



Community Policing Business Case

Prepared by:

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For:

Town of Olds

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Executive Summary

In 2023, the Town of Olds embarked on a review of its policing service to assess its effectiveness, efficiency, and fit with the Town's values and needs. WMC (Western Management Consultants) Alberta, assisted by Applications Management, was contracted to support this review and conducted a broad examination of existing practices and evaluated them against similar municipalities and the future needs of the town. The residents of Olds were important stakeholders in this work, and the views of citizens were gathered via survey and consultation processes.

The themes from all sources of inquiry were similar in content, and in most cases, were supported by the financial and service analysis conducted.

Key findings include the following:

- The citizens of Olds generally feel their community is safe, but do not have a thorough understanding of how governance of the policing service works. There is low support for establishing a town police force to replace the RCMP.
- Overall crime rates are similar to comparable municipalities and are lower than many.
- Crime rates have trended down over the study period.
- Compared to similar municipalities, Olds has more non-violent crime and fewer violent incidents.
- The Town of Olds spends less on its protective services than comparable municipalities.
- General concerns include police visibility and consistency in traffic enforcement.

The project outcome was to determine whether the current model is the best fit, or whether another option should be considered. It is not a review of service levels or crime rates per se, although that data is important in assessing the effectiveness of the model.

The consultant team recommends retaining the current contract with the RCMP with enhancements in communications, strategic planning, and citizen involvement. Detailed recommendations are included in this report.

This report contains a high-level summary of the work and results. Details of the analysis are included in enclosures.

Introduction & Background

Brief Project Background

The Town of Olds posted a Request for Proposal on August 23, 2023, calling for “Town of Olds – Development of a Community Policing Business Case.” WMC responded with a proposal and was later awarded the contract.

During the project kick-off, the project steering committee (SC) explained that there was no underlying agenda for this project, rather, with the federal government signalling an end to contract policing post 2032, there is a need to consider what policing could look like in Olds in the future. The SC also indicated that collaboration with the people of Olds was important, and this informed the engagement process undertaken.

The objective of the project is to review the provision of policing services in the Town of Olds and determine whether the present model is the best or whether another option should be considered.

Guiding Principles for the Project

At the start of the project, the consulting team, along with the SC, agreed that all efforts made in this project keep in mind the following:

- Safe spaces and open channels must be established and leveraged;
- All voices are equal; and
- Success is achieved through collaboration.

Community Profile

The Town of Olds is located between Red Deer and Calgary on the Highway 2 Corridor and is home to just under 10,000 residents. Its geographic location is ideal for residents seeking a small community with easy access to a larger centre and breathtaking rocky mountain views.

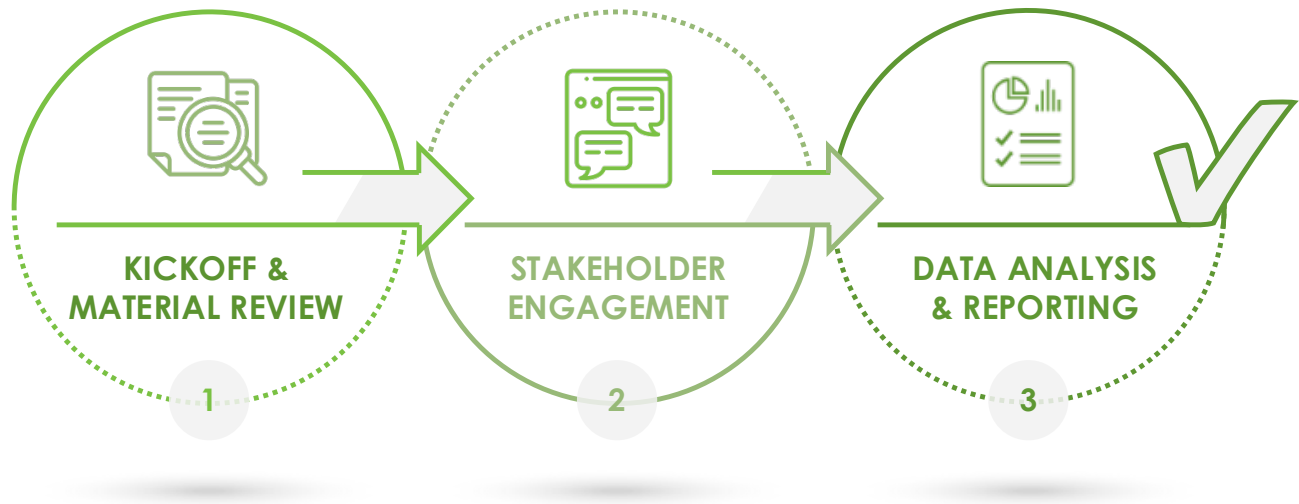
Olds is home to Olds College of Agriculture and Technology, a century's old institution and the top agriculture research college in Canada. With over 3,000 students and 400 staff on campus throughout the year, Olds College brings social and economic diversity to the town, making it one of the most dynamic places in rural Alberta.

Olds is also a Fair-Trade Town, promoting fair trade concepts in businesses and personal lives of citizens.

Process Overview

As outlined in the project proposal, WMC designed a thorough, fact-based process to identify key trends, themes, and opportunities.

A three-stage process was used which included:



This work culminated in the preparation of a business case report, including recommendations and presentation.

During these stages, an extensive document review was completed; interview, focus group, and survey activities were designed and implemented; an organizational review with four comparable municipalities completed; and a thorough financial modelling process was undertaken.

Policing in the Town of Olds

Governance

Policing services are provided to the Town of Olds through a Municipal Police Service Agreement with the RCMP. The current plan started on April 1, 2023, and covers five years. This plan calls for a “collaborative process for the RCMP and the Town of Olds to engage in multi-year, long-term financial planning and reporting for the Service and divisional administration. This process ensures the contract parties discuss future resource requirements and increases financial accountability and transparency. The financial planning and forecasting process is critical to ensuring adequate funding is available for resources and equipment to support public and officer safety.”

The Town of Olds' Council may establish a policing committee with no fewer than three (3) and no more than 12 members for a term of three years. The role of the police committee, as a civilian group is to work directly with the police agency (RCMP) to:

- Set priorities for policing in the community;
- Communicate the public and Council's interests; and
- Develop annual plans.

Until recently, the Town of Olds had a Policing Advisory Committee in place, but the committee was discontinued. Council's priorities for policing are currently clearly identified and communicated to the RCMP, although at a high level. The consultant team does not recommend establishing a policing committee at this time.

In 2021, the RCMP used a Policing Priorities Survey to determine citizen priorities, with the assistance of the Policing Advisory Committee. The survey has not been repeated but the RCMP does undertake citizen engagement through meetings with specific groups.

A detailed outline of federal and provincial authorities and responsibilities is attached in [Enclosure I](#).

Financial & Performance Analysis

A useful way to assess the Olds' model is to compare it to similar municipalities both in terms of financial structures (i.e., expenditures and revenues) and the crime patterns of the community. For these purposes, the consulting team has prepared comparison data for the province as well as for three municipalities that each have their own police force. This will illustrate current expenditure patterns, but also demonstrate what level of expenditure Olds might have if it chose to have its own police force.

