



Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 32-20(1): Increasing RCMP Response in Hay River

Motion

The MLA for Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh moved Motion 32-20(1): *Increasing RCMP Response in Hay River*. The Motion was adopted in the Legislative Assembly on June 7, 2024.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Dehcho, that the Government of the Northwest Territories reinstate the Royal Canadian Mounted Police canine unit in Hay River;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police collaborate and respond specifically to the rise in crime in Hay River;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days.

GNWT Response

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is concerned by the increasing presence of drugs and related violent crime in the Northwest Territories (NWT), including in Hay River. The GNWT is committed to working with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to address crime across the NWT by disrupting the illegal drug trade and reducing associated criminal behaviors.

Three-year Policing Priorities are set by the Minister of Justice in consultation with the RCMP, Indigenous governments, community leaders, partners, and service providers. The first priority of the latest Policing Priorities (2024-2027), made under Article 6 of the Territorial Police Services Agreement, is to “[t]arget enforcement responses to reduce illegal drugs and alcohol.” A Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) has been established within the RCMP’s “G” Division in the NWT. The CRU is mandated to conduct drug and alcohol enforcement and assist with violent crime investigations related to organized crime and the drug trade. The CRU will support “G” Division’s drug and crime reduction strategies and will place an emphasis on the disruption of illicit drug activities, such as the movement of illegal substances on road networks and at airports. As part of the GNWT’s ongoing mandate commitment to public safety, particularly relating to drug trafficking and criminal activity, the GNWT will also be undertaking an analysis to understand the potential implications that a *Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act* could have in the NWT.

Actions taken by the RCMP to improve public safety in Hay River include both reactive and preventative measures. Community and partner engagement is a community policing priority in Hay

River, with the goal of information sharing and partnering to address community issues, including the distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol in the community. This priority is addressed by engaging with staff and students at local schools, attending sporting and community events, and regularly meeting with community leadership. The RCMP also regularly conduct traffic stops in and around Hay River, including Kátł'odeeche First Nation reserve, Enterprise, and the NWT/Alberta border. The intent of these traffic stops is to ensure driver safety and proper vehicle documents are on hand, and to reduce the number of impaired drivers on the road.

The Hay River detachment has also launched a Habitual Offender/Repeat Offender Management System, which was created to reduce harm by identifying and monitoring those who are most likely to cause the most harm to the community.

While remaining responsive to the Policing Priorities, the RCMP are required to maintain control of their own operations. A program review in 2018 determined the Police Dog Services (PDS) unit, which was stationed in Hay River, did not support the efficient use of RCMP resources, given that the PDS unit is expected to operate as a territorial service. Accessibility and mobility challenges were among the primary issues in maintaining the Hay River location and transferring the unit to a more accessible location in Yellowknife helped address these issues. A specialized PDS team based in Yellowknife allows for increased mobility and rapid deployment to meet RCMP operational needs across the NWT. Limited resources nationwide mean that creating additional PDS units for the NWT is not possible and an additional PDS service has not been identified as an operational need by the RCMP.