



# Prince Albert Grand Council

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## Regional Policing Model Study



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# Executive Summary

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Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) is exploring First Nations led policing for its members, including the creation of a regional First Nations police service, as a result of persistent challenges with the current externally imposed policing models, which have led to diminished community trust, limited police presence and focus on proactive community policing, and a lack of culturally appropriate policing. There is a strong desire among PAGC communities to take ownership of their safety, seeking self-administered policing that is culturally and linguistically relevant, focused on addressing systemic issues and root causes of crime, and restores local control and accountability over public safety.

Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC) is a Tribal Council representing 12 First Nations in Saskatchewan, with approximately 47,000 members. The PAGC First Nations are signatories to Treaties 5, 6, 6A, 8, and 10, and are organized into four cultural and geographic sectors: Denesuline, Woodland Cree, Plains, and Swampy Cree. PAGC's values emphasize community involvement, trust, partnerships, and respect, with official languages including Dakota, Dene, and Cree.

Informed by a thorough understanding of the unique needs of each community and valuable insights provided by comparator police services, leading practices led the design of a future policing model for PAGC communities as well as options for making improvements to the RCMP policing model for any communities that would like to continue with their current service. First Nations policing in Canada is set up as a program nationally under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program (FNIPP) and all of the alternative policing options explored in this study are guided by the options established within the program. The FNIPP was created to establish culturally appropriate arrangements for policing between First Nations and Inuit communities and federal, provincial, and territorial governments and "to contribute to the improvement of social order, public security, and personal safety in First Nation and Inuit communities, including the safety of women, children, and other vulnerable groups".<sup>1</sup>

Under the FNIPP framework, communities can enter agreements under four streams:

- **Stream One:** Standalone or regional self-administered police service
- **Stream Two:** Contracted policing services (e.g., RCMP)
- **Stream Three:** Long-term presence of safety officers
- **Stream Four:** Time-limited projects for other policing and public safety initiatives

The development of PAGC's future policing models involved a systematic comparison of community needs to identify logistical efficiencies and determine which functions should be regionalized or localized. Decisions were guided by historical activity and stakeholder input, with a focus on balancing community expectations against the imperative for effective and efficient resource utilization.

The primary objective is to deliver the highest quality of service, tailored to the specific requirements of each community, while ensuring responsible resource management and establishing a foundation for long-term success.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Safety Canada. 2014-2015 Evaluation of the First Nations Policing Program – Final Report, p. 2-4.



The First Nation led policing options integrates Stream 1 and Stream 3, and for First Nations who would like to continue to receive RCMP services under Stream 2, recommendations were developed to address gaps identified during consultation with the PAGC communities and the RCMP.

*\*It is important to note, Shoal Lake Cree Nation requested to be excluded from participation in this study. As a result, they have not been included in any data collection activities or in the development of future state models.*

## Current Policing Model

Based on both qualitative and quantitative findings, and in alignment with PAGC's interest in exploring the establishment of a First Nations-led police service, community members and leaders consistently report challenges related to RCMP staffing shortages, high turnover, and a lack of consistent police presence, which results in slow response times and limited proactive patrolling. This lack of visibility undermines trust and makes residents feel unsafe.

There is a strong desire for more proactive, community-based policing that emphasizes relationship-building, cultural awareness, and engagement with local traditions and languages. Community members want officers who are familiar with their communities, participate in local events, and understand the unique cultural context of each Nation. The current model is seen as reactive, with officers often only responding to major incidents and lacking meaningful engagement with residents.

While some PAGC First Nations have existing Community Tripartite Agreements (CTAs) which provides dedicated police officers, over and above police services provided by the Province under the Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA)<sup>2</sup>, there are opportunities to establish Community Consultative Groups (CCGs). CCGs work closely with the RCMP to develop policing objectives, priorities, and strategies tailored to the unique needs of each Nation. This includes joint efforts in crime prevention, community engagement, and the enforcement of bylaws identified by the community, as well as regular evaluation of police services and input on the selection of RCMP members deployed to the community. The CTAs are designed to ensure that policing is responsive, culturally relevant, and accountable to the communities serviced. However, in practice, there are notable gaps in execution. Many communities report that the collaborative mechanisms envisioned, such as meaningful CCG involvement, regular evaluations, and effective bylaw enforcement, are inconsistently implemented or, in some cases, absent altogether. Many communities have not established CCGs and in their absence much of the CTA accountability mechanisms and responsibilities are not implemented by the Nation leadership and the RCMP. This disconnect between the intended collaborative model and the realities on the ground has limited the effectiveness of CTAs in delivering the community-based, culturally appropriate policing that was originally envisioned.