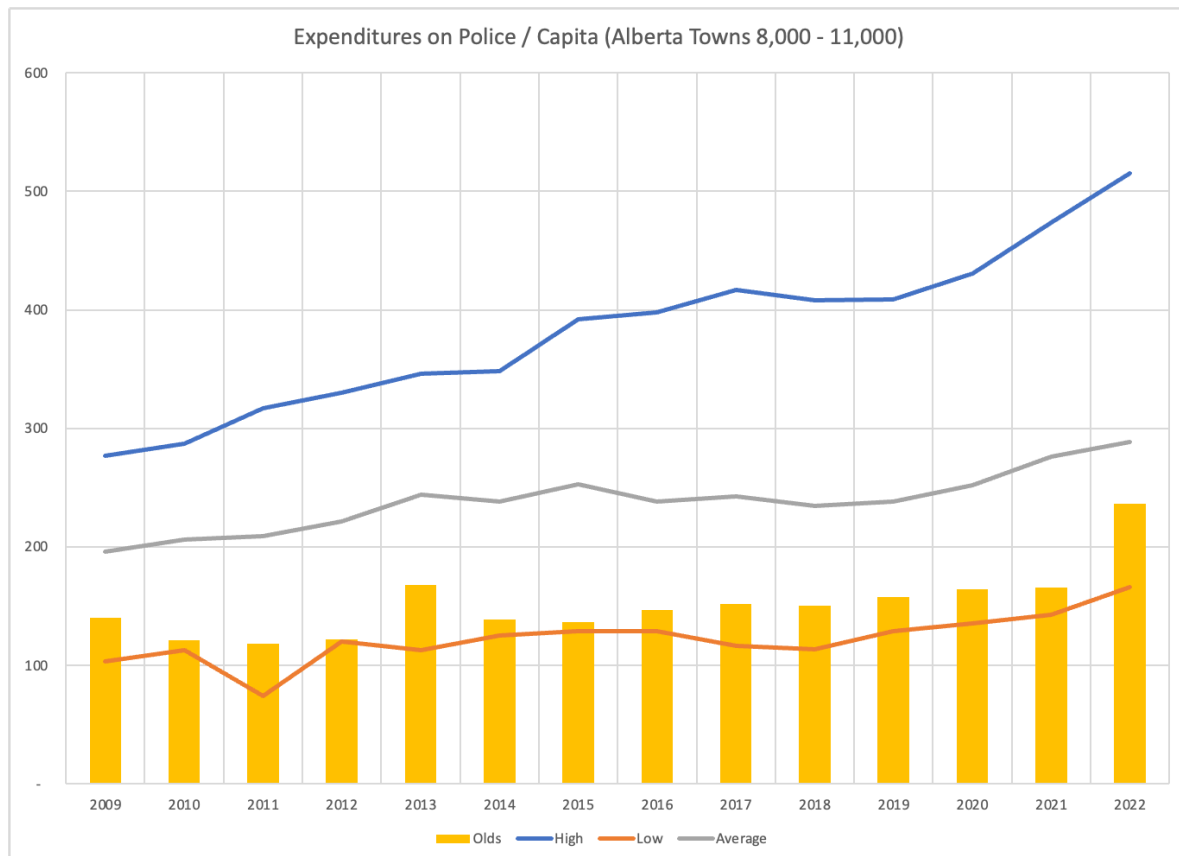
Detailed data is available in [Enclosure II](#).

Finances

Expenditures

The Town of Olds spends less per capita than many other municipalities.

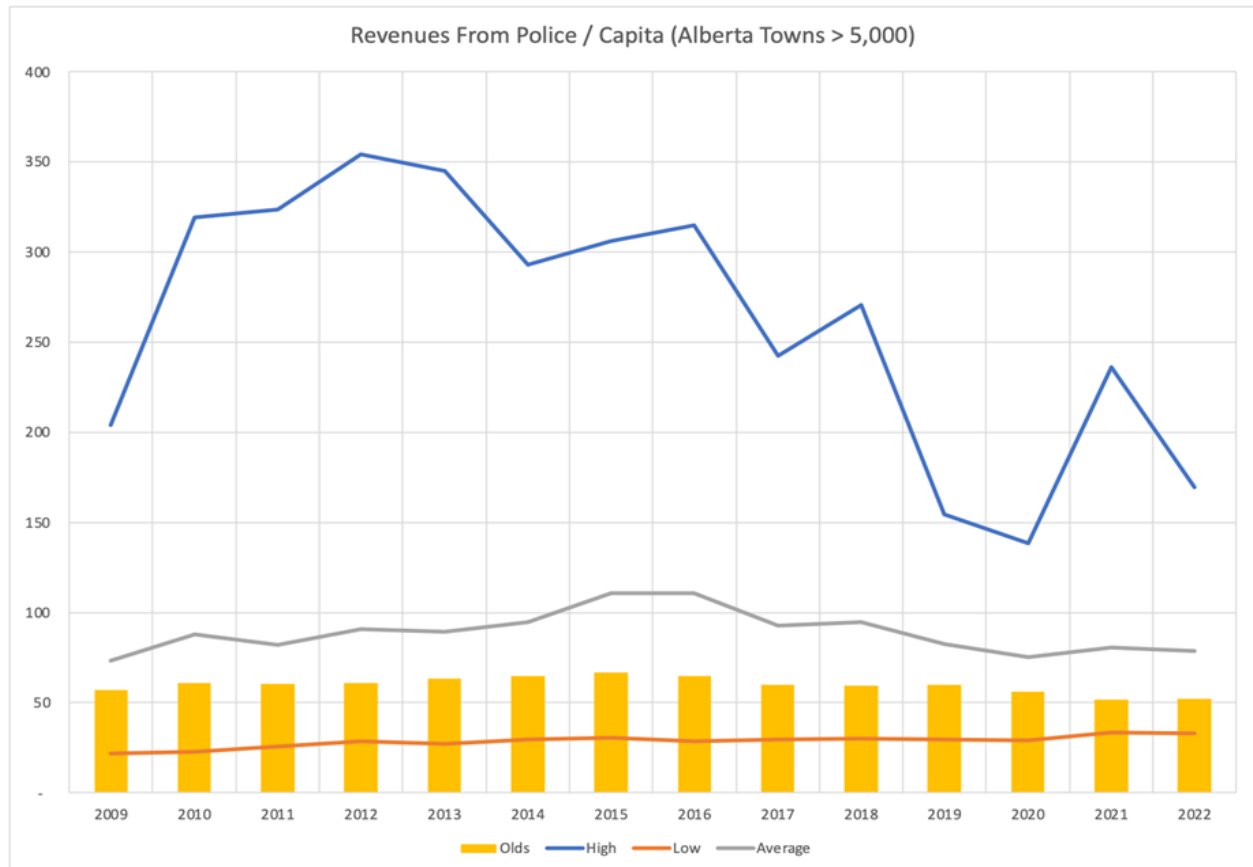
Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for operating expenditures on police per capita, the Town of Olds has reported significantly below average expenditures compared to 11 other towns in Alberta with a population between 8,000 and 11,000. Olds' per capita expenditures on police were 18% below the average for the other towns in Alberta in 2022.



