

Subject: Resource Officer Position – Father Mercredi High School

APPROVALS:

Cherie Cormier, Senior Manager, Contracts and Integration, RCMP

Kelly Kloss, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Rodney Burkard, Chief Administrative Officer

Administrative Recommendation(s):

1. THAT the Municipality enter into an agreement with Fort McMurray Catholic Schools to provide a School Resource Officer to Father Mercredi High School; and
2. THAT the position be funded equally between the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board and the Municipality.

Summary:

Since September 30, 2006, there has been a School Resource Officer at Father Mercredi Community High School. The pilot agreement between the Municipality and the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools expires June 30, 2009 and Administration has received a request from the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools to continue with the position on an ongoing basis.

Background:

In May 2006 Council entered into an agreement with the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools to provide a School Resource Officer until June 30, 2009. The agreement is up for renewal.

In a letter to Administration dated June 2, 2009, the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools request a continuation of the agreement to provide a School Resource Officer to Father Mercredi High School on an ongoing basis. Currently the position works with youth within the high school to develop relationships with students, and aids in the identification and deterrence of crime.

The School Resource Officer position at Father Mercredi High School has been very successful from both a Municipality and School perspective. During the past school year (2008/2009), the School Resource Officer was available to students to answer questions about recruitment for high school students who were interested in a policing career, acted as a confidant to students who needed someone to listen to them and offer advice, helped in situations dealing with bullying and other social situations by acting as a youth mentor as well as handling 102 complaints and issued 52 violations on items related to policing matters.

Budget/Financial Implications:

The actual costs associated with a member of the RCMP are determined by the Municipal Policing Agreement. In 2006, the complete cost of providing and equipping an RCMP member

was approximately \$125,000 per year. Currently in 2009 it is approximately \$128,000. The Fort McMurray Catholic Schools would pay 50% of the cost, with the remainder being paid by the Municipality. The Municipality's portion is currently part of the base RCMP budget.

Rationale for Recommendation(s):

The Municipality and the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools agree that the School Resource Officer position at Father Mercredi Community High School is of great benefit to both organizations. Continuation of the agreement signifies a strong commitment to proactive community policing.

Attachments:

Att 1 – Letter from Fort McMurray Catholic School Board



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June 2, 2009

Kelly Kloss
Deputy CAO, Protective Services
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
9909 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4

Dear Mr. Kloss:

Re: School Resource Officer at Father Patrick Mercredi High School

I am writing on behalf of the Fort McMurray Catholic School District to request that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo continue the agreement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to provide a School Resource Officer to Father Patrick Mercredi High School on an ongoing basis until either party terminates the agreement.

During the past three years that the School Resource Officer Program (SRO) has been in place, it is the belief of the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board, the staff, students and parents of Father Patrick Mercredi High School that the presence of the Officer has had significant positive results. Indeed, a survey held at the school at the end of last year indicated that 298 out of 300 parents felt that having the SRO at the school improved the atmosphere and safety of the school community. For instance, during the wave of bomb hoaxes that struck the local high schools last year, the SRO was able to apprehend the individuals making a prank call to Fr. Mercredi within an hour of receiving that call. The other high schools spent weeks trying to track down similar individuals. Part of the quick response by the SRO was due to the fact that she was in the school, however, the main reason that the matter was resolved so quickly was that the students with whom she had established great rapport were willing to assist by providing information. This relationship was established through the constant presence of the SRO in the hallways. This was further enhanced through classroom presentations on the RCMP and legal matters. The students are very interested about the Force and legal issues in general.

There is no doubt that the presence of the RCMP in the school has been a very positive deterrent to those individuals seeking to engage in drug trafficking, however, this has not been the main focus of the position.

Catholic Schools... Making a Difference

At a recent meeting called by the Minister of Education concerning the Three Year Education Plan for Alberta, Minister Hancock informed Board Chairs and Superintendents that he strongly supported the concept of the SRO Program and hoped that one day law enforcement personnel would be present in a positive way in all of Alberta's high schools. I know that our Board Chair took great pride in that the Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Fort McMurray Catholic School Board were leading the Province in this initiative. Indeed, the District has begun to look at the possibility of a wrap around services model similar to that in Surrey BC if we are fortunate enough to continue our SRO partnership.

I believe that by establishing this partnership three years ago, the Municipality and the Catholic School District showed great forward vision in an area that is now proving to be an up and coming focus in the Province. I sincerely hope that we are able to continue this partnership and continue to demonstrate our leadership in this area. Certainly the Father Patrick Mercredi High School community would applaud this continued relationship, as the SRO Program has become an integral part of school life.

Sincerely,



Kim Jenkins
Superintendent
Fort McMurray Catholic School District

C.c. Kirke Hopkins, RCMP Superintendent
✓Cheri Cormier, Senior Manager, Contracts and Integration
Geraldine Carbery, Board Chair
Gil Espejo, Principal Father Patrick Mercredi High School