

## *Chapter Fourteen*

### **REGIONALIZATION OF POLICING: THE CLOSING OF AN ERA**

L. Clairmont and A. Thomson

The major structural issue facing the RCMP and the MPDs at the end of the century was regionalisation. The future of the small town police forces appeared to be precarious. The limited resources of many small town departments have necessitated a certain degree of dependence on the RCMP. Specialized RCMP services are available to all municipal Valley police departments. In major criminal investigations, such as murder, the RCMP have official jurisdiction. All of the small town police departments in the Valley utilize the RCMP identification (forensic) services. As federal and provincial budgets tighten, however, these services will be provided increasingly at cost. For example, identification services, the use of tracking dogs and lab work may well, in the future, be billed to the municipal police departments.

In a very fundamental way the dependence of the town police on political authority and the resources of the RCMP are reflected in the potential threat to disband the municipal police force and bring in the federal force. In some departments this threat has surfaced on occasion, especially during contract negotiations and departmental problems. In Middleton the threat of RCMP takeover has been less conspicuous. On the contrary, political discussion of municipal regionalization may presage a reverse of this relationship, with an expanded regional or provincial force threatening RCMP presence in all or parts of now-rural policing.

The most obvious advantage of the municipal RCMP contracts has been the high level of subsidization of town policing by the government. However, as the federal government moves to recover an increasing proportion of its expenditure from the municipalities, the cost benefits of an RCMP contract will diminish and subsequently the importance of local control over police forces will be heightened.

#### **Community Influentials**

Initially, we asked the "knowledgeable" sample for their feelings about regionalization in their area. None of the users had given much consideration to the regionalization of police in the area nor to the impact such a change may have on their relationship with the police. They tended to be equally divided in their "off the cuff" response to this question. Similarly, the collaborators were also divided in their feelings. About a third did not care ("it's not a big concern"), did not know or said it would depend on how it was implemented. Another third suggested positive benefits which might come from amalgamation. The remaining third were opposed because it implied the elimination of the RCMP ("remember Hatfield's police"), they saw "no cause for it" or thought it would generate too many administrative headaches.

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Respondents perceived many aspects of regional policing positively. Regionalization was beneficial for one because it would allow MPD officers to be transferred from area to area providing them with a "fresh outlook" and diminishing some of the problems associated with familiarity, such as unequal justice. Another agreed that officers would find it easier to police areas in which they did not live, although he added that he did not think local police had many problems in that area. In addition, opportunities would be opened for MPD officers to obtain promotions. Presently, they are frustrated by the lack of opportunities.

Regionalization would allow departments to create greater specialization and expertise in such areas as sexual assault, fraud and anti-drug work. Another respondent suggested that some of the overlapping of territories would be eradicated as well as some "black spots where you never seem to see any patrols".<sup>1</sup> A social agency worker believed that regionalization would make it less likely that something would "fall in between" the police forces. In addition, with a single force, referrals would be more directly co-ordinated. Another suggested that regionalization would tend to limit petty jealousies because all officers would belong to the same organization; there would be no false competition. Police would not have to worry about all the "stupid little borders".

Standardisation was seen as a potential spin-off benefit of regionalization by some respondents. A standard policy would reduce the individual discretion of the officers and the different policy orientations of the various departments. One social service worker thought dealing with a single police organization and style would simplify matters, making it easier to place one call for assistance and eliminating jurisdictional conflict. A correctional administrator, who "always thought Berwick, Wolfville and Kentville should go regional", felt it would enhance communication with other criminal justice agencies. A prosecutor anticipated the standardisation of crown and information sheets and one central office scheduling court cases. He added: "This region is ripe for regional policing."

Among those who opposed regionalization or aspects of it, some were concerned with the potential loss of the RCMP while others feared that a regional police force would be unable to implement a Community-based Policing strategy. A peace officer assumed regionalization would mean replacing the RCMP with a provincial force. This might cause a shortfall of funding for things such as training. Another respondent was concerned that a regional police commission and a provincial police force would both be unworkable-- that would be like the SQ in Quebec, he suggested, or the New Brunswick Highway Patrol. He hoped the RCMP would take over the area: "I think we have to go with a winner! I'll applaud the day when the RCMP finally takes over all the towns."

Among the prosecutors, three were initially opposed to regionalization if it meant a reduction in the policing jurisdiction of the RCMP. Asked about municipal

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<sup>1</sup> One such area mentioned by one respondent was the New Ross road. He said, "That can be a long, lonely drive and you wonder where those people are policed from. It's an issue, I'm sure, for them. That type of situation could be responded to better with some type of regional policing."

regionalization, one prosecutor was opposed because "you'd almost have to kick out the RCMP....I think you'd be hard pressed to find better officers." Another would prefer to see the RCMP "do it all" rather than have a regional force. The County Wardens did not favour regionalization because they feared losing the RCMP: "I can relate better to the yellow stripes"; municipal policing was "too parochial".