Revenues

Olds' per capita revenues from police averaged 68% less than the average for the other Towns in Alberta.

Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for operating revenues from police per capita, the Town of Olds has reported significantly below average revenues from police operations compared to 11 other towns in Alberta with a population between 8,000 and 11,000. Olds' per capita revenues from police averaged 37% less than the average for the other Towns in Alberta in 2022.

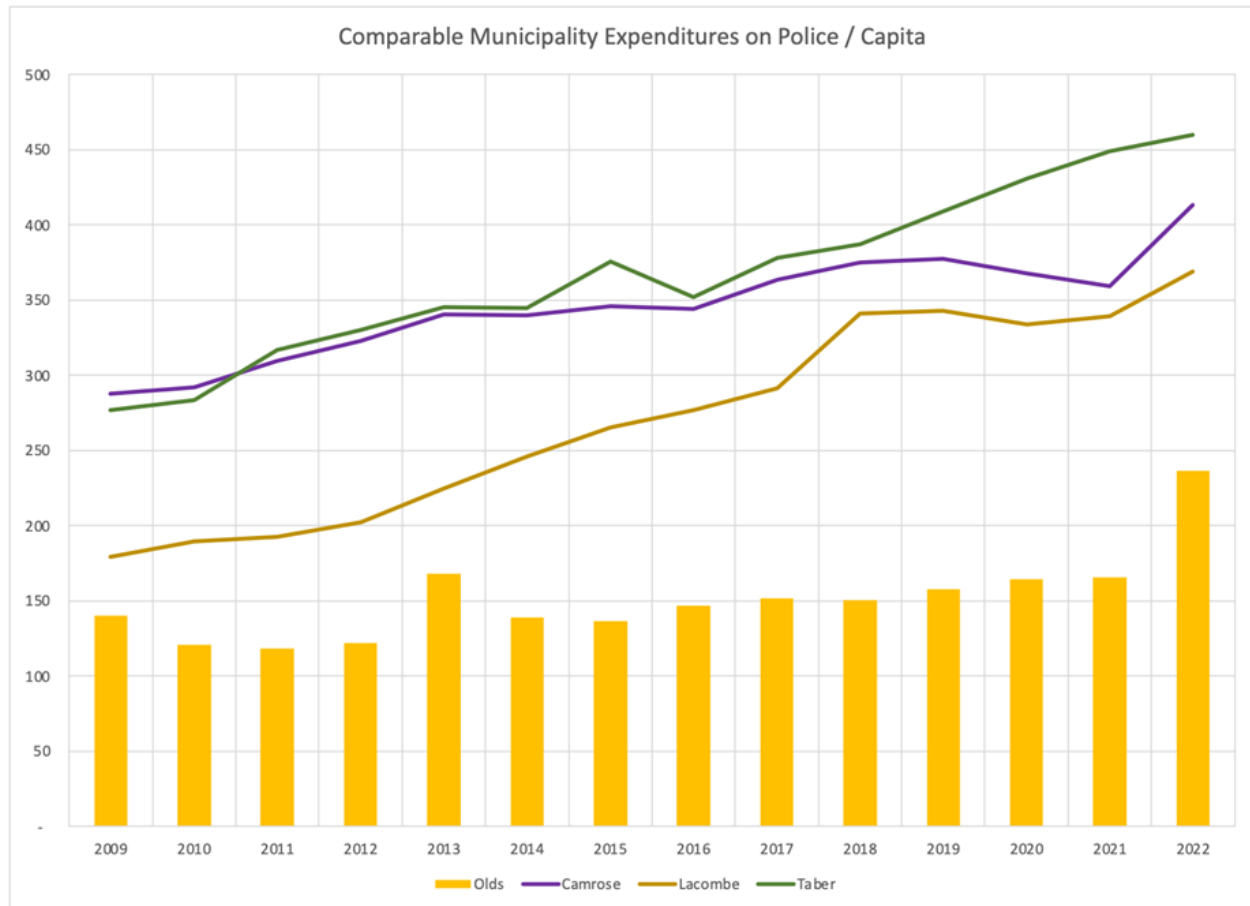


Comparable Municipalities

Three municipalities which are similar in size to Olds but have their own police services, were identified for comparison of Olds' current and optional police services. They are Camrose, Lacombe, and Taber.

Comparable Municipal Expenditures on Police

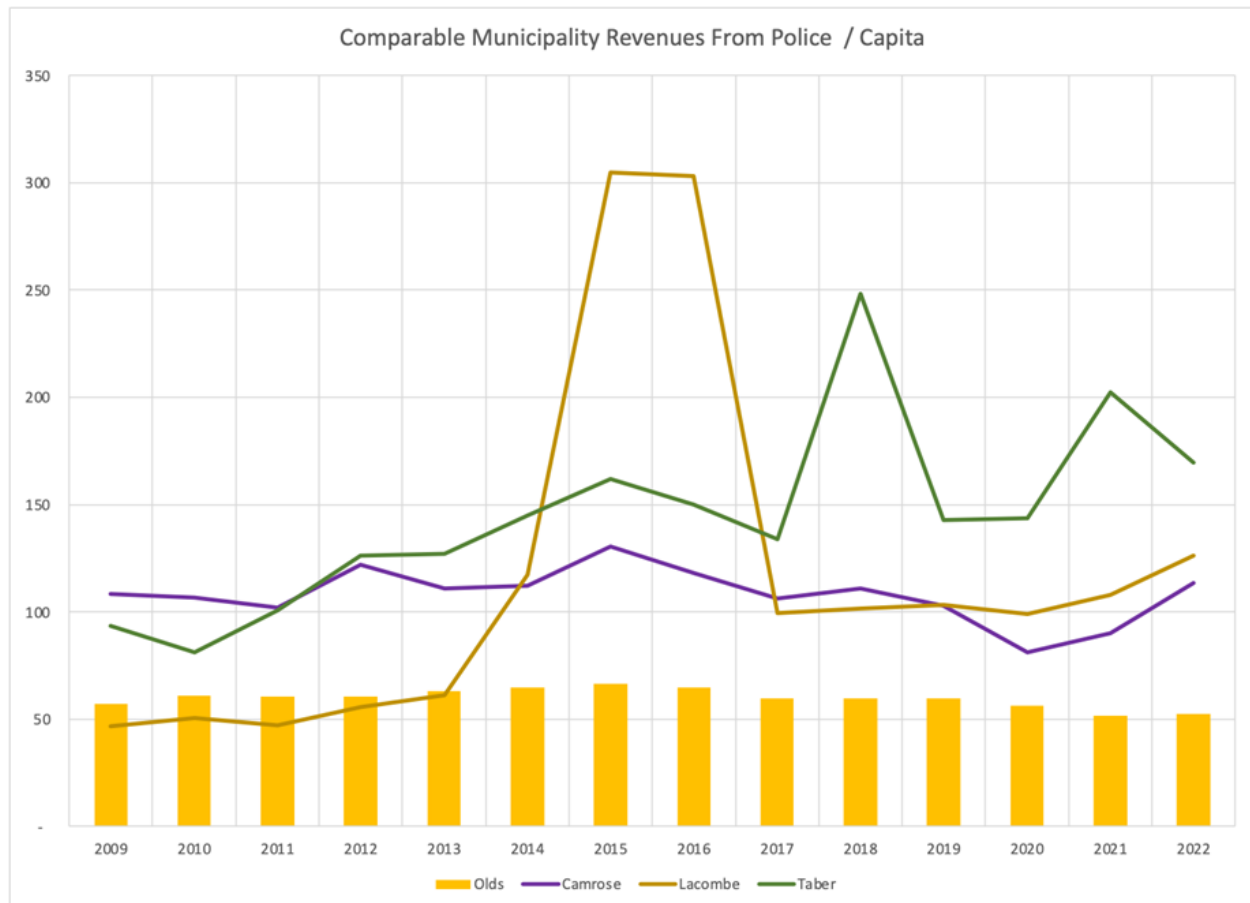
Annual operating expenditures per capita on police services for the Town of Olds are significantly below that reported for each of the 'comparable' municipalities.