Crime and policing activity in PAGC communities are heavily driven by the prevalence of illegal substances, gang activity, and youth-related challenges. Substance use challenges, drug trafficking, and bootlegging are noted as major contributors to crime, while gang involvement and youth issues such as vandalism and violence further strain policing resources. Communities highlight the need for

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<sup>2</sup> Community Tripartite Agreement (CTA) Toolkit. Public Safety Canada: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/police/publications/agreements/community-consultative-group-toolkit.pdf>



enforcement of local laws and Band Council Resolutions (BCRs), which are often not recognized or enforced under the current RCMP model. It is important to note that police and CSOs are limited to the enforcement of the criminal code and provincial and federal statutes. There are efforts, both in Saskatchewan and across Canada, where leaders from the provinces and First Nations are working together to find solutions to community-based law enforcement. This will not be more easily solved by a First Nation led police service as much of the challenge exists on the prosecution and judicial system limitations more than enforcement.

Additionally, both community feedback and RCMP interviews point to increasing calls for service and police occurrences, reflecting growing public safety needs. RCMP leaders acknowledge that staffing shortages, large geographic areas, and high call volumes prevent even distribution of coverage and limit the ability to provide 24/7 service. Survey responses gathered from engagement with all PAGC Nations indicated significant concerns and priorities among community members regarding policing and public safety. More than half the respondents reported feeling unsafe in their communities, highlighting a sense of vulnerability. There is also a strong desire for change, with 75% of respondents expressing support for the establishment of a First Nations-led police service.

A look into the quantitative analyses of the current policing model in PAGC communities reveals persistent staffing shortages, with actual officer numbers consistently below authorized levels. Service coverage is reliant on daily on-call hours, as none of the detachments operate 24/7.

Calls for service and police occurrences have grown steadily, with certain detachments, most notably Black Lake, experiencing significantly higher demand relative to their population. Response times vary, with some detachments facing delays due to geography and location of RCMP detachments. Equipment and facility resources are unevenly distributed, and much of the infrastructure is aging with an average age of 31 years, though recent investments have been made in select communities including new detachments in Black Lake and Pelican Narrows (8 and 3 years ago, respectively) and plans to build new detachments in Montreal Lake and Sturgeon Lake.

These operational challenges, together with a lack of activity from the communities in CCGs, highlights where First Nation led policing is an opportunity to introduce culturally relevant policing model, as well as opportunities for both the RCMP or a new police service to improve resource allocation, service coverage, and infrastructure to more effectively meet the safety needs of PAGC communities.

## Future State Options

The proposed future state model options include a comprehensive, regional, self-administered First Nations police service for PAGC that integrates Stream 1 and Stream 3 from the FNIPP followed by exploring continuing service delivery via Stream 2 from the RCMP with recommendations for changes to address the gaps and challenges that were identified during the environmental scan element of this study.

### PAGC First Nations Police

Informed by a thorough understanding of the unique needs of each community and valuable insights provided by comparator police services, a First Nation led policing model was designed based on



leading practices for PAGC communities. The primary objective is to deliver the highest quality of service, tailored to the specific requirements of each community, while ensuring responsible resource management and establishing a foundation for long-term success.

Executive leadership and administrative resources are expected to operate out of a centralized headquarters with these resources benefiting the entire service while regional resources split across two regions providing specialized services such as criminal investigators, mental health supports, and operational leadership to the First Nations in their region. Frontline and community policing is then deployed at the local level.

