



Tuesday, March 22, 2016

Police service layoffs avoided in 2016

The Winnipeg Police Board announced Tuesday that it has worked with the Winnipeg Police Service and City Council to ensure there are no reductions to the police complement through layoffs or attrition in 2016.

The Winnipeg Police Service faced cost increases in 2016 of over \$20 million for salaries and benefits, accommodations and debt charges, and transfers for capital projects. While the preliminary estimates recommended by Executive Policy Committee provided a substantial budget increase, the amount of the increase fell short of covering these cost increases by approximately \$3.5 million.

The Board has worked closely with the Service to find one-time expenditure reductions and deferrals in various non-salary accounts totaling a maximum of \$2.5 million for 2016. To make up the remaining \$1.0 million shortfall, in order to avoid layoffs, the Board is recommending the cancellation of a pilot project to test the effectiveness of body-worn cameras that was scheduled to commence in 2017.

As Council approval is required for amendments to the City's capital plan, Councillor Scott Gillingham brought the necessary motion to the floor of Council this morning, and expressed his appreciation to his Council colleagues for taking the unusual step of approving a transfer of capital funding to cover an operating expense shortfall.

"This was a difficult decision for the Board, especially as the body-worn camera pilot was identified as a priority in the Board's strategic plan" said Councillor Gillingham. "The Board remains interested in the potential of body-worn cameras and will consider a pilot project in the future if the funding is available. In the meantime, the Board and the Service will study the outcomes of pilot projects being conducted in other cities. With limited resources in 2016, we are choosing to focus on avoiding layoffs. Maintaining the current police complement enables the Service to continue to make progress toward achieving the remaining goals and objectives outlined in our strategic plan."

Detailed information explaining the challenges of the 2016 budget process is attached.

Media inquiries should be directed **Councillor Scott Gillingham, Chair of the Winnipeg Police Board**, at 204-986-5848 or via email at ScottGillingham@winnipeg.ca.

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The Challenges of Determining a Budget Sufficient to Maintain an Adequate and Effective Police Service in Winnipeg

The Winnipeg Police Board was established in 2013 in accordance with *The Police Services Act*. One of the Board's most important legislated duties is to submit a proposed budget to City Council that is, in its opinion, sufficient to maintain an adequate and effective police service, in alignment with its strategic plan for the Winnipeg Police Service. Council has the responsibility to consider the Board's advice and establish the total budget of the police service based on the level of service it considers affordable; the Board then has responsibility to allocate that budget.

The starting point for the Board in developing the proposed 2016 police service budget was to determine the appropriate workload capacity of the police service given the policing context in Winnipeg and the priorities and objectives set out in the strategic plan.

Despite falling crime rates over the past decade, police workloads have actually been increasing due to ongoing socio-economic disparities and reductions in other areas of public service. Dispatched calls for service have increased 30% since 2008, with an ever-increasing volume of calls to address domestic disturbances, missing persons, and people with alcohol or drug addictions or in mental health crisis. Legal changes and the changing nature of crime have also increased the complexity of investigations and the time required to support successful prosecutions.

Policing experts advise that, for a police service to be effective in crime prevention, officers should spend at least 30% of their time on proactive activities. In Winnipeg, officers are forced to spend less than 15% of their time on proactive activities due to the sheer volume of calls for service and public expectations for timely response.

In addition, while there has been significant success in reducing the overall crime rate, violent crime in Winnipeg in particular remains a serious problem relative to other urban centers in Canada. In 2014 the Winnipeg census metropolitan area had the third highest crime severity index in Canada, after only Thunder Bay and Saskatoon, 65% higher than the national average. That year, Winnipeg had the highest rates of robbery and sexual assault of any CMA in Canada, and the second highest homicide rate. Manitoba also has the highest youth crime severity index of all provinces.

Every 5 years, Statistics Canada carries out a General Social Survey on Victimization, which addresses both reported and unreported crime. The 2014 survey indicates that Winnipeg has the highest rate of violent victimization of the largest nine CMAs in Canada.

Indigenous people are disproportionately affected by the risk factors for criminal victimization, such as poverty, discrimination and other forms of marginalization, due to their historical treatment, inter-generational trauma transmission, and ongoing barriers to inclusion. Indigenous people in Manitoba are nine times more likely to be a victim of homicide - the greatest overrepresentation in the country. With Winnipeg having the largest proportion of Indigenous people of all urban areas in Canada, and relatively high child poverty rates, Winnipeg has a higher proportion of its population exposed to these risk factors.