Comparable Municipal Revenues from Police

Per capita revenues have been significantly below that report for each comparator.

Annual revenues per capita from police services for the Town of Olds have been significantly below that reported for each of the comparable municipalities included in the analysis since 2014. Prior to 2014 revenues from police services were roughly comparable to those reported for Lacombe.

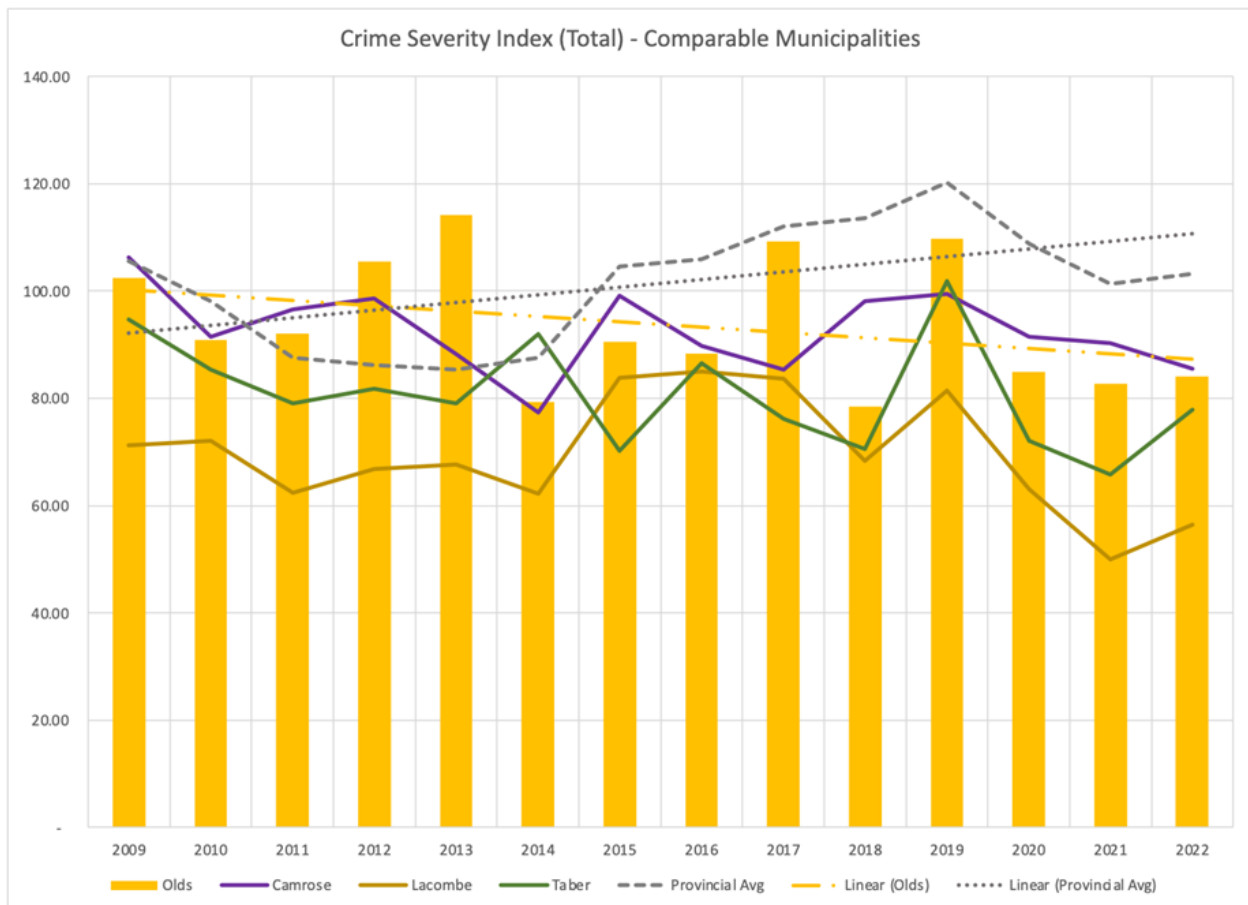


Crime Severity Index

Total CSI for Olds & Comparable Municipalities

The town has a lower CSI than the province and in the middle of comparator municipalities. Since 2014, the Town of Olds has had a lower CSI than the province as a whole. In relation to the comparable municipalities, Olds' CSI has historically been similar to that of Camrose and generally above that for both Lacombe and Taber.

While generally the CSI has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.