As we have seen above, however, this expresses only one side of the question of the appropriate social distance between the community and the police. A second important issue raised by the respondents was that regionalization would mean a loss of close police-community relations. One prosecutor did not favour regionalization because he didn't "like big! ...With big comes bureaucracy" and decisions are made "for those who squawk the most." The quality of service in the towns would decline, including less foot patrol. The only way to save money would be to reduce the number of officers, and this, he continued, was not desirable.<sup>2</sup>

A social services administrator said that regionalization would cause the police to lose touch with the local community although, in his view, this was not an important concern. For many others, however, this was a very salient issue. A school principal said that he was "somewhat resistant" to regionalization because he thinks a small town requires a constant police presence and that driving through once in a while was insufficient. A town is different from a rural area because the population is more concentrated. There is a sense of community in a small town which is important to maintain. The concentration of local businesses and more residents provides more "crime targets" which require police presence as a deterrent. With a regional police force the police would be far less visible and "real problems" would arise unless there was an officer always in the town. He was uncomfortable with the idea that he would likely not know the police working in his area. A social service administrator thought it especially important for victims to know the police in their area and feel that they can approach them and be protected. This required a community-based department in which the police were seen as part of the community. A regional style of policing would increase the social distance compared with a smaller municipal department.

There was concern among many users in the towns about losing the services provided by their local MPDs. An owner of one business believed he would not like regionalization: "Without a police force in town, it is pretty hard to have the same kind of rapport. Having a staff sergeant to do the job is not the same as a police chief. A Chief has to establish rapport with the people. If I lived in town I'd want to have a town police force rather than have police floating in and out." Another business manager said, "Policing needs some local presence; the policeman should live in the community." Another, who felt there may be a role for regionalization in the provision of more specialized services, such as drug enforcement, wanted "day to day policing done at the level of the community."

Even should regionalization be beneficial, some respondents said that it would be difficult to implement because each town has its own distinct identity and community

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<sup>2</sup> Another prosecutor said that regionalization with the same Chiefs and municipal police officers make it no different from present policing.

personality. Furthermore, there would be a lot of squabbles over who would administer the force, manpower deployment, resource allocation, and so on -- "a lot of 'this is my turf' stuff.... They have their own mandate: self-interest, self improvement and survival." Another believed there would be many administrative problems because different policing styles were needed for rural areas and towns.

### **The Movements Towards a Regional Police**

Over the course of the last few years, the regionalisation shoe had changed feet several times. At one time on the defensive in Kings County, by 1997 the RCMP appeared poised to take over municipal policing in Kentville, the king-pin for a take-over of the entire valley. By 1998 the Kentville force was assured of at least a five-year future under new Chief (and former RCMP Sergeant) MacLean and Town Council was contemplating poaching on RCMP turf. At the end of this five-year hiatus, however, the idea of regionalization under the RCMP was again on the agenda of Town Council.

One way to gauge the nature of the relationship between the community and the police is to consider public response to a proposed change in policing. Policing in Nova Scotia is undergoing a process of regionalization which disrupts long-standing policing patterns, a topic which will be explored in more detail below.

The absorption of most of the smaller Valley town police departments was not an inevitable development. The idea of regionalization had been initially championed in the late 1980s by former-Chief Innes in Kentville. He had argued that the development of a regional police force would provide benefits to all the municipal units. There was considerable waste involved in having six small departments in the Valley, each with a Chief of Police and numerous other duplications of services. Innes envisaged a type of zone policing with a centralized station as a core and sub-offices in each of the towns. One Chief, who also favoured regionalization, said that he would be quite willing to become a detachment commander and allow the role of "Chief" to be filled by someone else for the whole region. The main benefits of regionalization, he thought, would be specialization and motivation. Officers could specialize in certain areas, such as drug enforcement or traffic. In addition, a constable could be transferred from one town, where he had worked for a number of years, to another in order to give his career a boost.

It was in the area of crime prevention that steps towards regionalization (or amalgamation) were first taken by the towns prior to the death of Innes. With the assistance of a private company, a crime prevention van was purchased for the cooperative use of the six Valley municipal departments. The van was used primarily during ceremonial occasions such as escorting parades and as part of routine crime prevention displays. Like crime prevention initiatives in general, the van tended to be under-utilized. In general, most municipal officers have adopted the view that such work is not as significant as enforcement or investigation.

Additional early steps towards regional co-operation were the centralizing of the answering service in Kentville and the Valley Investigator's Meeting. Every month representatives from each department, usually the GIS officer if the town had that

specialization, would meet together to share criminal intelligence and plan possible joint actions. Similarly, the police Chiefs also met regularly, discussing areas of cooperation such as joining the Provincial Radio Grid system and the common purchase of cars. There was some informal swapping of constables during events such as the Annapolis Valley Festival.