The Board's new strategic plan proposed to address these challenges through proactive policing and crime prevention through social development. This general approach was intended to reduce the demand for police services, while promoting efficiency through greater civilianization (including expansion of the role of cadets), and thereby to achieve reductions on policing costs over time.

Given the current context for policing in Winnipeg, the Board concluded that police service capacity in our City needs to be maintained at its current level in order to make progress achieving the goals of this strategic plan.

To maintain the current level of police service capacity, a budget increase of over \$20 million was required, due to the following cost increases beyond the control of the Board and the costs of capital projects that are prioritized and allocated on a City-wide basis:

1. Salary and benefit costs required by the City-negotiated collective agreement - \$9.6 million
2. Accommodation and debt charges made by the City, mostly due to the new police HQ, which was approved by Council before the Board existed - \$6.4 million
3. Allocation for capital projects - \$4.1 million

While Executive Policy Committee recommended that Council provide a substantial budget increase, the amount of this increase fell short of covering the above cost increases by about \$3.5 million.

While the Board has legislated responsibility for allocating the police service budget, as a practical reality the Board in fact does not control the allocation of a large proportion of the budget. The Board has no ability to reallocate to other purposes, the increase for salaries and benefits prescribed by the collective agreement, or the increase for the City's accommodation and debt charges. In addition, while the Board and the Service have had input into the City's capital plan, adjustments to that plan require Council approval, and any funding that becomes available in the capital plan is normally reallocated by Council based on its consideration of City-wide priorities.

The Board also does not have the authority to reallocate funds provided by the provincial government, nor to renegotiate funding agreements between the City and the Province. For example, the Board would prioritize funding to maintain the current staff complement higher than funding for police helicopter operations, but as the Province fully covers the operating costs of the helicopter, reallocation of these funds is not effectively within the control of the Board.

The Police Chief had advised the Board that an expenditure reduction of \$3.5 million in the areas under the control of the Board would necessitate significant reductions in the complements of police officers and cadets. The Board has been able to work closely with the Service to find expenditure reductions in various non-salary accounts totalling a maximum of about \$2.5 million that could be managed on a one-time basis in 2016, with adverse implications and risks, but with less serious implications for the police service's capacity to deliver than a complement reduction. This left a \$1.0 million shortfall.

For the Board, avoiding a reduction in police officer and cadet complements was a top priority. For this reason, the Board agreed to request the Board Chair to approach Council to take the unusual step of approving the transfer of \$1.0 million of the Service's capital allocation, to eliminate the remaining operating budget shortfall. To achieve this reduction, the Board determined it had to indefinitely postpone the body-worn camera pilot project that was planned for 2017 and to defer an essential police divisions systems upgrade project to 2017.

Completion of the body-worn camera pilot project was a significant objective in the Board's strategic plan for the Service, toward improving transparency and accountability. However, a reduction in complement would have had an even greater effect on the Service's ability to achieve other long term goals of the strategic plan, including the goal of controlling policing costs. In particular, the Service would have become even more reactive rather than more proactive; resources for crime prevention through social development would have been inadequate; and the Service would have been much less efficient with sworn officers having to assume a substantial portion of the cadet workload.

The Board acknowledges that the Service's ability to manage one-time savings in 2016 and Council's transfer of a capital allocation to an operating expense, in order to avoid layoffs in 2016, has done little to address the core issues driving the cost for police services in Winnipeg. At best, coming to grips with the problem has been deferred a year.

The Board is of the view that its new strategic plan should be given time to work, and that the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Manitoba need time to work together to address our City's socio-economic challenges. Until real progress in reducing the demand for police services has been achieved, the current level of police complement should be maintained. In the interim, the Board will continue to closely review the Service's operating expenses on an ongoing basis to identify potential savings and efficiencies, and in particular will provide close oversight of overtime management within the Service.

The City in particular needs to address key cost drivers and constraints on improved efficiency in the current collective agreement through negotiations with the Winnipeg Police Association. In addition, the City needs to work with the provincial government to align the current level of provincial funding support to policing in Winnipeg with the shared priorities of the strategic plan for the Service. The City and the province also need to work together to find ways of ensuring the most appropriate combination of police and civilian resources, through the most appropriate agencies, is available to cost-effectively address our community's social, health and public safety needs. Finally, the City and the police service need to work collaboratively with the province and the courts to further reduce the amount of overtime required in relation to officers' court appearances.

Fundamentally, over the next year the City needs to determine the level of policing services that are necessary and reasonably affordable in Winnipeg, and to provide the budget required to achieve this level of service, after due and respectful consideration of the advice of the independent Board established to provide civilian governance of police services and the administrative direction and organization required to provide an adequate and effective police service in Winnipeg.