Given the geographic locations, populations, and historic, unique service needs of each of the communities, different staffing models were developed. The regional police service aims to provide an increase in officer presence and visibility. To meet their varying needs of communities, ensure appropriate oversight and supervision and manage workload four different resourcing models were created. For communities that are in close proximity to the regional centres dedicated officers are assigned to communities using a zone model while a fly-in drive-in model was created for remote communities that are not easily accessible to the regional centres and these teams also include locally based specialized civilian roles such as Youth Outreach Coordinators and Mental Health Crisis Response resources that are regionally provided to the communities that are closer to the hub. Communities with road access, higher populations, and greater service demand, have locally based frontline teams with supervision and administrative support and access specialized service via the regional hub. Lastly, the Community Safety Officer Model addresses communities with lower populations and fewer calls for service by assigning dedicated Community Safety Officers to maintain presence and visibility, relying on nearby detachments or hubs for police response as needed.

Cost estimations were based on current RCMP expenditures, comparable police service data, and external sources. All costs were calculated in 2025 dollars and should be updated annually to reflect inflation rates.

Salaries were benchmarked to RCMP salary scales, with premiums for specialized positions. Additional allocations covered overtime, benefits, night shift premiums, and payouts for vacation/statutory holidays. Travel costs for fly-in/remote communities were based on a 10-day rotation model, with flight estimates provided by Rise Air.

One-time and transition costs included vehicles, equipment, officer housing, legal reserve fund, information technology, and police building construction.

The following table outlines the overall costs associated with full implementation of a regional police service with the recommended staffing complements. Overall, the total for implementation one-time costs is estimated to be \$244 million and, once fully operational, annual costs are estimated to be approximately \$125 million.



## Current State with Recommendations for Improvements

For PAGC First Nations that decide to remain with the RCMP policing model, a number of strategic recommendations are outlined with the goal of improving public safety outcomes and community engagement based on the results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The recommendations emphasize the importance of building formal structures and dedicated roles to strengthen the relationship between PAGC communities and the RCMP that is less vulnerable to changes in the specific personnel staffed in RCMP leadership positions or in First Nation elected positions. The recommendations link gaps in current approaches, including insufficient consultative group participation and underutilized opportunities within existing agreements with practical steps to ensure PAGC First Nations voices and needs are effectively communicated and addressed. The recommendations are summarized below, separated into those for the RCMP and those for PAGC and its member First Nations.

### PAGC First Nations Recommendations

- **Hire a PAGC Policing Liaison:** Establish a dedicated policing liaison within the PAGC justice team, tasked with supporting First Nations in managing CTAs and developing Community Consultative Groups (CCGs). This role would facilitate training, help communities explore new agreements, maximize existing opportunities, and support those interested in self-administered policing.
- **Set up CCGs in all PAGC Nations with CTAs:** Regardless of whether a policing liaison is hired, all PAGC First Nations with CTAs should create a Community Consultative Group. These groups are responsible for drafting Letters of Expectation to express their communities' priorities to the RCMP, and for meeting quarterly with RCMP leadership to monitor progress and accountability. This step is essential for ensuring that community-specific needs are communicated and addressed.
- **Advocate for Mental Health and Addiction Support Resources:** PAGC First Nation leaders must continue advocating for enhanced mental health and addiction support services. Such resources are critically needed, as data indicates these issues drive much of the police activity in PAGC communities. While police can target illegal substances, they are not equipped to provide direct therapeutic support, necessitating broader action and investment in community health services.

### RCMP Recommendations

- **Conduct Workload Analysis and Update Resourcing:** The RCMP should perform updated workload analyses to determine appropriate staffing levels for PAGC communities. The 2019 General Duty Police Resourcing Model (GDPRM) analysis results revealed a shortage of 65 officers between current staffing and recommended levels. There is a need for ongoing reassessment as community needs and call volumes rise. Increased resources should also ensure officers have time for proactive community policing. However, high RCMP vacancy rates in the region will continue to limit the ability to add personnel.
- **Prioritize Collaboration with the Community Safety Officer:** The RCMP should continue to work collaboratively with CSOs. Coordination of shift schedules and working more closely on shift together would provide two-way training and information sharing between the teams. The



RCMP could provide mentorship, with the CSOs bringing their extensive local insights, resulting in stronger relationships and improved service delivery.