With Innes, regionalization had been an idea he brought from Ontario, where the absorption of small forces into the OPP had been a fait accompli. In Nova Scotia, regionalization of police services in areas including the Valley had been proposed as early as 1981 in a study of municipal government (the Green Report). In the mid-1990s the Department of Justice initiated a comprehensive review of police services which added an external dimension to the movement for amalgamation in the Valley. Municipal police units are ultimately subject to provincial standards and reviews. The basic question was whether or not small municipal units could afford to provide policing that met the standards established by the province. Throughout the period, provincial decisions strained the financial resources of town policing budgets. Police departments were obliged to provide training in family violence intervention and in the graduated use of force. The Department of Justice mandated the replacement of the old .38 calibre pistols with 9 mm automatics. These proved to be only the beginning of a comprehensive change of policing standards.

In a White Paper on policing services that resulted from a Department of Justice initiative in 1996, the connected issues of providing and paying for specialized policing services were debated at length. The small towns had, for many years, received free services from the RCMP, including the use of Identification (forensics) specialists, the use of RCMP resources for complex investigations, such as murder, and emergency back-up support. As the Department of Justice began to require small forces to make provisions of their own for these services or use the existing ones on a cost-recovery basis, independent small town policing became increasingly unviable.

Meanwhile, as part of a broad political movement towards the regionalization of municipalities that created Halifax and Cape Breton Regional Municipalities, the separate MPDs of these newly amalgamated towns and cities were similarly brought together in single, regional police forces. Some steps towards amalgamation of police forces, in the absence of the larger political movement, were also taken in Pictou and Lunenburg Counties. Some influentials in the Valley were sceptical of these moves. One respondent stated that regionalization had been tried in Pictou County but "it didn't work well because small town politics got in the way. Each wanted to run its own areas and wouldn't give up control; some of the towns resented the way regionalization was set up". It appeared that municipal policing would survive only in those areas with a sufficiently large taxation base to support larger, fully serviced police forces. How large a population or taxation base that was required was debatable. Without question, in the Valley only the Kentville Police Department could make a case as a stand-alone force, and that was still on the margins of survivability.

The dynamics of change in the systems and standards of policing services in the Province that were emanating from the external environment were apparent to police Chiefs and Town Councils. Late in 1994, the Wolfville Police Commission initiated the

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idea of discussing the possibilities of “service integration” with representatives of other small Valley towns. The term “integration” was used because of the “unnecessary baggage” that was associated with “amalgamation” or “regionalization”. In April, 1995, the Executive Director of Policing Services in Nova Scotia, Robert Barss, made a public presentation outlining the concept of sharing resources. In that month, four Chiefs had begun weekly meetings to discuss “the need for increased services, reduction in waste and the demands for optimum service using a depleted budget.” The Police Commissions in the Valley towns struck an Implementation Committee charged with developing “a strategic plan for police service integration” to provide “uniform and cost effective policing services” within the NS Police Act. The committee considered three main issues: governance, organization and structure, and budget (Implementation Committee 1996: 2-3). In the words of Robert Stead, who chaired the police services Implementation Committee, the towns basically had two choices: “you can either direct and drive the changes necessary for these four municipal units or you can expend as much energy and money keeping up with the new marching orders which will come to you from Halifax.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the representatives from the Valley towns deemed their work towards service sharing was ground-breaking and independent, it was quickly apparent that the opportunity for self-direction was brief. The Province was preparing a Policing Plan with a final report due by April 1997. “As stand alone units,” the Implementation Committee reported (: 4-5), “it’s most unlikely and probably impossible for any one of our four units to meet these standards.” No police department with fewer than twenty members could expect to meet these standards. Costs, including training costs of new recruits which were already 50% self-sustaining, would increase. In fact, the committee anticipated the province would demand “near-complete cost downloading”. Service integration seemed the only way to avoid losing independent policing and maintain local identities (: 5).

The four police Chiefs reported on a structural plan complete with a very detailed budget for a single administrative structure consisting on one Police Chief, a Deputy Chief, and two Inspectors, drawn from the four existing Chiefs, and a zone policing model including sub-stations in each town under one of these four administrative ranks. Operationally, the officers would be deployed by community, so that citizens would see the same officers and maintain public identity with their policing services. The major changes, then, were on paper; personnel would remain the same, there would be no reduction in staffing, and the same members would police in the new structure (Implementation Report: 1996: 7-13). Uniformed constables were termed “Crime Prevention Officers/Investigators”. To meet the expected provincial standards, an Investigative Support Services” unit of three members was proposed, operating in all four communities. The Investigative unit would allow the uniformed officers to spend

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<sup>3</sup> Stead to Mayors and Police Commission Chairs, Towns of Berwick, Hantsport, Kentville, and Wolfville, September 1996.

more time on patrol, traffic enforcement, “and, most importantly, in delivering the Community/Crime Prevention component of the service” (: 16).<sup>4</sup>

