

Outcomes of Smoky Lake RCMP Community Engagement 2021

As per the 2021 Summer Smoky Lake Community Engagement initiative, which was open to all residents from in the following geographic areas:

Town of Smoky Lake, County of Smoky Lake, Vilna, Bellis, Waskatenau, Warspite and Spedden.

This initiative was open to submissions between the dates of Monday, July 19th, 2021 to Monday July 26, 2021. It was developed to provide a forum where residents could bring forth any of their policing concerns to the Detachment Commander and have their concerns published along with the corresponding responses and/or action plans to address the issues, if applicable.

Following the deadline for submissions, I received some responses from community members and have added some additional general information. I've summarized them below.

Concern #1:

Property thefts are increasing.

Answer #1:

Although it may feel like property crime is increasing, the reality is property related crime is decreasing. Smoky Lake Detachment year end 2020 statistics show:

- Property Crime have **decreased** by 38%.
- Break and Enters have **decreased** by 51%.
- Theft Under \$5000 have **decreased** by 38%.
- Theft of Motor Vehicle have **decreased** by 51%.
- Other Criminal Code have **decreased** by 27%.
- Overall Criminal Code offences have **decreased** by 30%.

Concern #2:

Request for increased traffic enforcement on Highway 28.

Answer #2:

Over the last 16 months the pandemic has caused a wide variety of business and services to adjust how they conduct their day-to-day activities to ensure business continuity and flatten the curve. Policing over the pandemic has faced the same challenges and with restrictions easing there has been an increase in visibility and traffic enforcement.

Additional Information 1:

Impaired Driving and new provincial sanctions.

I want to take the time to discuss the importance of impaired driving and the effect it has and can have on our communities. Each year countless numbers of people die or suffer life long injuries as a result of impaired driving on our roadways. Every year police, governments, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and other groups encourage and warn drivers of the perils of driving impaired and outcomes that may result. The reality is impaired driving is a choice and can be prevented. We strongly encourage Albertans to plan ahead and drive sober.

Effective Dec. 1, 2020, Bill 21, the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act (PAPA), came into effect. Under this act, police officers have the ability to hand out significant penalties roadside, for impaired driving – including significant fines and seizing vehicles for up to 30 days. Repeat offenders now face a mandatory education program and mandatory ignition interlock. For cases which involve aggravating circumstances, repeat offenders, and/or bodily harm or death may also result in criminal charges on top of other penalties. The new penalties under PAPA are:

- **Novice Drivers:** 3-day licence suspension for any alcohol detected.

- **Commercial Drivers:**
 - 1st offence: 3-day licence suspension, no vehicle seizure for any alcohol detected.
 - 2nd offence: 15-day licence suspension, no vehicle seizure for any alcohol detected.
 - 3rd offence: 30 day licence suspension, no vehicle seizure for any alcohol detected.

- **Immediate Roadside Sanctions Warn** (drivers that are not Novice or Commercial and have a blood alcohol level of 0.05 to 0.079:
 - 1st offence: 3-day licence suspension, 3-day vehicle seizure.

- 2nd offence: 15-day licence suspension, 7-day vehicle seizure, and Planning Ahead or Crossroads Course.
 - 3rd offence: 30-day licence suspension, 7-day vehicle seizure and IMPACT Course.
- **Immediate Roadside Sanctions Fail** (drivers that are not Novice or Commercial and have a blood alcohol level at or above 0.080):
 - 1st offence:
 - Two-stage, fixed term driver's licence suspension:
 - 90 days where the suspended driver is unable to drive under any circumstances, and
 - A further 12-month driver's licence suspension (driver may participate in the interlock program and drive)
 - Completion of the Planning Ahead course.
 - 30-day vehicle seizure.
 - \$1,000 fine plus victim fine surcharge of 20%.
 - 2nd offence:
 - Two-stage, fixed term driver's licence suspension:
 - 90 days where the suspended driver is unable to drive under any circumstances, and
 - A further 36-month driver's licence suspension (driver may participate in the interlock program and drive)
 - Completion of the IMPACT course.
 - 30-day vehicle seizure.
 - \$2,000 fine plus victim fine surcharge of 20%.
 - 3rd offence:
 - Two-stage, fixed term driver's licence suspension:

