



Halifax Regional Police

A Principled Response For Action



Introduction

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) has endeavoured to respond to Professor Philip Girard's Decision in a balanced and transparent manner. It is in this same spirit that we offer our response to the needs assessment reports mandated by his Decision.

We would like to acknowledge the authors of both reports - Drs. Hari and Mallika Das of Das Management and Educational Services, and Keith Taylor and Peter Cople of Perivale + Taylor - for their efforts. We also thank everyone who participated in the review; without your contribution, this process would not have been possible. We accept the comments and observations offered by the participants as part of the review. We note in the author's findings that caution must be exercised when interpreting anecdotal evidence as conclusive, however, we concur they are indicators of concern.

In HRP's response, we will focus on the recommendations contained in both reports. Our response will be comprehensive, however, we have decided not to individually address each recommendation offered by the individual consultants. We recognize the similarities in each submission, however, we also note several of the recommendations, as stated in the Das Management report, address more than one finding. As such, it would be redundant to specifically respond to each one. It is our intention to provide a clear and concise response that will illustrate the direction of HRP. We are all in agreement that it is time to move forward and bring about positive and meaningful change within HRP and the communities we serve.

Action #1: Equity Diversity Officer Role

The Equity Diversity Officer was established in April 2004 as a dedicated position that would address diversity issues. Reporting to the Chief of Police, this position ensures a co-ordinated response to diversity concerns as illustrated in the actions below. By encompassing both internal and external responsibilities, the Equity Diversity Officer provides a consistent contact point for HRP on issues of this nature.

Action #2: Community Outreach

HRP has recognized the necessity to establish a community-based advisory committee to the Chief of Police, consisting of citizens from HRM's diverse communities. The Chief's Diversity Advisory Committee (CDAC) is in its final stages of development with an imminent public appointment process. An excerpt from the Terms of Reference is as follows...

The primary role of the CDAC is to offer advice from a community perspective and serve as a knowledge base to the Chief's Office on diversity-related issues. As a link between the community and Halifax Regional Police, the CDAC shall play a proactive role in fulfilling its obligations, with a desired emphasis on forward vision. This role may also be furthered by helping to reach out to our communities when situations warrant, contributing to an effective, progressive and sustained relationship between the police and the diverse communities we serve.

Selection criteria will include knowledge of diversity issues, community involvement and a willingness to work in a cooperative manner with the police. It is a stated goal of this committee that it be reflective and inclusive of the diversity of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). As part of their mandate to convey the needs and concerns of diverse communities, the CDAC will be the suitable mechanism to determine the appropriateness of community-action teams for "at risk" communities.

We acknowledge the importance of conveying our commitment to diversity to both internal and external audiences and will review all communications, including our mission statement, to ensure they specifically reflect this commitment.

Deputy Chief Christopher McNeil will continue to lead the diversity initiatives of HRP as we move forward.

Action #3: Targeted Recruiting

HRP is pleased the consultants recognize our outreach recruiting activities as a best practice. We remain committed to ensuring HRP is reflective of the diverse community it serves. The success of this program speaks for itself and is a testament to the commitment of the recruiting team.

HRP's current recruit class that began training in January 2005 demonstrates our commitment to diversity. The demographic make-up of the class is 65% diverse candidates - 40% female and 25% racially visible (including Aboriginal, Black and Arabic representation). A second class scheduled in late 2005/early 2006 will continue to strengthen our diversity. HRP recognizes the need to be more aggressive in targeting diverse communities for civilian positions within the organization.

We are confident there are recruit selection devices in place that address candidates competency to value diversity. That being said, HRP commits to reviewing all of our selection processes and human resources practices with the assistance of HRM expertise.

HRP strongly believes our recruiting efforts will continue to foster change in our organization. We are confident diversity among the ranks and levels of the organization is inevitable. This is an evolutionary process that has and will continue to show results.

Action #4: Culturally-Responsive Complaint Process

Nova Scotians are fortunate that our Province is a leader in the development of an independent and accessible police oversight system. Each person has the right under Nova Scotia law to have a completely independent investigation into allegations of police misconduct. In addition, decisions of the Nova Scotia Police Review Board are binding.