- Explore Policing Workspaces in Remote Road Access Communities:** RCMP should explore the possibility of police workspaces in PAGC communities lacking physical detachments. These spaces would facilitate RCMP presence, administrative work, and community engagement. Limitations include the possible lack of suitable local facilities and existing RCMP personnel shortages, which could present safety risks if officers are spread too thinly across large geographic areas.

## Implementation Plan

Transitioning to a regional, self-administered police service for PAGC involves a multi-year implementation plan that requires careful planning, community commitment, and adaptive leadership. The implementation plan is designed to guide PAGC Nations through each phase, ensuring that foundational elements are established at the outset. The implementation plan is intentionally flexible, recognizing that timelines and milestones may shift due to funding negotiations, recruitment challenges, infrastructure delays, or evolving community needs. The implementation plan also takes into account the importance of cultural integration, community engagement, and capacity-building.

The following table details the timeline of the implementation plan while the sections that follow provide a brief description of the activities over the 10-year period.

Table 1: PAGC Police Service Implementation Timeline

Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Confirmation of Participation</b>										
<b>Transition Set-up and Funding Negotiations</b>										
<b>Leadership and Oversight</b>										
Incorporation of a Police Service										
Establish Police Service Board of Commissioners										
Hire the Board Support Team										
Develop Bylaws and Governance Framework										
Secure Insurance, Benefits, and Pension Provider										
Select Police Chief										
<b>Policy Development</b>										
<b>People and Training</b>										
Recruitment and Hiring										



Years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Support Service Agreement or MOU with the RCMP										
<b>Infrastructure Set-up</b>										
Facilities and Officer Housing										
Equipment										
IT										

### Year 1: Building Commitment and Foundation

The first year will be dedicated to securing commitments from participating PAGC First Nations. Once participation is confirmed, a transition team/negotiation table can be assembled, drawing on expertise from PAGC leadership, provincial and federal government representatives, RCMP representatives, legal counsel, and an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to ensure cultural guidance.

Negotiations with funders (the Province of Saskatchewan and Public Safety Canada) will be initiated to secure a comprehensive funding agreement that covers both the transition and ongoing operations. This agreement should support infrastructure, staffing, equipment, and professional services, while also outlining a framework for collaboration with the RCMP during the transition period.

Throughout the implementation, the RCMP will continue to provide policing services, ensuring public safety and continuity while a new police service builds its own capacity.

### Year 2: Leadership and Oversight

With funding secured, the police service can be formally incorporated, creating a legal entity that separates liability from the participating Nations and establishes the police service as the employer for all staff.

A police board of commissioners should be established early in the process. Board members should be selected for their skills, commitment, and ability to represent the interests of all PAGC communities. The board’s first tasks will include developing bylaws and governance policies and securing insurance, benefits, and pension providers.

The board’s most critical early decision will be the selection of the Chief of Police who will become an integral member of the transition team and begin establishing relationships and dialogue with counterparts in the RCMP to determine effective means for collaboration and interoperability once the police service is operational. One of the first tasks for the new police chief will be to initiate discussions with the Saskatchewan Police College or other training provider to determine how many new recruits the PAGC Police Service can train annually. The Chief of Police will hold the responsibility for the selection and hiring of subsequent employees, including executive leadership, officers, and administrative staff.



## Years 3–10: Operationalization and Phased Expansion

The subsequent years focus on operationalizing the service by developing a detailed recruitment plan with an initial focus on hiring executive leadership and administrative support, followed by human resources, training, finance, equipment, fleet, infrastructure, and IT specialists.

A phased expansion plan focuses first on establishing capacity in regional centres, then rolling out frontline and community services, and finally building specialized service capacity. Infrastructure planning and construction is also expected to take place throughout the phased expansion with police buildings and officer housing prioritized according to operational needs.

Throughout this period, the RCMP will continue to provide policing in areas where capacity is not yet sufficient. The transition should be gradual and methodical, with RCMP services scaled back as the new police service's own resources expand. Formal agreements or MOUs with the RCMP should be established to define roles, responsibilities, and protocols for cooperation, ensuring seamless service delivery and public safety.



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