



Halifax Regional Council
February 19, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: *David P. McKinnon*
David P. McKinnon, Chief of Police

DATE: February 6, 2002

SUBJECT: Highway 107 By-Pass Accident

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the January 30, 2001, meeting of Halifax Regional Council, Councillor McInroy requested a report from the Chief of Police with regard to a communique that was circulated regarding an accident on the Highway 107 By-Pass on January 12, 2001. The discussion reflected that it was felt that the communique did not provide any contact information regarding the RCMP although the communique did note that the accident was within the RCMP jurisdiction. In a follow up memo to the Chief it was noted that there was no contact information (contact names, phone numbers or fax numbers) and that the communication was ineffective, not as helpful to the media as it could be and abrupt to a point that it might convey a less than seamless and totally co-operative communications effort with the RCMP. The Chief was asked to review this matter and communication exchanges between the Halifax Region Police and the RCMP.

BACKGROUND

Although some of the following information is not directly related to the Councillor's question, the information does set the stage for the media releases that were done.

On the afternoon of January 12, 2001, at approximately 3:16pm the Halifax Regional Municipality 911/Communications Centre received a number of phone calls concerning a serious injury or fatality motor vehicle accident on the Highway 107 By-pass between the 188 Highway and the Waverley exit near Conrad Brothers Quarry. A number of these calls were from cell phones that had their

primary service on a 911 circuit that would ring through to the HRM Communications Centre rather than through to the RCMP Communications Centre.

Halifax Regional Police units, along with fire and ambulance units, were dispatched with the first police unit arriving two minutes after the first call at 3:18 pm. In a matter of minutes, the Watch Commander and 6 Halifax Regional Police units were on scene. By 3:34 pm it had been identified that there was a fatality at the scene and the HRP accident reconstruction member had been called out to attend the scene and requests were under way to have barricades and signage brought to the area. By 4:17 pm ambulances were taking persons from the scene and since it was believed there may be charges pending against one person being taken to hospital, HRP staff accompanied the ambulances from the scene to hospital.

The first RCMP units were dispatched at 3:18 pm; however, the dispatched location given was Rocky Lake Drive and Waverley Road. The first RCMP unit arrived at the specific accident scene at 3:40pm (Sgt Ray Russell). It is unknown how the discussion of jurisdiction developed; however, it would appear from the audio tapes available that most of this dialogue took place over the radio and phone systems between 4:17 pm and 4:58 pm at which time it was finally determined the accident location was in fact in the RCMP area. HRP staff remained at the scene assisting the RCMP and ultimately turning all of our reports and information to them. The last of the HRP units closed the call at 9:18 pm.

It would appear that in the early stages of the event the parties thought the accident was in the HRP area. Once a fatality had been confirmed at 3:32 pm the communications centre staff advised the Public Information officer for the HRP. A media release was prepared to convey the information to the media, (copy attached #1). The media release identified the location of the accident, the time of occurrence, the fact that at that time there was one fatality and that the party was a male. In addition, the information indicated that other persons had gone to the QEII hospital with life threatening injuries. The report also indicated that the 107 Highway would be blocked off from the Waverley By-Pass to the 118 until at least 6:00 pm.

The information indicated above was sent out at approximately 4:09 pm. Shortly thereafter at approximately 4:36 pm (e-mailed at 4:40 pm) Public Affairs staff of the HRP were made aware of the fact that the accident was in the RCMP area. They immediately sent out a follow-up release indicating that the Cole Harbour detachment of the RCMP would be the contact for any further information on this matter (attachment #2). In both cases the information releases did include the contact information for the HRP. Neither the first nor the second release document contained any specific contact information for the RCMP.