In Kings County, the discussions about sharing services that had been continuing inconsistently for years took on a renewed urgency. Initially, a Police Commission member stated, “there was a real outcry against amalgamation, against losing our own police force in the town. The issue slowly petered out here, the government changed, so did priorities. Then, the Chief raised the issue again, saying that we should look at all the alternatives. He said that the ante was being raised by the Department of Justice. They were raising standards. It was [the Chief’s] view then that [the Town] would not be able to afford a self-contained police force soon [or] the kinds of training that the Department of Justice was or would be demanding, and anyway that 99% of this training would not be necessary.” As the Mayor of one town asserted, “We didn’t realize how badly off we were in policing.... We were seriously falling short mostly as a result of the lack of resources. We were almost an island, and would have to draw on personnel and equipment from outside we couldn’t pay for.”

Some of this movement reflected the stand taken by individual mayors. In one town, for example, when the Mayor was reluctant to enter into any negotiations, requests for meetings were turned down. When a new Mayor was elected, not only did discussions open but, in the context of the movement towards province-wide amalgamation, this new Mayor wanted to negotiate a more comprehensive regionalization than the initial steps towards service sharing that were on the table. Either by abstaining or pushing for a more thorough reorganization, this town erected a considerable roadblock to amalgamation.

As proponents of the larger change in structure found, there were numerous obstacles to amalgamation in the Valley, not least of which were the history of independent policing in each town and the necessity for consensus among all the departments. Not all of the Chiefs agreed with the practice of informal swapping of constables, for example, a simple and fundamental precursor to amalgamation. A former Mayor of a town that eventually contracted with the RCMP said that, at the time of the amalgamation discussions, he had not been “pro-RCMP”. “Towns were special, locally and inwardly oriented. There was a different flavour in each town and that was a good thing. I greatly regret the huge amount of time that was wasted on the valley police force idea because nothing came of it. There was an untold number of meetings over two years that went nowhere.”

One problem they encountered was the absence of common policies across the departments. Certain tentative steps had been taken to establish regional policies in the meetings of the Chiefs, but these had not amounted to anything in some initial meetings. It was agreed that formulating such common policies was an important step, and that this would entail dedication of a lengthy period of time, but no concrete steps

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<sup>4</sup> The four union locals (Police Association of Nova Scotia) submitted an alternative structural plan which differed from that of the Chiefs primarily in proposing an additional sergeant, four corporals (a rank which was ignored by the Chiefs), and a full-time “Community Relations Officer”.

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were taken to realize this ambition. Not all Chiefs were equally willing to forego control of their town and become smaller fish in a larger pond.

The obstacles to amalgamation were greater than the pressure exerted by the demands for uniform policing services and standards across the province. The on-going discussions among police chiefs undertaken in the late 1990s on sharing services and working towards greater cooperation did not arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. In the view of one of the town mayor's involved in the process, who said that at the time he was committed to small town policing, "The Chiefs didn't understand the gravity of the situation vis-à-vis the municipal units they were serving. They exhibited a lack of vision for the future", an absence of foresight, he said, that was also exhibited by the Police union.

In the eyes of an ex-Mayor of one small town, in the end, it was Kentville that would not make the commitment to a regional force. Only Kentville thought that they would be able to survive on their own. "One of the key issues was representation on the Board of Police Commissioners. Most of the towns wanted even representation with two from each town. Kentville wanted it according to population, which would mean they had more and, of course, the cost of the services would reflect population differences."

The majority of Town Councilors in the Valley supported small town policing throughout the 1990s, but in the new environment brought about by external pressure for change, that support did not usually extend to the establishment of a regional municipal police force. This acceptance of the traditional model persisted despite the numerous problems that seemed to dog small town policing in the Valley. These were usually attributed to the "bad apple" syndrome – individual problems that could be solved by personnel changes rather than institutional ones. Crises among the small departments fed fuel to the persistent minority on Council and in the town that favoured the RCMP. In every town at critical moments in the recent history of policing the notion of bringing in the Mounties had been seriously debated and this option persisted as an alternative to the MPD and, later, to the idea of a regional MPD. With between four and six municipal units negotiating in this atmosphere, it became impossible to reach consensus. According to a Mayor involved in the talks, "On any matter that threatened a unit's self interest, that unit would balk. There was no infrastructure to hold the talks together, or any real external pressure [from the province] to amalgamate. So we gave up on that idea. But the status quo was unacceptable."

The regionalization of policing is ambiguously related to community-based approaches. On the one hand, regionalization will permit greater specialization, including the development of specific units handling crime prevention and police-community relations. In this respect, a more formal type of CBP can be implemented, consistent with the RCMP model described above. However, regionalization can also break the link between the police and the small town community. Given the movement towards regionalization, however, the implementation of a community policing philosophy may provide the necessary correction to the bureaucratic tendencies inherent in amalgamating small into larger forces.





