissioner – Pacific Region
& Commanding Officer, “E” Division

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