

Devin BLAKESTON - RE: Calgary Herald

From: "Fabes, Diane (CAL Herald)" <DFabes@theherald.canwest.com>
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sorry too busy not paying attention.

----- IMAGES Michael Buckley, For The Calgary Herald

According to an assessment, the RCMP building in Canmore is "overcrowded," and its victim services unit had to move to another building. (FPinfomart: Restricted, Canada.com: Restricted) Cramped confines handcuff Mounties; Annual review highlights deficiencies Calgary Herald Monday, September 3, 2007 Page: B1 / FRONT Section: City & Region Byline: Jason van Rassel Source: Calgary Herald Mounties at several southern Alberta detachments are working in cramped, outdated buildings that lack cellblocks, security barriers for counter staff or proper storage for evidence. The annual assessments of 35 detachments, obtained by the Herald through an access-to-information request, illustrate how officers in many small-town posts have to sometimes improvise solutions to their predicaments -- some with more success than others. The officer who inspected the Piikani Nation detachment in Brocket observed that biological evidence was being stored in the coffee room fridge. "This could become an Occupational Health and Safety issue as well as a continuity (of evidence) issue," the evaluator wrote. A veteran Calgary defence lawyer said he would definitely challenge in court the validity of any evidence stored in an insecure fridge. "Who's to say someone hasn't tampered with it?" said Balfour Der. "It goes to the weight the judge could give to the sample, and it could also lead to having the case stayed." Another evaluator noted the Bow Island detachment didn't have a secure fridge, either -- though members there put exhibits in a locked container placed inside the fridge. "This area should be revisited," the officer wrote. Piikani got a secure fridge shortly after its evaluation was done; Bow Island is undergoing renovations to repair storm damage from last year and will buy one when that job is done, an RCMP official said. Despite the infrastructure issues, local politicians interviewed by the RCMP voiced strong support for their detachments, and evaluators were generally satisfied with the skill level and performance of officers. "We think we've earned (support) of the communities we deal with. We've listened to them," said Chief Supt. Fred Kamins. There are 2,250 RCMP officers stationed in Alberta in federal, provincial and municipal policing roles. The government of Alberta will pay the RCMP \$160 million this year for contract policing in many of the province's rural areas and small towns. The agreement expires in 2012. Alberta's share is 70 per cent of the cost, which is topped up with a 30 per cent federal contribution. Several larger communities, such as Airdrie and Red Deer, contract directly with the RCMP for municipal policing. The jurisdictional patchwork can make it difficult for needed changes to get addressed: some detachment buildings are owned by the federal government, others are leased from the province or the local municipality. Vulcan's aging, federally owned detachment building had black mould, asbestos-insulated pipes and the exhibit room lacked proper venting. Since the evaluation, the building has undergone air quality testing, and contractors have begun removing the mould, the RCMP said. A more permanent solution, however, is years away. The RCMP, the Town of Vulcan and the local county are in talks to build a tri-services facility to house the RCMP, fire and EMS, but it's only in the planning stages. Fort Macleod's detachment is one of several whose aging cellblocks no longer meet current standards for a variety of reasons -- hanging points, blind spots, lack of surveillance -- meaning prisoners are usually taken elsewhere unless there are exceptional circumstances. The evaluator also noted there was no proper vault barrier in the front counter area. Fort Macleod has since installed a vault barrier and is "a priority for a new building." Canmore detachment, meanwhile, is "overcrowded," and its victim services unit had to move to another building; Sundre is "spartan" despite recent renovations, and Coronation remains in a temporary building after its old facility was condemned. The news wasn't all bad, however: detachments in Banff and Consort had needed work done, and members in Pincher Creek will soon move into a new building. The Olds detachment building is just two years old. "The vast majority of our facilities are meeting the current need," Kamins said. The reason so many cellblocks have been condemned is because the current standard set by the RCMP is so strict, said Kamins. By his estimate, it would cost \$40 million to make every cellblock in Alberta compliant. The RCMP's answer, Kamins said, is to prioritize the detachments most in need of new cells and to manage the risk at the others. If it's impossible to take a prisoner to a neighbouring detachment with up-to-date cells, officers can put the offender under constant surveillance to ensure he doesn't hurt himself, explained Kamins. Leo Knight, a former police officer and Vancouver-based commentator,



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RCMP report, Southern Alberta highlights

Calgary Herald

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The RCMP conducts annual assessments of all its detachments. Each is scored on how it performs in 28 standard categories, ranging from administrative areas such as budgeting and overtime, to policing duties such as investigations and traffic enforcement.

