

Mayor Andrew Black statement on policing Oct. 10/23

I want to take this opportunity to speak about policing in Tantramar. At the Committee of the Whole meeting on September 25th, a question was asked by Mr. Bruce Wark about policing services in town to which I responded. I want to start by apologizing to my fellow council members for how I delivered that comment. I realize that in my role, I speak for council and the answer to Mr. Wark's question was not discussed with you at all. It is clear to me that we all may have a different understanding of what "adequately policed" as I put it, may mean to ourselves and to the citizens that we serve.

There has been much chatter on social media about policing as of late and I have received some comments directly from Tantramar residents with concerns about police services in our community. So, I wanted to clarify what I meant by "adequately policed" and that is, adequately policed when it comes to what we pay for in our contract agreement with the RCMP. I also want to point out that it was not my intention to prove my point based on foot patrol during the Fall Fair weekend because that really was a one-off moment in policing and I can see how my words may have misled people into thinking that.

The truth is we have, at times, challenges with policing like all municipalities, but like many other things, it ebbs and flows. There are times that are better and there are times that are worse. There have been instances in the past when council has seen a problem in town and requested that the RCMP add this issue to their priority list and put resources towards it. In those moments, the RCMP heard what we said and prioritized as needed, but at the end of the day, that is where our push ends.

The RCMP operationalize their policing as they need to attempting to balance local priorities with internal priorities and needs. Policing is a complicated file because of the players at the table with the orders of government, the RCMP themselves, their contract management group and tripartite policing priorities all having a part to play and, at times, butting heads with each other.

There is a significant conversation happening in this province about the future of policing and the reason this is happening is because of many things such as police response times, police presence, questions about jurisdictional responsibilities,

increasing costs, provincial and community increases in crime, public perception and community mindedness of the RCMP, recruitment issues and mental health and addiction responses. These are just a few concerns showing, as I said, that policing is a complicated file.

There will likely be a decision to make at some point, possibly in the next year, we are not sure, about what policing will look like in Tantramar. Will we be a full municipal policing service agreement or provincial policing service agreement? That discussion and final decision will change what public safety means in our municipality. Until then, we will continue to work with our contracted officers and inform them of public concerns and I urge the public to contact the RCMP so that files will be created and acted on.

Thanks.