## MPD/RCMP Turf Wars

The remaining alternative to the status quo gained ascendancy as the shared services/amalgamation movement in the Valley began to self-destruct. One Police Commission member commented that the history of the cost-sharing negotiations in the Valley “began with an interest in cost sharing and joint purchases. But when the province pushed through amalgamation in Cape Breton and Halifax, the ‘A’ word became taboo.” In addition, he claimed, the result “would have been different if [Chief] Crowell had continued in charge. He was the only one who could have pulled it off”. The dramatic indictment of the then-Kentville Chief on theft and fraud charges helped scuttle the negotiations although they would likely have failed even in the absence of this serious breach.

The Kentville Police Service was at the centre of the regional proposal. Critics in the other towns argued that Kentville would benefit the most from a centralized and expanded service, while the other towns would be marginalized and lose services. The Chief of Police in Kentville who spearheaded the plan, it was said, was the front runner for the new position of “Super Chief”. The Chief’s fall from grace was also the police departments. Encouraged by members of Town Council, the RCMP aggressively pursued a municipal contract in Kentville, seen as the point of greatest leverage for a sweep through the Valley.

From the point of view of the RCMP, one of the advantages of absorbing the Valley would be to consolidate their hold on rural policing at a time when they were threatened with the loss of the more urbanized centres in Nova Scotia. This was particularly the case in Cape Breton. The Police Departments of several small towns in Cape Breton had been amalgamated into a Regional Police Force in the mid-1990s as a consequence of a general movement to regionalize the separate political councils into one body. While a single municipal government was created for the entire geographic area, what was particularly anomalous was that the area continued to be served by two distinct police forces. While these towns were close in proximity, they were each surrounded by territory under the political control of the county municipal government, but under the jurisdiction of the RCMP. The semi-rural parts of the territory between the former towns were still RCMP turf. Within the boundaries of the superseded towns, the Cape Breton regional Police had jurisdiction. This scenario led to inter-force rivalry, competition, and duplication of services.

The issue was whether or not policing in the whole county should be regionalized, which would mean replacing the RCMP and expanding the regional police force. In the face of a projected budget shortfall, both the Regional Police (CBRP) and the RCMP put forward proposed budgets for stand-alone policing of the entire municipality. The RCMP proposal involved less money – their budget was about one million dollars a year less than the CBRP – and fewer officers. Regional [police officers who met RCMP standards would be rolled-over into the federal Force. The Department of Justice did not recommend one force over the other, leaving the decision in the hands of the municipality, and both forces were advised not to lobby the Council or the public on behalf of their proposal. Despite this, a memo was circulated by a member

within the RCMP listing up to 48 members who would have to relocate if the CBRP expanded, to the financial detriment of local businesses, and suggesting that members call the mayor's office (Hoare and Jeffrey 2000).

Citizens in the effected area mounted a publicity campaign designed, minimally, to maintain RCMP policing in the rural zones. Some MPD supporters speculated that members of the RCMP's own citizens' committee may have been involved in a "support your local detachment" campaign. Our research indicates that there would likely be a substantial basis of public support for existing police arrangements, whether MPD or RCMP, in any affected area. In the small municipal units, the police department is often regarded as a symbol of the Town, and threats to replace the local force with the RCMP are resisted by supporters of small town departments which claim to offer more extensive services than that paid for through an RCMP contract. In rural Nova Scotia, the RCMP has high approval ratings.

In order to approach this dispute over policing rationally, in 1999 the Regional Municipality contracted with Destrier Management Consultants of Ottawa to review the policing options and make a recommendation. In the view of the consultants, the proposal from the regional police force was "top heavy" and that both proposals would have the same number of officers on the street. They also recommended the RCMP 8-hour shift over the CBRP 12-hour platoon system. Despite these reservations, the consulting firm recommended that the CBRP policing option. The issue, consultant Raymond Foote explained to Council, was that the regional police offered more opportunities for community policing. (Camus 2000). Although the Cape Breton Regional Council debated the two policing options in depth, in the end the policing status quo remained.

The original regionalization movement in the Valley had a similar, if not more serious, geographical dilemma as in Cape Breton. Valley towns were strung, ribbon-like, along an old two-lane highway, maximizing the distance between the towns and making the initial plan artificial. The problems of a disparate jurisdiction, cross-cut by large areas of RCMP rural policing, would be even more apparent in the Valley than in Cape Breton.

Additional internal factors encouraged the RCMP ambitions in the Valley. The police departments in Middleton and Wolfville had not embraced the Community-based Policing model as self-consciously as some of the other towns and this was used against them. During the Public Study into policing undertaken in Wolfville, the Mayor claimed, "The Chief would come and say that 'You have to tell us what you want.' Well, it should have been obvious that we needed programmes for seniors, for youth, to address parking problems, etc.... The Chief, the union Executive, the members, did not see the challenge" that was looming for their own future. "They became inward looking, selfish as opposed to reaching out to the community, developing programming, seeing what needs there were they weren't addressing."

