

June 28, 2024

Mayor Brenda Locke
13450 104 Avenue
Surrey, BC
V3T 1V8

Dear Mayor Locke,

Re: Service or Policy Complaint – Surrey Police Service – OPCC File No. 2024-25832

At the June 26, 2024 closed meeting of the Board, a report on the above-noted Service or Policy Complaint was presented. The following are the results.

SUMMARY

On April 28, 2024, the City of Surrey Mayor, Brenda Locke, submitted a Service and Policy complaint to the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) alleging that on April 23, 2024, members of Surrey Police Service (SPS) withdrew their services to attend a meeting with Minister Farnworth at the direction of Chief Constable Lipinski. Mayor Locke's complaint implies that the SPS members' attendance at this meeting impacted the safety of the City of Surrey and members of the RCMP.

On April 23, 2024, Minister Farnworth did attend the City Works Yard to meet with SPS staff. This meeting was not mandatory for SPS staff but an invitation to attend the meeting was communicated to SPS staff by Chief Constable Lipinski. On the date in question, a number of SPS members attended the meeting as operational needs permitted.

The Administrator of the Surrey Police Board reviewed the complaint and requested a report back from SPS on the matter. In order to address the complaint, SPS interviewed the Duty Officer, reviewed the call dispatch logs, police record management systems, and operational shift reports on the date in question to determine the effect, if any, on staffing levels and policing services.

The findings indicate that the meeting with Minister Farnworth and his staff did not negatively affect the policing service levels in the City of Surrey. It is recommended that the Surrey Police Board conclude its review of this complaint based on the information in this report.

BACKGROUND

On April 23, 2024, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General made a public announcement that SPS would take command of policing the City of Surrey on November 29, 2024. Together with the RCMP Deputy

Commissioner and Chief of SPS, Minister Farnworth also advised the current RCMP Municipal Policing Unit Agreement with the City of Surrey would be cancelled.

The Minister had requested an opportunity to meet with SPS personnel after the announcement and a general announcement and invitation on behalf of Chief Lipinski was subsequently distributed to all civilian and sworn members. At 3:15 p.m., the Minister, Deputy Minister, and Director of Police Services attended the SPS Training Centre in Surrey where a large number of employees had gathered.

On-duty Frontline members know in-service meetings can be challenging to attend given operational requirements, and there is an implicit understanding that priority operational calls may preclude or interrupt their attendance.

Service or Policy Complaint

On May 3, 2024, the OPCC notified Board Administrator, Mike Serr, of the complaint that was forwarded directly to the OPCC by Mayor Locke. Mayor Locke reported to the OPCC that she had concerns related to SPS's decision to withdraw SPS members from service to attend a meeting with the Minister at the direction of Chief Lipinski.

There are three components to this complaint:

1. Mayor Locke believed that SPS members, using twenty-four police vehicles, withdrew their services to the residents of Surrey by meeting with Minister Mike Farnworth.
2. The withdrawal of service was not authorized by the RCMP Detachment Commander.
3. Chief Lipinski directed members to withdraw [their services] for the meeting in question.

Pursuant to Section 171(1) of the *Police Act*, the Board, having authority over SPS, requested an investigative review of the allegations made by Mayor Locke. The SPS review included call dispatch logs, police record management systems, and operational shift reports for April 23, 2024.

In-service briefings, training sessions, and meetings are a standard policing practice and arguably the most effective way of providing a consistent message to the organization. Given the significant announcement being made by the Minister that impacted both police agencies, April 23, 2024, was no exception, when both the RCMP and SPS held 45-minute in-service meetings at different times of the day.

1. Mayor Locke believed that SPS members, using twenty-four police vehicles, withdrew their services to the residents of Surrey by meeting at the City Works Yard with Minister Mike Farnworth.

On April 23, 2024, at 3:15 p.m., when Minister Farnworth attended the SPS Training Centre to address SPS staff, there was an overlap between dayshift and afternoon shift providing extra coverage. SPS deployed a number of Frontline Sgts/Csts on dayshift with an additional deployment of members on afternoon shift as of 1430 hours. Dayshift RCMP also deployed Sgts/Csts, with additional afternoon shift Csts and Frontline

support units including traffic, youth, gangs, mental health, general investigation teams, and community response units.