- 90 days where the suspended driver is unable to drive under any circumstances, and
 - A further lifetime driver's licence suspension (driver may participate in the interlock program and drive)
- Provided the driver meets the eligibility criteria, they can apply for driver's licence reinstatement and removal of interlock after 10 years.
 - 30-day vehicle seizure.
 - \$2,000 fine plus victim fine surcharge of 20%.

*Criminal Charges can accompany and are in addition to any of the Immediate Roadside Sanctions Fail offences.

Additional Information 2:

Role of the police in the criminal justice system.

It is the police's responsibility to investigate criminal matters, seize evidence and conduct a thorough investigation. The police investigation is completed in order to assist in identifying the person or persons responsible for criminal acts. Once the investigation is completed, and sometimes prior to, the police work in partnership with the "Alberta Legal System".

The investigation is presented to the Alberta Crown Prosecutor's office for their continued action. If the suspect is held in custody at the police station, the prosecutor is responsible for conducting a "judicial interim release hearing" where the prosecutor and defence lawyer/duty counsel present the case to a Judge/Justice of the Peace who then determines whether the suspect is released from police custody. This release can be with or without restitution, and with or without conditions they have to abide by until court. Another option is the Judge/Justice of the Peace can order the suspect to stay in custody until the next court appearance. Finally, the Crown Prosecutor and the Defence Lawyer/Duty counsel can discuss the matter and make a joint submission to the Judge/Justice of the Peace in regards to whether the suspect should be released and with what amount of restitution and/or conditions.

The court process then continues over the course of sometimes numerous court appearances, where the accused person is either found not guilty/guilty at trial or the Crown Prosecutor can choose to withdraw or stay the charges. If the suspect is found guilty at trial, the Judge/Justice listens to the Crown Prosecutor and Defence Lawyer's

arguments and is then responsible for sentencing the accused person to an appropriate sentence which can range anywhere from probation, a fine, time in jail, or a combination of both.

Additional Information 3:

What can we do to help the RCMP?

No matter the challenges, the solutions remain the same. The partnerships between concerned, committed stakeholders, governments at all levels (Federal, Provincial and Municipal), multiple enforcement agencies, organizations and citizens all working together to build stronger and safer communities. From an RCMP perspective, there is an expectation that our detachments be engaged in and with the communities we serve. That means consulting with residents and community leaders (as we are doing today with this Town Hall) to establish policing priorities and assisting with public safety issues. We are committed to having regular communication with community leaders, providing reports and updates, being involved in community activities and events when possible. Through these and numerous other means our goal is to develop positive and fortify relationships of trust with the community.

Additional Information 4:

What community outreach programs/committees are the communities engaging in to collaborate with the RCMP on policing priorities and strategies for our area?

There are a variety of community programs and committees that Smoky Lake RCMP detachment participates in and contributes to. Some examples are Citizens on Patrol, Victim Services and Rural Crime Watch. In addition, having liaison officers assigned to work together with groups and organizations located within the detachment area, to address any specific policing needs required.

There is a variety of other community programs that you may see in other communities such as Police Advisory Committees, Block Watch, HUB program, Restorative Justice Programs, along with many others. These are all programs that are run by community volunteers with the local RCMP detachment contributing and assisting wherever possible. Smoky Lake RCMP detachment is more than willing to engage with residents to make these programs a success.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this “Virtual Town Hall”. I would also like to acknowledge several individuals who expressed their appreciation and thank the



staff of Smoky Lake RCMP Detachment for the work they do everyday. With the support of the communities, our success improves for safer communities.

Regards,

Sgt. Jeff Sehn
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