In this context, long-standing grievances added additional weight. With regional municipal policing, Town Councils would still have to negotiate with the police unions. The RCMP was a union-free alternative. Contracting out in the past has often occurred during contract disputes and it appeared to resolve the issue of negotiating and the

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potential for a strike with one blow. The disadvantage of RCMP policing was particularly seen in the absence of accountability to elected officials. As one Police Commission member put it, "The police, as a quasi-military body, need to be infiltrated by civilians; they need to rub shoulders with citizens." With an MPD, he continued, "the community is able to direct and monitor the police force and make decision based on what things they learn about the police. My police chief better respond. I'll put a bee in his bonnet. I'm his boss; I do his evaluations."

Under the Police Act the Town had a considerable measure of control over the purse strings. Municipal government representatives who were interviewed among the Influentials did not want to lose effective control of their police departments, a result they feared from regionalization. They also expressed concern about the loss of municipal identity and community-intensive police style, fearing the police would lose the "personal touch". Another respondent said, "if you do that we may as well have the RCMP because [regionalization] takes away from the community aspect we are trying to develop".

The turf war between the RCMP and MPD in the Valley centred initially on Kentville. Late in 1996, after an amalgamation committee had been studying the question for two years, Kentville Town Council debated three policing options: keep its 11-member police force, replace it with a 9 or 10-member RCMP contract, or amalgamate the existing department it with Wolfville, Berwick and Hantsport. This would duplicate the kind of patch-work amalgamation that had occurred in Cape Breton, with the RCMP continuing to exercise jurisdiction in the territories between the town boundaries.

The RCMP took its proposal directly to Town Council. According to one Council member, representatives from the Town were called to a private meeting in Halifax with the RCMP, where they sat in a square in chairs facing a screen where the RCMP presented a polished presentation about the benefits of RCMP policing. He said, "There were three or four high-ranking members who stood up behind them, so all you looked up to was the uniform and the brass, "an intimidating technique he recognized from his time in the armed forces. Town Council emerged from the meeting seriously divided about the offer.

The RCMP projected budget cost about \$200,000 less, but also provided less coverage than the 24-hour MPD coverage (Delaney 9 Nov. 1996). The turf war escalated when a member of Town Council suggested that a fourth option be considered: expanding the town force into a regional force covering the urbanized core, including New Minas to the east of the town and Coldbrook to the west. This option made more sense geographically. While it still embraced ribbon development along the old two-lane highway, it was restricted to the more urbanized eastern end of Kings County. The suggestion of a fourth option was in response to the request from the RCMP to increase the New Minas detachment by three members, a move that was justified by the RCMP saying the area has the highest provincial growth rate of Criminal Code cases (Delaney 13 December 1996). Some informal discussions were held with a few County Councillors, one town Police Commission member explained, "who were willing to look at buying policing from a municipal force at last for the urbanized parts

of the county, meaning New Minas and Coldbrook.. Of course, though, when it came to population, the County would be in complete charge of the force.... The county was never approached formally. But it was really a matter of the attitudes of the various players that killed the idea."

Several factors led to the decision for Kentville to stand pat with their MPD, including advice from Bob Barss, the executive director of police and public safety services for the Department of Justice. A Justice Department audit that took place while the Kentville police was under the management of Deputy Chief Mander had been favourable. Mander had been interim Chief for nearly two and a half years following the resignation of former-Chief Crowell. Mander had undertaken a needs assessment that, in addition, solicited public opinions about the town police. Predictably, the survey of residents indicated that a majority of citizens in the town evaluated the town police positively. The results of this survey were consciously intended to weigh-in on the side of the MPD in the turf war, a perception certainly expressed by the local RCMP staff sergeant. Ultimately, however, the decision on the mode of policing came down to dollars. Barss told Council that the federal government had changed Treasury Board rules in 1996 eliminating federal subsidies for new RCMP contracts in towns with a population greater than 5,000 people. In these towns, policing costs were entirely the responsibility of the municipality. (Fairclough 16 May 1997). That meant that the town would not receive the substantial federal subsidy available to smaller towns in the Valley. In the light of this information, Town Council voted to hire a police Chief effectively retaining the stand-alone MPD. An ex-member of the RCMP was selected for the position of Police Chief.

This concern over money had been clearly expressed by the police controllers. For most, regionalization was primarily a matter of money. Many respondents were uncertain of the financial implications of regionalization and suggested that their support would depend on whether it was more efficient. Some thought it would be more "cost effective", would lower overhead and reduce the substantial overlap. A controller said: "I'm all for it mainly because of the cost, the economy of scale." A business manager, however, said he liked the current system and did not know whether regionalization would be cost efficient: "We might not be able to afford regionalization in the long run." Three respondents believed that, while police service was expensive, it was not uncontrollable: "everything is in line". Since "everything is going up" in price, the cost of policing was merely keeping pace.