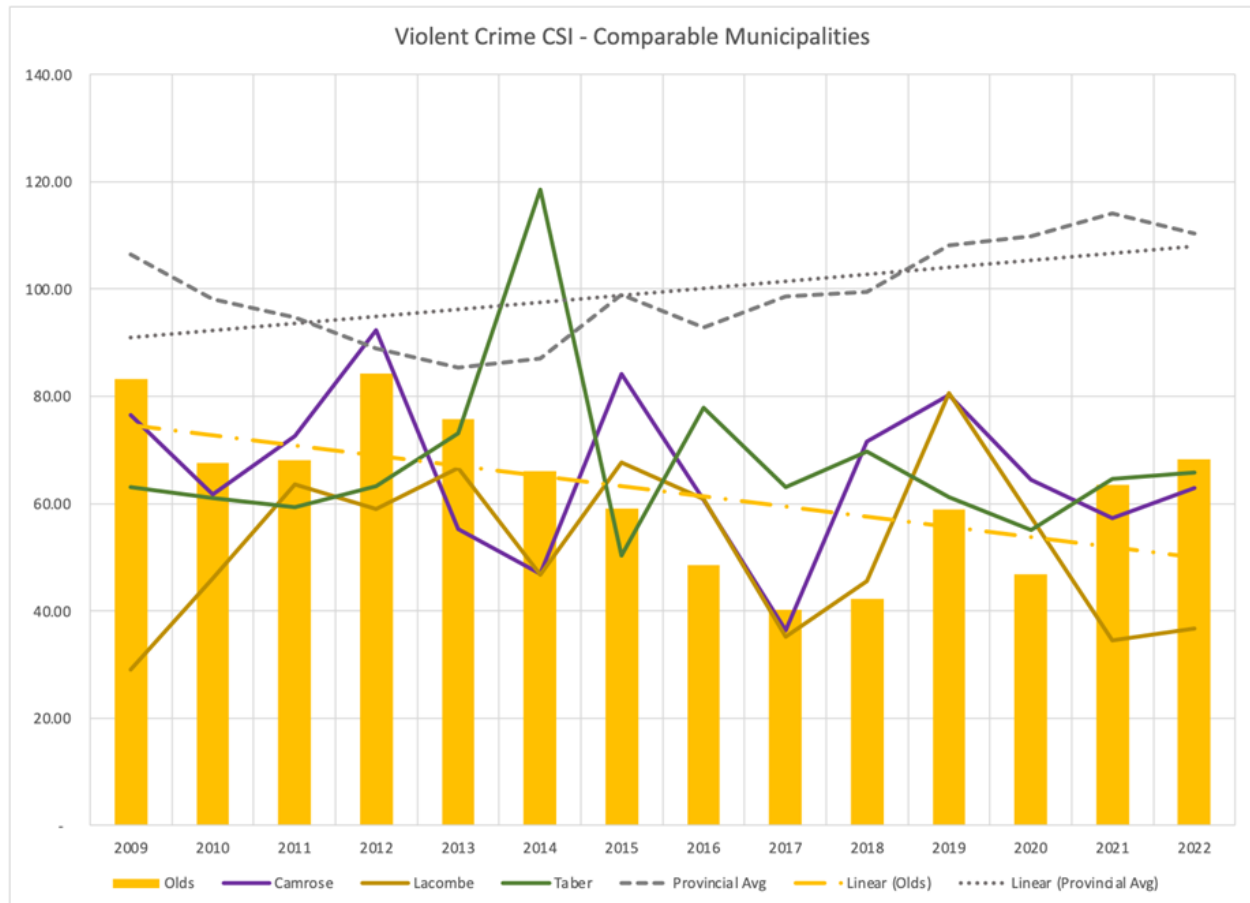


Violent Crime CSI for Olds & Comparable Municipalities

Olds is significantly lower than the province, with mixed results in relation to comparable municipalities. Trend has been down for Olds.

The Town of Olds has had a significantly lower Violent Crime CSI than the province as a whole. This is generally true of the comparable municipalities used in this analysis. Olds' Violent Crime CSI as compared to these comparable municipalities is similar, with mixed results year over year.

While generally the violent crime has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.

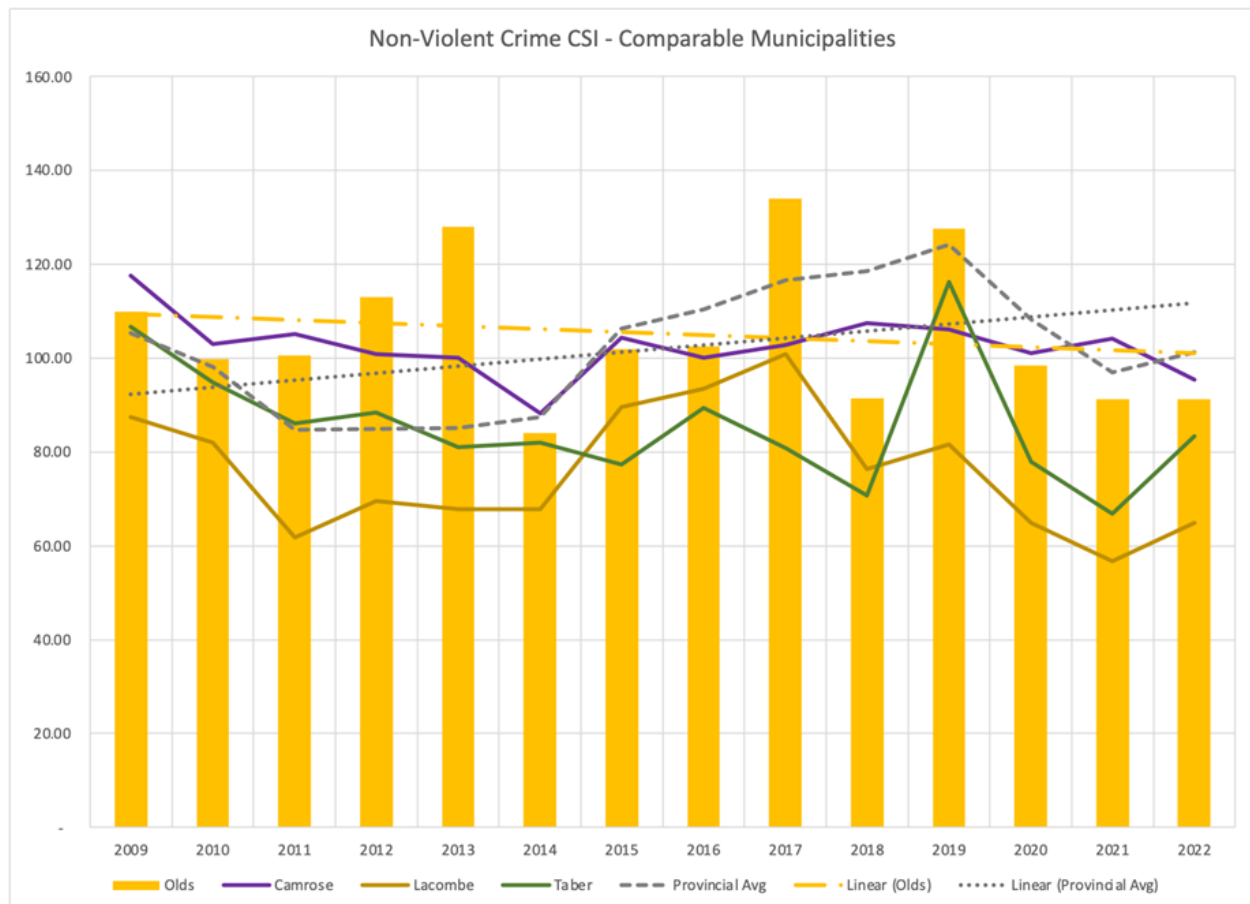


Non-Violent Crime CSI for Olds & Comparable Municipalities

Olds' rate is similar to the province and somewhat higher than comparable municipalities. Trend has been down for Olds.

Since 2014 the Town of Olds has had a similar Non-Violent Crime CSI as that of the province as a whole. This is generally true of the comparable municipalities used in this analysis. Generally, the NVCSI for Olds has been somewhat higher than that for the comparable municipalities included in this analysis.

While generally non-violent crime has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.



