

**Subject: PROPOSED INTEGRATION OF POLICE DETACHMENTS IN THE REGION.****Date:** Sun, 13 Apr 2003 09:37:05 -0700**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>**To:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

> Yes, it is true that the proposed regionalization of the Lower Mainland police forces has been in the cards for several years and yes, it is true that theoretically such a move might provide a platform for a more efficient use of police resources. But all theory is gray not green as the saying goes. The question is how will this effect a municipality like the District of North Vancouver where the crime rate is far lower then in the rest of the region.

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> To begin with it is nothing short of scandalous that the Province which does not pay for policing should determine how local policing should be conducted. No say without pay obviously does not apply here. It makes a mockery of the recently introduced municipal charter at the heart of which is supposed to be full municipal autonomy. It is hardly surprising that Mayor McCallum of Surrey one of the few local politicians with the courage to speak his mind, is upset.

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> Regional policing, we are told, will result in a regional homicide unit to investigate every murder in the Greater Vancouver Area, more specialized police units operating across municipal boundaries and improved communication between a patchwork of departments in BC's most populous region. The moves are designed to save money, hone expertise and improve efficiency at a time when criminals are more savvy and more transient, we are told.

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> However, existing police detachments have been communicating and co-operating across municipal boundaries for a long time already. By way of example, the North Vancouver dog teams have also been available to Burnaby and West Vancouver. Whenever a crisis exists anywhere the police respond regardless. That police departments exchange information on an ongoing basis and do so instantly is also a given. Indeed crime information is computerized and is available at an instant in every area of the region.

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> On the other hand, the District of North Van. has one of the lowest crime rates in BC. That we are a bedroom community is but one reason. Our success is rather the result of a conscious policy pursued by District Council resulting in a much higher per capita RCMP police contingent than is the case in most other municipalities. And we are paying for it especially in crime prevention programs, including community policing.

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> Under the new plan, regional policing will undoubtedly be based on response requirements and the District with its low crime rate will pay a far greater share to make up for municipalities where the crime rate is higher.

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> While based on population we will pay our fair share, we will be the victim of "averaging out". Our high standards cannot but be affected. One of the first things to suffer may well be municipal bylaw enforcement. This has never been a high priority with the RCMP in any case and has often been a bone of contention. Still there was at least a measure of accountability which may not be the case with regional policing.

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> There is also the danger that there will be a loss of incentive for municipalities to continue financing crime prevention programs since nobody can be sure that the money spent by the local taxpayers will also be used for their benefit. This is another way of saying there will be a constant suspicion that the more we pay the more municipalities with a high crime rate will benefit. Ironic as it may seem Surrey, which has the highest crime rate in the region, might well benefit at the expense of other municipalities.

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> Also, it is unlikely that, in such a scenario, police officers will show the same dedication to their community as members of a local detachment, who live in the community and who as a result are often involved in community volunteer work. Also, the move comes at a time when some progress has been made towards a closer relationship between members of the RCMP detachment and the community in which they work. According to a police spokesman under the new proposed program there will still be a local police presence but the suspicion that we are reversing this trend cannot but linger.

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> All in all, it is a step that needs to be thoroughly discussed before the province, eager to impose a regional police force on municipalities, proceeds. After all it is we at the municipal level who are paying for it.

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> Ernie Crist,


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> Councillor, District of North Vancouver.

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