DISCUSSION

The HRP and the RCMP exercise a great deal of care when it comes to media issues in HRM. Care is taken, not because of any negative relationship between the two agencies, but as an effort to insure the best representation of policing in HRM is put forward. Staff in the Public Affairs sections of each service have active dialogue on issues as they arise. Each formal operational plan for a specific investigation or ongoing work activity contains within the plan a designated plan for who should handle media inquires in those subject areas. Generally, whenever one agency has a circumstance occur the other tries to stay out of doing stories on related topics. For example, if there is an joint investigation of a motorcycle gang there is a spokes person identified to speak on the matter. If a child that was abducted is found by the RCMP then HRP would refrain from commenting on the topic of child abduction but refer the matter to the RCMP.

In the six months prior to this accident the HRP did 113 media releases, only nine even mention the RCMP and in most cases when they did it was either to relate to a joint investigative unit or, in one case dealing with guns, police indicated that citizens of HRM could turn weapons in to either the RCMP or the HRP. In the case of a joint operation there is a separate letterhead used and the document contains logos of both services and the contact numbers for both public information officers (copy attached #3).

The senior staff of the HRP meet with the senior staff and detachment commanders of the RCMP in HRM approximately every three months to discuss issues. Further, the RCMP detachments and senior staff now participate in a morning conference, co-ordinated by HRP, to provide information on current activities in the various sections of HRM.(major crime, drugs, patrol etc).

The Chief has reviewed the specifics of this situation and believes that when the two media releases are read in conjunction with each other the material required for the media to report on the events are as full and complete as would be required. Although the second release appears somewhat abrupt and does not provide contact information, it must be remembered that the media have contact numbers for the various police outlets. The thrust of the second release was to advise the media with regard to the contact agency for any further or follow-up inquires.

It is the Chief's observation that when examined in the complete context, the relationship between the RCMP and HRP is a very open , frank and co-operative one. At times, at some levels, there may be communications failures, or conflicts in policy or procedure; however, this situation "does not" appear to be one of those cases. Both parties are committed to work to resolve those issues when and if they arise.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating Reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

Three attachments:

- (1) Media Release Jan. 12, 2001 time 4:09 pm
- (2) Media Release Jan. 12, 2001 time 4:36 pm
- (3) Media Release Dec. 7, 2000 time 10:35 am

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:

David P. McKinnon, Chief of Police

490-6500



News Release

For more information, please contact:
Cst. Brenda Zima, Public Information Officer
(902) 490-5154

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2001 (4:09PM)

107 Highway Motor Vehicle Fatality

One man is dead after a head on collision on the 107 Highway near Conrad's Trucking.

The incident was reported at 3:15 p.m., with the lone male in one car declared dead at the scene and four persons in the other vehicle taken to the QE II, some with life-threatening injuries.

Police expect to have the 107 Highway blocked off from the Waverley Road bypass to the 118 until at least 6:00 p.m.

This is the second serious accident in the last eight hours. Earlier today, there was a two vehicle accident on the Bedford Highway. In that incident, there were no serious injuries, however, one of the cars was sheared in two from the impact.

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"To Serve and Protect"



Media Advisory

For more information, please contact:
Cst. Brenda Zima, Media Relations
(902) 490-5154

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2001 (4:36PM)

107 bypass accident

It has been determined that the accident on the 107 bypass is an RCMP matter. Please contact the Cole Harbour Detachment for further information concerning this incident.

"To Serve and Protect"



NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNIQUE

December 7, 2000 (10:35AM)

Heatwave search nets drugs and weapons

Halifax Regional Police drug members with the assistance of the RCMP conducted a search of a Dartmouth address late yesterday afternoon in connection with Operation Heatwave.

Police seized 280 grams of marijuana, a loaded 22 calibre handgun, a sawed off shotgun, over \$2,000 in cash and a large quantity of unidentified pills from the Lilac Street address.

A 30 year old Dartmouth man was charged with trafficking and weapons offences and will appear in Dartmouth court this morning.

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For more information, please contact:

Cst. Brenda Zima, HRP
Media Relations
(902) 490-5154 pager 458-6433

Sgt. Wayne Noonan, RCMP
Media Relations
(902) 426-5120 pager 498-0786

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