Stakeholder Consultation

As part of WMC's community policing business case project, an information gathering engagement was conducted with select stakeholders. Fourteen interviews were conducted in December 2023 and January 2024. Representatives spanned a cross-section of groups:

- Olds Town Council
- Select Town Employees
- RCMP Officers
- Community Policing Officers

The interview data collected included perceptions related to:

- How the current policing model is working – strengths, gaps, opportunities, and threats
- Policing priorities
- Strategic issues that must be prioritized

Community focus group sessions were held in February 2024 to gain a wider stakeholder perspective. In addition, a community-wide survey will run for two weeks in February. The aggregated and summarized perspectives are outlined below.

The following summarizes the key themes and findings from this engagement. Key observations and reflections from management are also included.

Research Questions

Stakeholders were asked for their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What is working well with the current policing model (RCMP)?
2. What gaps in service are you aware of/hearing about?
3. What is important for WMC to consider in developing this business case?
4. If you could change/add/delete one thing to the policing service in Olds, what would it be?
5. Are you aware of any other Alberta community that handles policing in a way that you admire? In a way that you would not want to emulate.
6. Anything else you would like to add?

Thematic Analysis

Overall stakeholders held the following common perspectives.

Current Policing Model

- The cost of the current RCMP model is considered affordable and effective.
- There is positive engagement with the local detachment, particularly with the Staff Sergeant and Community Resource Officer.
- Gaps in service include the need for more visibility and community engagement.

Challenges & Considerations

- There are concerns about the balance of staffing and resources, staffing shortages, and the delineation between municipal and provincial priorities.
- Stakeholders identified the need to rigorously consider the cost, staffing requirements, and potential challenges in transitioning to a community policing model.

Community Policing Model

- Stakeholders expressed desire for a true community policing focus, additional officers, and a more localized scope for the detachment.
- There are concerns about the potential transition to a police force, including financial implications and the need for recruitment and infrastructure.

Key Themes

Several key themes emerged from the interviews related to:

- Community engagement and visibility.
- Resource allocation and staffing.
- Cost and financial considerations.
- Transition and preparedness for change.
- Community policing model and service priorities.
- Comparative analysis and learning from other communities.

A detailed report outlining the methods used and responses received is attached as [Enclosure III](#).

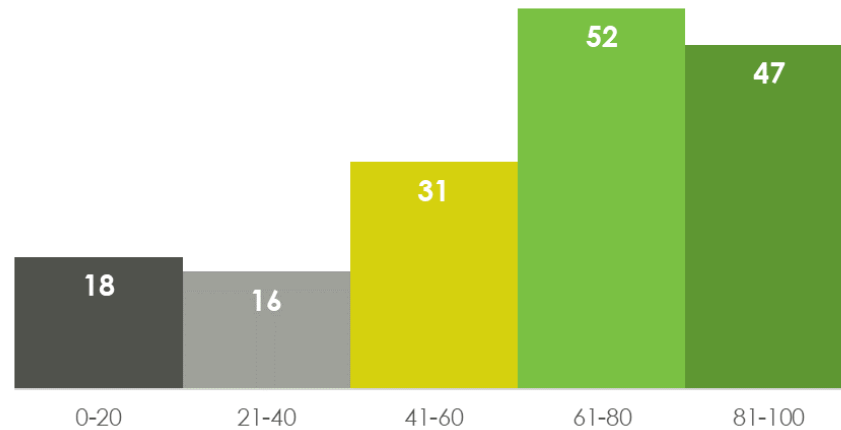
Online Survey

An online survey was made available to interested citizens, and responses were received from over 150 individuals. The questions were intended to assess the perceived effectiveness of the current model, its fit with community values, and the degree of influence citizens felt they have over how the services are provided.

Not every participant answered every question, so there is variation in the total number of responses recorded for each question.

Question 1

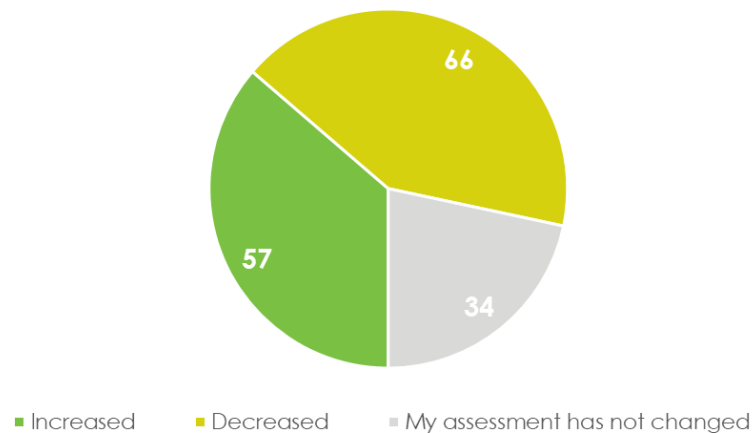
How would you rate public safety in Olds?
(0-100)



The majority of respondents provided a positive assessment of public safety in the Town of Olds.

Question 2

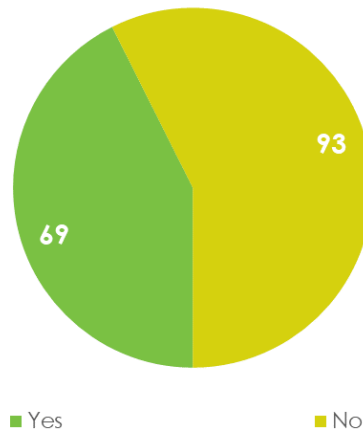
Has your assessment of public safety increased or decreased over the last five years?



The majority of respondents recorded either no change or an improvement in their perception of public safety.

Question 4

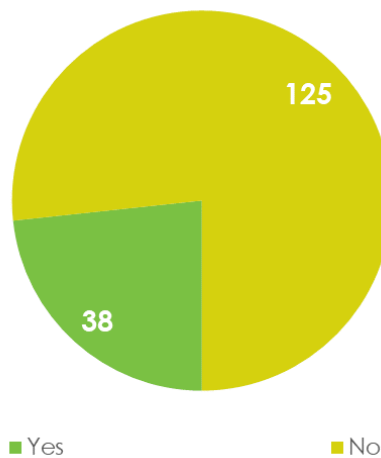
Do you know who makes decisions about policing policy and operations in Olds?



The majority of respondents said they did not know who made decisions about policing.

Question 5

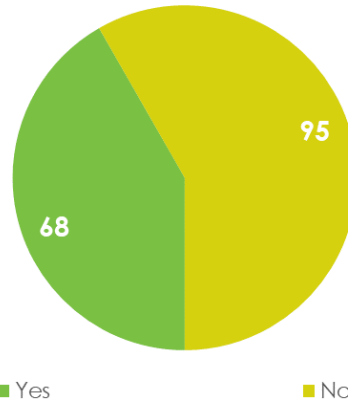
Do you have input into those policies?



Over 75% of respondents said they did not have input into policing and safety issues.

Question 6

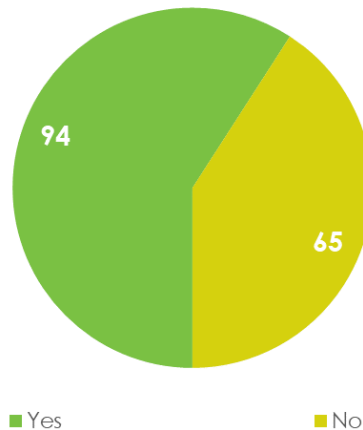
If you had a concern or question about how policing is provided, do you know where to go with your question or concern?