A store owner thought that policing was probably cheaper now, without regionalization. A town councilor added, "You'd have more corporals and sergeants and then you'd lose control of the cost." The administrative structure would expand and eliminate any potential savings. Only the two county representatives did not view the cost of policing as problematic. For several town respondents, however, the subsidized policing in the county was a "bone of contention"; in their view, "the towns are always getting nicked."

Fifteen political controllers perceived current costs to be a considerable problem. One said that policing "was at the upper limit of what the town can afford". In another town, according to a respondent, the cost of policing is causing a major political debate

and there was some thought of eliminating the town police because of the tax burden. Town policing, he said, has many unnecessary costs and "the squeeze is on". Town councilors complained that they pay for their own police force directly and then, indirectly through provincial taxation, help pay the costs of policing the county.

### **Regionalization under the RCMP**

The combination of external pushes from the Department of Justice and incentives from federal subsidies were the main factors in determining the fate of most of the other small town Valley forces. When the shared-services negotiations fell through, the small towns turned to the RCMP, found them willing to negotiate and change some of their practices, and struck a deal with them. According to a Police Commission member, the idea of regionalization under the wing of the RCMP originated with the Police Chief. "The local paper," he said, strongly educated people in the town that they would not be able to afford its own force. If a murder had occurred in the town, it would have blown our budget. The RCMP would have presented us with a \$25,000 bill! Discussions with the RCMP proceeded quickly." In his view, the RCMP, "to their credit, made every effort to have their presence here", even going so far, he claimed, as to expect members posted to the town detachment to live in the town. The old Police Commission, he added, "did not require police members to live in the town. We just put some reasonable guidelines on it-- between Kingston and Kentville, a pretty wide area. But the RCMP went further than anyone expected...This made some citizens thrilled. Businesses seemed most positive, although businesses really depend on people who live outside the town coming in to do their shopping."

In Wolfville, the Mayor claimed that he believes the RCMP contract was a model for the province. He claimed that the RCMP had agreed -- at last on paper -- to a greater degree of accountability and reporting than was usual with municipal contracts.

One of the chief benefits for the Town of an RCMP contract is the expanded "flexibility" it brings for management unfettered by a union contract. As one Mayor explained, "With the union there was no flexibility to make changes in such things as manpower resources, for example, the shift schedules. We couldn't change the shifts or the number of people on a shift without utilizing manpower." The union contract was the standard 12-hour shifts, with 2 members on at any one time. That was fixed. If the police needed additional officers during a shift, as frequently happened on Friday or Saturday nights, the Chief had to utilize the call-out and bring in officers on overtime. In Wolfville, the Mayor said, the overtime budget cost as high as \$50,000 annually. The Union then used the argument that, "with that amount of overtime, you might as well hire another officer. So the overtime would drop to \$15,000, then slowly go up, \$20,000, \$30,000, until we were back where we started, all because there wasn't enough flexibility." Furthermore, he added, "Under the MPD, you had to start planning months ahead for any shift changes. There would be many meetings to make the arrangements, for example, for Mud Creek Days, or Apple Blossom. It was such a bureaucracy."

The RCMP contract agreed to by the Town established a nine-member force, one fewer than the complement of the disbanded town department. Rather than the standard twelve-hour shifts, the RCMP utilize over-lapping 10-hour split shifts so that, at times, more than one officer is on while at other times, there is only one. The mayor anticipated that this will substantially decrease the amount of overtime used.

Throughout the process of negotiating with the RCMP, the Towns were conscious of the need to "take care of our people". This entailed the promise that members would be enrolled in the RCMP, provided they met the standards of the Force. The major issue in the roll-over of personnel involved a few older Town officers who either resigned or were retired. In Wolfville and Berwick, the former Chiefs became Corporals in the RCMP. In Middleton, the Chief agreed to work as a Constable on Highway patrol. In Wolfville, the secretary was also absorbed into the RCMP, as a civilian.

As a condition of the Wolfville contract with the RCMP, all ten former Town police officers were absorbed by the RCMP. Most of the newly hired RCMP officers were posted to other detachments. A few members continued to police their original Town. Three former town officers, for example, were still policing in Wolfville after the take-over. The Mayor described them as "good community-oriented police officers who knew the town and wanted to stay." In his view, the six new RCMP officers "had experience in and were committed to community policing", although the Corporal in charge of the Detachment had built his career largely in drug enforcement and not community policing. Ordinarily in the RCMP a Detachment of that size would be a Sergeant's position. Under the present restructuring, it operates largely as a sub-unit out of Kings Detachment.