Here are excerpts from the most recent evaluations of 35 southern Alberta detachments:

Banff: "The community plan has been developed with the Bar Watch program in place . . . complaints are down 25 per cent as per correspondence dated July 2006. . . .

"From my personal observations, I note that the level of jocularly is higher than it's ever been, the work is being done, traffic enforcement is up and the community has provided me with very positive feedback on the detachment."

Bassano: "They were concerned of rumours that division would be looking at amalgamating Bassano with either Gleichen or Brooks detachments. I advised them that there is no information out there that I am aware of regarding their concerns and would consider it just that - a rumour."

Bow Island: "Quality (of investigations) is satisfactory and the commander has to be very hands-on as he has a very junior detachment. . . .

"Files reviewed (included) a very serious domestic with very serious graphic threats, the members did a very good job, however, the judicial system in my summation failed miserably by the hearing justice simply releasing the accused."

Brooks: "The detachment has a very good clearance rate on major files and are complimented on this. . . .

"There are no developing (crime) trends, however the detachment does continue to deal with a high number of crimes against persons. . . .

"A sense of frustration has been identified with the lack of resources for the workload the detachment is experiencing. Junior members have not had the mentorship they desire This is *not* a reflection on the commander as much as this is out of his control."

Canmore: "I met with the new (town) CEO and policing commissioner and they . . . express strong support of the commander and know several of the members by name."

Cardston: "Intelligence is shared within and outside the office with other agencies and detachments via word of mouth and email. . . . (R)eports should be utilized as necessary to share information with neighbouring detachments and other agencies rather than email and word of mouth."

Claresholm: "From the community, we received very positive feedback on the membership. . . . The morale at the office was upbeat and we were well-received by all."

Consort: "Last year (2006) showed a dramatic increase in both Criminal Code and provincial traffic enforcement. CC almost doubled and prov traffic #'s went up over threefold. Excellent work."

Coronation: "The workload, on-call hours and overtime are high for a small detachment. Some of this can be attributed to junior members and some logistic matters causing excessive work ie no cells, inadequate office facilities. Morale very high amongst members interviewed. . . .

"The storefront office in Castor has been up and running for several weeks and has received a very positive response from the community."

Crowsnest Pass: "The level of morale at this detachment is described as good to very good. Two of the three interviewees are involved in the community both on an off duty through sports and the Legion."

Didsbury: "Didsbury no longer has a municipal contract with the force, they had been paying for four members (out of 10). (The mayor) indicated to me that she still expected that those four positions would be directly responsible and spend all their time policing the Town of Didsbury. I indicated the level of service to the town should continue as before, but the actual control of those positions was the responsibility of the commander and all members now police the whole area."

Drumheller: "There has been what I feel is a positive spike in clearance rates as they relate to (drug) investigations. The detachment is actively using their own and human source intelligence to monitor and pursue illicit substance files and are doing so very successfully with multiple accused charged and various substances seized. . . .

"Of note, property related crime stats appear to be down and it is believed this is directly as a result of the detachment's work targeting the illicit drug trade."

Fort Macleod: "Fort Macleod is presently in a situation whereby the cell block facility has been condemned. . . . Fort Macleod has been made a priority for a new building."

Gleichen: "The increase in expenditures can be tracked to replacing windows in the police vehicles which are kicked out by unruly prisoners, the commander hopes to curtail this by way of installing bars on the back seat windows. . . .

"Vehicle repairs are up 52 per cent, or \$46,113 vs. \$30,243, however this is simply the cost of doing business in a harsh environment which the detachment polices."

Hanna: "This is a relatively junior detachment when it comes to constables and because of this significant risk, the commander has had no choice but to expend numerous hours in providing proper mentorship in conjunction with his day-to-day tasks."