Over half of respondents did not know where to go for answers to questions or concerns.

Question 7

Do the police services provided in Olds match the values of the community?



Almost 69% felt community values matched police activities.

Question 8

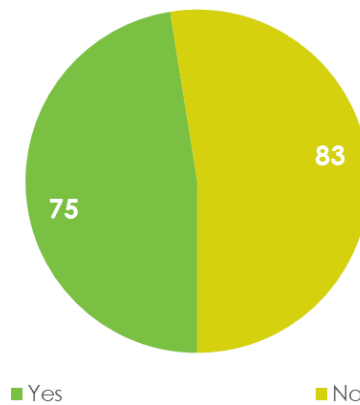
In question 8, respondents were asked to provide an example to support their rating. Answers included:

- Involvement of town council and police in setting police priorities.
- Involvement in of community events.
- Personal experience where citizens believed that the police response was inadequate.

- Lack of visibility aside from community events.
- Lack of understanding of peace officer roles.

Question 9

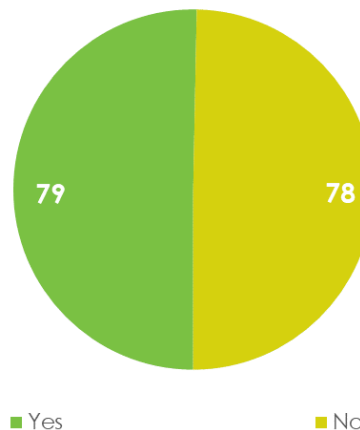
Do policing operations in Olds provide a good balance between proactive policing and response to unlawful incidents?



A small majority of respondents thought there was a good balance between proactive and reactive policing.

Question 10

Do you feel you are getting value for the money invested in policing?



Respondents were almost equally split regarding value for money in policing.

The full report is attached as [Enclosure III](#).

Municipal Police Service Start-Up Expenditures

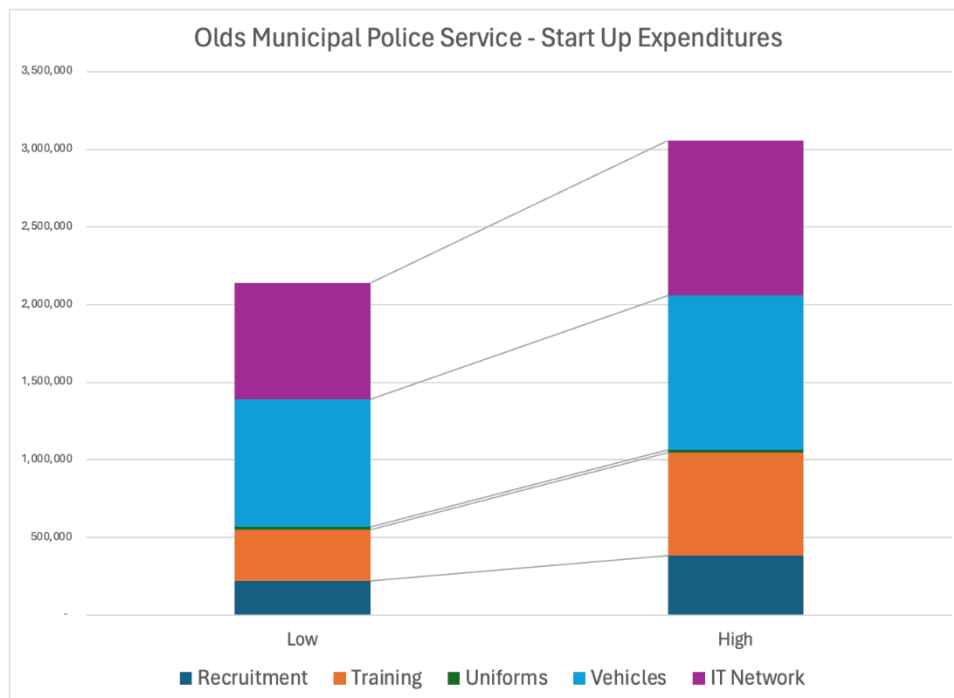
These are services that the police department outsources to external providers, which can include:

Recruitment: Recruiting costs include advertising/outreach; application processing; assessment and testing; background checks; interviewing; and onboarding. These costs can include relocation costs and signing bonuses. It is estimated these costs would range from \$20,000 to \$35,000 per hire.

Training: Costs for training would include tuition; wages; accommodation/meals; and operational expenditures associated with training. These costs could range from \$30,000 to \$60,000 per recruit.

Uniforms: *The Police Act* mandates that police officers must wear uniforms and insignia approved by the Commission. Recent estimates put the initial cost of equipping a police officer at \$3,000 to \$4,000, which includes a firearm, clothing allowance, and body armour. Additionally, there are ongoing costs associated with the uniform, including allowances for boots, dry cleaning, and other related expenses.

Vehicles: Vehicle costs include the base cost of the vehicle (which could be a sedan, SUV, or another type of vehicle suited for police work) and the additional cost for outfitting it with necessary law enforcement equipment such as emergency lighting, sirens, radio and communication equipment, computer systems, prisoner transport features, and specialized modifications. It is estimated the cost for a new police vehicle would range from \$75,000 to \$90,000.



IT Network: The cost of information systems for a municipal police department is covered by the town or city. The estimated start-up costs include expenses for equipment, applications, integration, and project management. There's a possibility for equipment to be transferred to the municipality, which could lead to cost savings.