The position of most police officers who were members of the MPDs during the negotiations was somewhat ambivalent. The major concern was job security and this was felt most keenly by older members and more senior personnel who were less assured that their future would be met. Other officers had chosen to work in municipal policing because it was stable and they could develop or maintain links in their community. The inducements to accept absorption, however, were substantial. The RCMP pay scale meant that many of the town police would receive a \$15,000 raise in pay. A career in the RCMP opened up new opportunities for promotion, transfer, training, and a variety of job assignments. In their own interests during the police turf war, the constables stayed neutral, particularly in Kentville where the outcome of the negotiations was less certain.

A common complaint among these new Mounties after their integration into the force was that they were still labelled as different and second-class, being tainted with their MPD origins. They expected this would diminish over time as new members came who would accept their RCMP status at face value and as their own hard work would earn them respect the Detachment. One ex-MPD Mountie said that he was very positive about the new job, as well as the pay and benefits. The work was very heavy. He had been "given a map of the county and a stack of files" when he arrived. He was clearly concerned about the RCMP audits and his assessments, but evinced a very positive attitude. His would do his best and make sure to do all the necessary work on the files. With a breathalyzer case coming up shortly, he wanted to be sure "not to lose

## Policing the Valley

it." He summed his situation by saying, "I got in by the back door but, once you're in, then it's up to you to prove you belong".

Among the major benefits for the town in the era of growing requirements for police service was access to such specialized services as GIS and Identification. Town police have been called out to back-up rural police officers more routinely than in the past. As well, under an RCMP contract the town has access to resources linked to Community-based Policing, such as the use of the Seniors Safety Coordinator who works out of the Kings Detachment. Her mandate is to help seniors protect themselves against phone scams and unwelcome door-to-door salesmen, offer advice on home security, any help with other issues that are of concern to the community. The Wolfville Mayor explained, "Basically one of the main benefits of the RCMP is the depth of programming they have available for us". Part of the agreement called for more traditional small town policing. The RCMP agreed to do six hours of foot or bicycle patrol daily and to walk up to the school during school hours.

Community-based Policing also embraces wider connections between the police and the community. Two areas where cooperation had been weak when Wolfville was policed by the MPD was with the University in the town and with the bar owners. When Acadia University is in session, the town population essentially doubles and, moreover, this increase involves an age-group prone to causing public disturbances. While given its class composition, this set of young people is not crime prone in any traditional sense, they pose a considerable problem for the order in the town and are prone to violations of provincial statutes, such as those involving liquor. Despite this, one of the main concerns in the town was the poor relationship that had developed between the police and the Acadia community. Town police were often frustrated that criminal occurrences would take place on campus and be dealt with internally, without their knowledge or participation. One complaint they had was that this lowered their crime statistics. The Mayor of Wolfville said that when the town contracted with the RCMP, "there was a complete about face on the part of the University." Joint meetings were held with the Corporal in charge of the Wolfville Detachment, the Head of Acadia's Safety and Security force, and the University administration. The expected result was a closer connection between university security and the RCMP, and a larger RCMP presence in the University.

Another area where new relations with the community were expected to develop with the RCMP was with the bar managers. In the words of the Wolfville Mayor, "The MPD idea of proactive policing was to have two guys sitting in the car outside the Anvil [Tavern] at night watching" and waiting to pick up public drunks or arrest impaired rivers. Under an RCMP initiative, issues of under-aged drinking, over-service of intoxicated clients, and people being "turfed out" of the bars onto the sidewalks by bar bouncers were discussed with bar managers. The initial response was to have the bar staff trained about these issues and for the police to take a genuinely proactive approach, even to the extent of being in the bar in plain clothes.

In Berwick, an ex-Mayor said, "I hate to admit it but I think people feel more positive about the personnel of the RCMP. Maybe that is because they haven't seen their warts, their short-comings, frailties. So that is a positive thing so far. The RCMP



is in the honeymoon period. Two policemen were fired from Berwick, one for a criminal code violation and the other for drinking. [One officer] had been fired once before under the Police Act, but had been reinstated." One of the issues that had arisen during the initial period of RCMP policing was visibility. "You hear grumblings," a ex-Mayor of Berwick claimed, "You never see them at the ball field or at the hockey rink, like you would see the town police. But only one RCMP has a child old enough to be involved in the community. And the RCMP now have a bike patrol that is used a lot so that is better. It is easier to get off a bicycle to talk to someone than it is to park a car.

"One of my main concerns about the RCMP", he continued, "was that they would be out of town a lot. The county here is right in the middle between the Kingston and New Minas detachments so they only time you see a cruiser is when there is trouble. I thought that the RCMP here would be always answering calls out of town, as the nearest detachment. The town police answered some calls. We kept track of these calls for assistance for accidents, domestic complaints. The nearest RCMP cruiser would be in Harbourville and our guys would go out. Now the RCMP goes out and sets up speed traps on [highway] 101. I don't know and I wonder how much work they are doing outside the town."