Innisfail: "Some very positive signs by way of certain areas of enforcement going up, and select criminal code areas going down dramatically this year, for example, break and enters. . . .

"There is some concern over the number of junior members at the detachment and their knowledge and skills in obtaining an EPO (emergency protection order)."

Kananaskis: "Kananaskis Country generates numerous missing persons complaints due to its appeal to the outdoor enthusiasts, daytime hikers and outdoor group activities. There is an agreed-upon working process with (conservation officers) and (search and rescue) that functions very well, which results in quick and expert response."

Lake Louise: "This detachment is in excellent condition. Property management installed wood stoves in private quarters, which has relieved financial burdens on the members as the heating source was propane. . . .

"Traffic enforcement has increased tenfold over the last two years, with Cpl. (Mark) Kay leading his younger members."

Lethbridge: "The members appear to have the knowledge, training and experience to perform their duties. Although some members are junior, the supervision provided at the detachment is good."

Milk River: "The mayor, upon speaking to him, could not say enough good things about the members of this detachment."

Nanton: "This unit is down to two members but have maintained a real traffic initiative. . . . In addition, members have been active with the newly-formed sheriffs office to run laser on (Highway 2) through town."

Olds: "The quality of members being turned out and trained in Olds continues to be above average and this is a direct reflection on both the supervisors. The support staff and victims services unit are happy and contribute to the overall success of the detachment."

Oyen: "This is a relatively junior detachment and for the most part the quality of investigation is good. Victims of crime are notified and files are regularly reviewed by the commander."

Picture Butte: "Community would like to see quarterly reports to be given in person at town council meetings. Relations with the county are well-established already."

Piikani: "Inquiries with . . . a resident of the Peigan reserve resulted in him advising that he feels the detachment works well with the community. The members are visible in the community and he sees them working in the community. . . . He said he has found the commander to be open to suggestion and he has a good rapport with him."

Pincher Creek: "A (municipal official) was interviewed. He feels the detachment is working very well but there is not (sic) enough members and he is frustrated by this. . . . He believes that vagrancy and traffic issues are the major issues facing Pincher Creek."

Raymond/Magrath: "Detachment has moved concentration from vandalism, to youth-involved drinking and driving. Special emphasis being considered toward a local cultural group of Hutterites with regard to drinking and driving."

Redcliff: "Of note a significant increase in impaired driver offences has been noted. In the calendar year 2005, the detachment charged 32 individuals whereas to date (Aug. 30, 2006), the are already at 35. . . .

"I am told there is an ongoing issue with impaired driving charges being reduced much in part due to local judges being very sympathetic to these types of incidents."

Rimbey: "(Lack of) cells remain an issue for the town from the standpoint of having a full service detachment, however, from analyzing the prisoner numbers, this would be a hard sell to anyone."

Rocky Mountain House: "There are currently no active numbered sources at this detachment. It is an ongoing exercise to educate and move ahead in this area."

Stettler: "The only issue the town brought up was the fact they are not pleased with the level of provincial resources in Stettler and feel they are paying for and augmenting the policing of the rural area."

Sundre: "Sundre is the 10th busiest detachment in the division and its budget was cut by \$3,000 this year. . . The prisoner counts are the same as last year, so it stands to reason there will be an overspending of the budget (bottom line). The membership is young and energetic and process more criminal code charges, which result in more court appearances, which can't be controlled."

Sylvan Lake: "There would appear to be a 'general' trend upward in almost all areas, including property and persons crime. Drug, liquor charges up, with traffic down This would all appear to be normal considering the town growth and increased workload pressures on members."

Taber/Vauxhall: "Significant turnaround in morale at this detachment with the arrival of new (commander). Members appear to be buying into a new philosophy and wanting to perform to these standards. . . .

"Mayor of Vauxhall could not say enough about the recent changes in regard to communication and initiative by the detachment members. . . . The future is looking very bright as far as our external clients are concerned."

Three Hills: "Crime trends have been on the increase generally across the board. Prisoner count has also increased."

Vulcan: "There are no developing (crime) trends, however the detachment reports that the community youth curfew bylaw seems to be working well."

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