

CITY OF NANAIMO

BUSINESS CASE – Police Services: Digital Forensic Technician

CURRENT OVERVIEW

We are in the digital age and criminals, across the full spectrum of Canadian laws, from drugs offences, homicides and offenses against persons, are using all manner of digital devices to store information/evidence.

The digital age and court disclosure rules have created an ever-changing need to extract and collect large amounts of evidence. Overall calls for service has shown a consistent increase of 9% or higher for the last 5 years. The rise in calls for service means a rise in offences against persons, which exponentially increases workload by sheer volume of digital devices being seized. The large amounts of data that is stored needs to be extracted, verified and saved as evidence to meet the rules of law and the public's interest.

Presently there is one dedicated RCMP member at the Nanaimo Detachment that has been redeployed to conduct data extraction full time.

BUSINESS ISSUE

Criminal offences against children with a focus on Child Exploitation, Child Luring, Child Pornography and Sexual Interference is on a rapid increase for detection. Nanaimo has one of the highest rates of this crime type per capita.

Calls for service over the last 5 years have shown a marked increase for a selection of high-risk offences against persons/children. Files per year:

- 2016 – 96
- 2017 - 81
- 2018 – 122
- 2019 - 114
- 2020 to date - 69 on pace for 120

On average 25 devices, which can include computers, external hard drives, USB storage, phones and tablets are being seized during search warrants in Child Pornography.

These criminal investigations are very time consuming and involved. Extraction of the data from the devices to gather evidence to support criminal charges is not only crucial but also very involved and requires specialized technical training. The costs to outsource device data extraction can range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per device with wait times in excess of 3 months. The steady increase of these offences and seizures of large amounts of digital devices is creating a backlog of timely extractions and evidence gathering to support charges.

There are also several other criminal offences where digital devices are seized as evidence and data extraction is required.

Presently there is one regular member of the RCMP doing this work full time and they are unable to meet demands. This member is a roadable police officer not conducting other operational police duties at this

time. Other members have basic level training in data extraction but are not specifically dedicated to this field. These members are required to fulfil the remainder of their other operational policing duties as a priority. The data extraction is therefore done off the side of their desk as time permits or overtime is incurred to complete the work.

RCMP senior management has identified a need for a municipal employee to support the police in this area. Similar positions have been created in the municipalities of Surrey, Westshore and Coquitlam.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The addition of a Digital Forensic Technician will allow the detachment to have expertise in digital extraction and a second dedicated resource to address the increasing workload that comes with the seizure and evidence gathering from digital devices.

OPTIONS

Option #1 – Add a Digital Forensic Technician

Creation of a full-time Digital Forensic Technician reporting to Manager, Support Services.

Benefits:

- Provide digital extraction expertise and direct technical support to police investigators.
- Provide timely evidence gathering for a myriad of police investigations.
- Increase the efficiency of investigations by generating and obtaining critical initial evidence in a timely manner.
- Provide evidence at the forefront of the investigation to assist in the interview process of accused persons and the availability to get charge approval from crown counsel.
- Allow members to focus on the criminal aspects of the investigations.
- Reduce RCMP member overtime.

Weaknesses:

- Permanent increase to operating budget of Police Services

Financial Analysis:

- The position is anticipated to be a level 12 or 13, subject to JEC, with an annual salary of \$76,752 to \$81,813 plus benefits for an estimated total of \$97,500 to \$103,900.
- No additional one-time or annual operating costs are anticipated. The RCMP will provide the workstation and required computer equipment.

Option# 2 – Status Quo

Continue with one RCMP member providing data extraction services.

Benefits:

- No increase to operating budget for Police Services

Weaknesses:

- Delays in the submission of complete and fulsome evidentiary packages to crown counsel for criminal prosecutions.
- Lack of specialized technical training.
- Increased workloads for RCMP members resulting in overtime to complete work.

RECOMMENDATION

Option #1 Add a Digital Forensic Technician position to Police Services.