

RCMP Costs & Staffing Levels

With energized momentum for Community Policing since the mass murder which started in Portapique, the Shoreline Journal developed a series of questions for Staff-Sgt Allan Carroll, Bible Hill. Upon contacting him, it was learned he was retiring on Friday, June 26 after over 40 years service.

S/Sgt Carroll replied, "I

have had a look at your questions and I will not be offering any replies at this time. I have forwarded this on to our Communications unit for their consideration. Many of these questions involve decisions that are made at the Provincial level with DOJ and the Municipalities via the PPSA for the contracting of policing services".

As of presstime a response has not been forthcoming from the communications unit. Here are the questions, we hope will be answered prior to deadline for the August Issue. Here are the questions:

- What does Colchester County pay annually for RCMP services?
- What is required staffing level to provide these services?
- Can you break that down to how many per day / number of shifts / how many on each shift?
- How many constables assigned to Bible Hill detachment were on sick-leave or unavailable for patrol duties on April 17th, excluding those assigned to or working in Millbrook?
- What was the level of active or on-duty officers on April 17th - not including administrative or desk duties?
- Was that the level planned for the weekend, or week?
- How many constables were in vehicles patrolling the county when the incident in Portapique started?
- Now that the Portapique incident happened about 8 weeks ago has staffing levels at Bible Hill detachment returned to normal, other than a group assigned 100% to the incident?
- If compliment is full, where did the additional officers come from; are they loaned from other detachments?
- When do you expect to have replacements who are here on "permanent / exclusive" basis?
- It is my understanding under your direction daily service to Colchester is contracted at 24 per day, of four shifts of six constables each:
 - How many are on duty and actually patrolling in vehicles?
 - How many are listed as being on sick leave or unable to work their shift?
 - If staffing is below 24 on any given day, how do you get staffing up to 24?
 - Is it overtime, or do you access staffing from another area?
- How many days in the last two months has staffing been below 24?
- On those "short staffing days" what was the high and low levels?
- What was the average per day shortage on the days when you could not provide a full complement of 24?
- When there are staff shortages, are you required to report that data to the Municipality of Colchester? If so how frequent?
- The contract annual cost to Colchester of \$5,015,000 is basically a mathematical formula of \$13,739.73 per day or \$572.49 per constable as a contracted amount for each shift.
- Is the Municipality credited with \$572.49 for each constable short per shift? If not, why not?
- During the 2019-2020 fiscal year how many constable shift shortages existed?
- Using that data and constable costs, if the data was available since the new contract was signed in 2012, what would be the annual total of shift shortages.
- Using the 2020 contract per diem costs per constable what might the amount be that would be credited to Municipality of Colchester for that 8 year period, if this method of calculation was applied?
- Quite a few people (residents and municipal leaders) have made suggestions about "Community Policing".
 - What action has been taken to listen to the constituents?
 - Are "town hall" type community planned to hear from the local residents? If so, when? If not, why not?

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Inferno on Plains Road

By Maurice Rees

Sunday, June 20th, it was a fire like never before as Plains Road, Debert became a launching pad for over 1,000 burning 20 lb propane tanks became incendiary missiles.

Debert residents had never seen anything like it and there was far more potential danger than when CFB Debert contained thousands of soldiers during World War II in the 40's. A tractor-trailer was destroyed, along with its load of propane tanks, after it caught fire on Plains Road in Debert on Sunday, June 20th.

Fire fighters from Debert, Onslow-Belmont were on the scene for nearly three hours.

The fire started when brakes failed on the trailer owned by Supreme Tank Inc., Sydney, failed, overheated and caught fire. The intense fire then spread up into the trailer loaded with 1,000 - 20 lb tanks. The primary danger for firefighters was the propane tanks became projectiles as they exploded. Propane tanks streaked into the air like missiles as a massive ball of flame rose above the trees after a tractor-trailer caught fire at the intersection of Plains Road and MacElmon Road.

Debert fire Chief Shane Slack, who has been chief for 23 of his 32 years on the force, said a call for assistance about a propane fire came in about 10:20 p.m.; the fire was already well underway when firefighters arrived at the scene between Lancaster Crescent and the Plains Road/ intersection.

The local firefighters, most of whom have several years service, have never witnessed a fire with such intensity and danger. As they overheated tanks became missiles going off in all directions, leaving a steam of burning propane as they flew around with many

of them landing in the woods a fair distance from the roadway.

The Debert fire brigade staging area was set up on the westerly side of the blaze on Plains Road while firefighters from the Onslow Belmont brigade set up on the east end. Great Village's fire brigade was on stand-by.

The fire was as intense as a blast furnace with Plains Road suffering damage and the truck's aluminum components became molten liquid and left the tractor and trailer burned almost beyond recognition and sitting on its frame on the heavily damaged pavement.

Many who viewed the scene said Debert was very lucky that the accident happened in the lateness of the night. If it had been during the middle of the day, the projecting tanks would have started many more fires in nearby woods, and if late afternoon there would have been numerous people heading home from several of the area's large employers. The dampness from the evening prevented further expansion of fires in nearby woods.

It was almost 1:00 am on Monday morning when the tanks had cooled enough the firefighters could return to the fire hall. While on scene volunteer firefighters had to remain well back until the tanks had ceased exploding.

During the June 25th monthly meeting of Colchester Council area councillor Bob Pash added the dangerous fire to the agenda, it was agreed staff will determine the amount of damage and cost of clean up of county property. Some burning propane tanks landed as far as 45 metres into the woods and caused minor fires as they landed amongst the brush causing small areas to be blackened and charred.

Councillor Bill Masters added that based on his experience in business, the insurance carrier on the truck would be responsible for payment of all claims. It is not clear what claim the Debert Fire Brigade may make in regard to their involvement in the incident.

On Monday morning after Plains Road was re-opened, the

wire remains of tires could be seen metres away from where they exploded off the rig. All that remained of the truck and trailer was the charred remained were the frame and superstructure. Any small parts had been incinerated, and aluminum components had been melted into molten lava which then cooled in clumps.



Keeping a safe distance from the site of the inferno, Tyrel Swan shot this photo of flames reaching high above the tree-line. (Photo credit to Tyrel Swan)



Although a bit blurry, this photo shows another angle of the intensity of the flames on Plains Road. (Photo credit to Tyrel Swan)

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