In accordance with the Surrey Police Union Collective Agreement, members may receive up to 90 minutes of breaks during a shift (operational requirements permitting). Some SPS members used their meal break allotment to attend the SPS Training Centre. With no immediate priority calls for service, others attended and ensured Dispatch was aware they were available if needed. All on-duty Frontline members in attendance were actively monitoring the radio and able to immediately respond to priority calls. Although the SPS members make up half of the Frontline resources, there were additional supporting units throughout the city.

In review of the calls for service, call types and the status of Frontline SPS members during the meeting in question, it was determined that SPS members did not withdraw their services to the residents of Surrey. During the meeting, there were no priority calls for service however as call demand increased, the SPS Duty Officer immediately dismissed members from the meeting after being contacted by the RCMP Duty Officer. The Duty Officers communicate regularly to ensure adequate resourcing when in-service meetings arise.

The SPS Training Centre is in an area known as District 3. This District receives most of the overall calls for service and is the largest SPS staffed District. Many of the “24” vehicles were assigned to this District and were in their geographic area of responsibility, hence there would be no undue delays in responding to priority calls for service. There were other members and vehicles assigned to the remaining four districts who were available for urgent calls if required.

On April 23, 2024, a total of 137 calls were dispatched for service to Frontline Csts during the dayshift between 4:00am-4:00pm. According to the RCMP Shift Report, there were no exigent calls for service or notable files that occurred throughout the day. The dayshift assumed conduct of a crime scene carried over from nightshift. The SPS Duty Officer advised that SPS members were deployed throughout the City of Surrey while the RCMP remained at the Main Detachment for a briefing and discussion their NPF representative, to discuss collective bargaining and the transition. These briefings were held for the 6:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. deployment shifts and lasted approximately 45 mins.

Between 3:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., there were 20 calls holding in the queue. Eight of those calls were cleared as false or accidental 911 calls. The remaining calls were low priority and none of the calls were urgent in nature and/or required immediate attention.

2. Mayor Locke believed the withdrawal of service was not authorized by the RCMP Detachment Commander.

As previously referenced, Mayor Locke’s belief that there was a “withdrawal of service” is incorrect. However, in reference to the complaint, the SPS Duty Officer was interviewed and from that interview it was learned that the SPS Duty Officer did not advise the RCMP Duty Officer of the meeting or discuss the attendance of SPS Frontline members, if operationally feasible. Having sought this authorization in advance was an oversight and lack of communication on the part of the SPS Duty Officer. Nonetheless, SPS members advised their supervisors and dispatchers as required in accordance with RCMP protocol and were in

position to respond to any incoming calls. The RCMP Staff Sgt Watch Commanders are embedded with the dispatchers and have the oversight for all operational resources.

3. Mayor Locke believed the Chief Lipinski directed members to withdraw [their services] for the meeting in question.

The allegation of Chief Lipinski ordering members to attend is not factual and did not occur. On April 22, 2024, Chief Lipinski sent out communication inviting all SPS staff to attend the meeting but there was never a direction or order given for staff regarding attendance.

CONCLUSION

On April 23, 2024, Frontline SPS members did attend a meeting with Minister Farnworth and members of his staff. However, Frontline members in attendance were on duty, actively monitoring calls, and in a position to respond if required. Chief Lipinski did not direct or order members to attend this meeting, but an invitation was extended to the SPS membership.

With the considerable complexity relative to the police transition for both RCMP and SPS, the information in these meeting has significant impact on all police members. For this reason, the Frontline members respectfully cover each other to facilitate attendance, knowing the importance of these meetings.

As a result of this complaint, a directive will be issued by the Chief Constable that the SPS Duty Officer will inform the RCMP Duty Officer of any planned meetings in the future.

The Surrey Police Board has concluded its review of the complaint based on the information outlined in this letter.

Should you disagree with the Board's decision, you can contact the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner to request a review under s.172 of the Police Act.

Sincerely,



Mike Serr, M.O.M.
Administrator
Surrey Police Board

cc. Andrea Spindler, OPCC