We recognize that in diverse communities there is a history of mistrust and misunderstanding which fosters dissatisfaction with the formal complaint process. HRP must overcome such

mistrust if we are to forge ahead. We have undertaken a thorough review and redesign of our formal public complaint mechanisms to revitalize the overall process. Of particular importance is enhancing the opportunity for meaningful informal resolutions. Further, HRP has reached an agreement with the Human Rights Commission to sign a Memorandum of Understanding which will strengthen our informal resolution attempts regarding human rights complaints.

To ensure a culturally sensitive response to public complaints, the Equity Diversity Officer will liaise with the Professional Standards Office to ensure a greater understanding of the effects of cultural differences on such complaints. In addition, we will review the documentation of complaints to ensure the early identification and resolution of concerns.

Consistent with our commitment to be more culturally sensitive, HRP will ensure both the Equity Diversity Officer and the Professional Standards Officer have enhanced diversity training and conflict-resolution training. In addition, all supervisors will receive training regarding the handling of culturally sensitive public complaints.

HRP will continue to strive for a culturally sensitive response to public complaints that fosters our commitment to integrity and impartiality. HRP is also exploring ways to inject restorative justice principles into the complaint process. Further, we will develop a public communication campaign to ensure all citizens understand the public complaint process and their rights when interacting with police officers.

Action #5: Policing with the Community

We recognize culturally-diverse communities require a policing response consistent with their unique characteristics and the Rule of Law. We also recognize the need to continually foster our relationship with all communities. Our commitment to the citizens we serve is demonstrated through such concepts as our Village Constables and Gottingen Street Beat Officers. The 2005/06 Business Plan builds on these and other successes with an enhanced Community Response Model.

The Community Response Model is a responsive, flexible, community-focussed approach, allowing the opportunity to work with communities to develop policing strategies that best address their unique needs.

Action #6: Human Resources

HRP remains committed to upholding HRM's Workplace Rights Policy. The implementation of a revised policy provides the opportunity to strengthen our efforts in communicating and ensuring HRP is a safe and healthy workplace. Deputy Chief McNeil will lead the roll-out of this program to demonstrate the expected standard of conduct of all employees. We are committed to an environment that fosters diversity.

To promote an environment of diversity where employees feel confident that the workplace promotes acceptance, equality and inclusivity, HRP will create a Diversity Action Team comprised of a diverse representation of our workforce. An excerpt from the Terms of Reference is as follows:

The primary objective of the Team is to establish a diverse representation of individuals within HRP committed to promoting and encouraging diversity in the workplace. As "Ambassadors of Diversity," the Diversity Action Team will work toward HRP being an inclusive, accepting and respectful culture in all areas related to Diversity. Committee members may also provide an internal mechanism to identify and address any diversity issues within HRP and recommend resolutions.

Action #7: Training & Education

HRP accepts the need to renew diversity training and education. We have developed a three-phased plan to address these concerns:

1. Awareness Training

The first phase will create diversity awareness. We will ensure all HRP officers have completed the Building Cultural Competency program or equivalent training by the end of 2005.

2. Applied Training

This phase will focus on the application of diversity competencies in a practical context by providing training to specific officers working in culturally sensitive assignments. The focus of this training is community involvement, rapport building and community dialogue. In addition, HRP will continue to explore additional training opportunities which enhance understanding of our diverse communities. We will build on the success of the Mi'Kmaq Experience program, and the Black Cultural Centre Diversity Training.

3. Adaptive Training

The third phase recognizes our need to ensure diversity is integrated into all of our training. We will undertake a review of training best practices and an assessment of all our training standards to develop a program which will assist in ensuring our commitment to diversity is reflected in our officers' day-to-day activities.

Conclusion

HRP recognizes change will not happen overnight and will require commitment and fortitude to be successful. We recognize the desire of the community to have the above-noted actions implemented, and will develop a detailed plan to illustrate we have heard and understood their concerns and are committed to taking action. As part of this process, we will continue to be accountable to the Board of Police Commissioners. Understanding the importance of having a public reporting mechanism, we will also report regularly to the CDAC to ensure public confidence and to provide a yardstick by which our response to this needs assessment will be measured.