

**Published in the Halifax Chronicle Herald, Thursday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2007**

## **Commentary unfair to RCMP**

By Assistance Commissioner Ian Atkins  
Commanding Officer NS RCMP

As the Commanding Officer of the RCMP in Nova Scotia, I would like to address an opinion piece written by Mr. Paul Palango appearing in *The Sunday Herald* of June 24 . While we grant Mr. Palango his opinions, he is doing Nova Scotians and all Canadians a disservice when he presents views which are without balance, offer little supporting detail and, most disconcerting, are lacking in factual accuracy.

Mr. Palango claims RCMP members are *“not as well trained or as effective as the majority of municipal officers or as Ontario or Quebec provincial police”*. The RCMP has been graduating cadets from our training Academy, Depot Division in Regina, for more than 120 years. It is recognized as one of the world’s finest police training facilities, as attested to by the many other national and international enforcement and regulatory agencies that choose send their people to Depot.

RCMP Deputy Commissioner Gary Bass is quoted in Mr. Palango’s article - erroneously as it turns out. Deputy Commissioner Bass has already written to Mr. Palango to point this out.

Again in this article Mr. Palango expresses his view that the RCMP should turn contract policing over to the provinces and transform itself into FBI north. In fact, Canada is fortunate to have a policing organization like the RCMP which operates in and understands municipal, provincial, national and international policing requirements - and can offer extensive and specialized services to all those levels. In contrast, I would encourage Mr Palango to truly explore law enforcement in many other countries to understand just how difficult communication, integration and information sharing is when numerous agencies with varying mandates are involved.

One can offer a reasoned rebuttal to many things Mr. Palango says in his piece, but one of the most egregious statements is that: *“in 2012, the next round of policing contracts come up for renewal ... [t]he federal Treasury Board has already indicated that it will no longer subsidize contract policing, which means the provinces and municipalities will have to pay full freight for their police.”*

It is true that policing contracts come up for review in 2012, but how Mr. Palango came to the conclusion that the federal government will no longer “subsidize” contract policing is unclear. The RCMP has been participating in meetings where the Provinces and the Federal Government, including the Treasury Board Secretariat, have been discussing the plans for contract policing renewal. At no time has the Secretariat reflected Mr. Palango’s take on this issue.

Mr. Palango appears to be of the opinion that the RCMP wants to put municipal police forces out of business. He says: *“[f]or example the RCMP is now lobbying to take over the duties of the municipal police force in Grand Falls, NB., promising to erect a new police building if they get*

*the work.*” This is not accurate. The RCMP is not a lobby group and is not lobbying to absorb the Grand Falls police force. Nor are we promising to build any new police building in the community. We can assert that submissions made by the RCMP to any community are at the request of municipal officials. The RCMP goes where it is needed and where it is wanted. Hundreds of communities in Canada, some remote and some not so remote; some large and some tiny, recognize the benefits of having the RCMP as their police force, and we are proud to serve them.

Advocating one model for Nova Scotia, or for the Maritimes is easy to say, but complex to design and implement. In Nova Scotia, by virtue of Service Exchange legislation, it is the municipalities who have a large say in what their policing service looks like, always recognizing however that it is the provinces that have Constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice, including policing, within their province.

If the crux of Mr. Palango’s numerous articles is that there is room for improvement at the RCMP, I would agree, and we are striving to that end. As widely reported, the federal government is in the process of striking a task force to examine management and governance of the RCMP. We look forward to the report of that task force later this year. We would only ask that in future, if Mr. Palango continues to be presented as an independent expert on the RCMP, that he be fair in his musings and accurate in his comments.