Network Architecture: \$300,000 to \$400,000

Mobility/PC's: \$200,000 to \$250,000

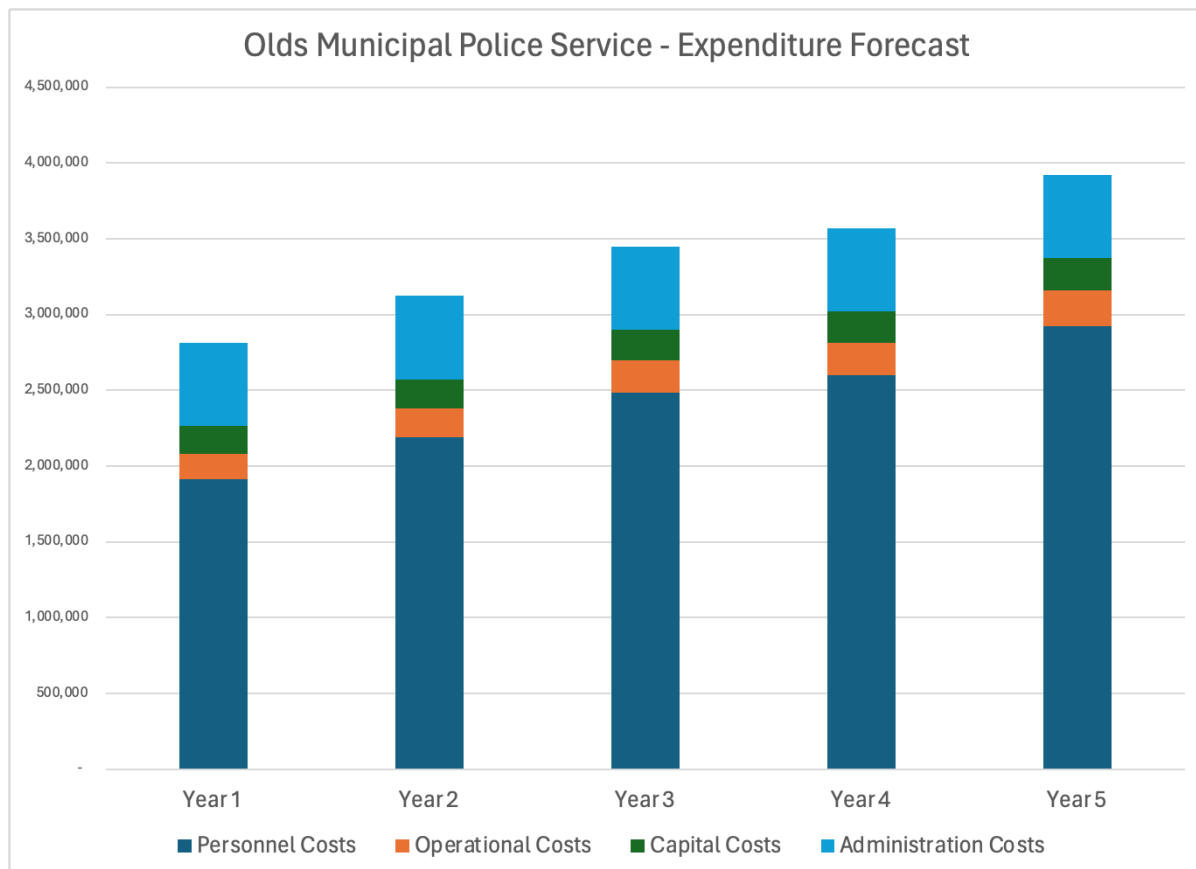
Systems: \$200,000 to \$250,000

Integration & Project Management: \$50,000 to \$100,000

Total start-up expenditures are estimated to range from over\$2 million to just over \$3 million.

Municipal Police Service Expenditure Forecast

The direct expenditures associated with the proposed Municipal Police Service are projected to increase from \$2.8 million in the first year of operation to \$3.9million in five years. The most significant reason for the cost increase is the projected increase in sworn officers, set to 11 in Year 1 and increasing to 14 by Year 5.



Detailed analysis is available in [Enclosure II](#).

Findings & Recommendations

Policing Model

The consulting team believes the current contract model with the RCMP serves the Town of Olds well, and that there is no compelling reason for change. Most citizens are satisfied with the method of service, the contract costs are lower than that paid by most comparator municipalities, and crime rates are below average for the province.

In addition, the estimated costs of establishing a town service are substantial, as outlined above and the annual operating costs would be higher than currently experienced.

As always, however, there are opportunities for improvement largely focused on improved communication and citizen involvement, and more appropriate service levels to deal with non-violent crime.

Olds also needs to be prepared for future changes in the province's policing structures and could be a stronger player in shaping that future.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to help the Town of Olds continue its enviable record in policing and safety services. The Town of Olds should:

1. Maintain its current contractual arrangement with the RCMP for the provision of policing services.
2. Improve communications about safety initiatives, policing activities, and related information:
 - a. Develop a proactive social media program supported by the Town's communication resources.
 - b. Design and implement a regular survey to identify citizen concerns and suggestions.
 - c. Support effective public consultation processes to address significant changes or challenges in policing activity in Olds.
3. Be more proactive in involving its citizens in the development and policing and safety policies:
 - a. Build on the provisions of the current MPSA and host a Safety Strategy planning session involving City Council, the RCMP, and key community stakeholders such as business associations, education institutions, and recreation groups.
 - b. Become an active participant in efforts to involve the municipalities in the provincial discussion on policing such as the Alberta Municipalities Analysis of PwC Report APPS Transition.
4. Improve police capacity to address concerns about visibility and response to minor incidents by increasing the number of peace officers and assisting the RCMP to fill its full staffing complement:

- a. Consider bringing its policing budget closer to that of comparator municipalities to fund these additional positions.
- 5. Improve operational liaison with the Olds College to assist in effective community response to college events and activities.

Conclusion

The Town of Olds is well served by its policing and safety structure. The model can be strengthened by targeted investment in staffing, greater attention to public involvement and consultation, and enhanced communication. Olds should participate in ongoing discussions about potential changes in policing to ensure the interests and needs of smaller municipalities are understood and addressed.

Enclosure I: Policing Background information

Policing in Canada

Federal

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is Canada's national police service and the largest single policing agency in the country. It enforces federal laws, investigates financial and organized crime, protects national security, and ensures the safety of state officials and foreign dignitaries. The RCMP also provides policing services under contract to all territories and provinces, except Ontario and Quebec. In addition, it provides policing services to more than 150 municipalities and 600 Indigenous communities. In total, the RCMP is the primary policing provider for 20% of Canada's population.

The RCMP is also mandated to provide technical or support services to all Canadian public police forces. This includes the Canadian Police College and the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). Other specialized services include Laboratory Services, the Canadian Firearms Program, and the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre.

Provincial

The provinces are responsible for public policing. Independent provincial police services exist in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In all other provinces and territories, the RCMP, through contract provide policing services to areas that don't have municipal police forces, provide policing services.

Provincial policing includes, but is not limited, to:

- Policing rural areas and small municipalities
- Highway patrol
- Multi-jurisdictional investigative teams
- Specialized Services including, but not limited to:
 - Tactical
 - Major crime

Municipal

In Canada, most urban municipalities with a population of 50,000 or more have their own police service. Provincial Police Acts stipulate the requirements for maintaining an independent police service. Most, if not all municipal police services are overseen by a civilian board or commission. Additionally, the Province will have further standards and evaluation requirements for such services.

First Nations

Most First Nation and Inuit communities are presently policed by the RCMP or a provincial police service; however, there is a growing trend of First Nations and Inuit communities forming their own police services. Funding for these police services is often done through a tri-party agreement between the First Nation or Inuit, provincial government, and federal government.

Once formed, these police services are full-authority policing agencies and meet the same standards as other municipal policing agencies for that province.

Other

Canada also has a few police agencies who carry federal authority to appoint a police officer. Examples of this include CP Rail Police and CN Rail Police. Both agencies employ police officers who have been authorized as such through the *Railway Act*. The Military Police is another such agency. While working within the scope of their duties these officers have the same or similar authorities as their municipal, provincial, or federal counterparts.

Policing in Alberta

Legislation

In Alberta, policing is community-based. Police services, oversight bodies, the Alberta government and a number of independent agencies and organizations, civilian groups, and municipal bodies work in partnership across the province to:

- Help keep communities safe; and
- Ensure policing services are effective and performing their duties according to legislated requirements, standards, and community priorities.

Roles and responsibilities for policing and how police services, oversight bodies and associated policing partners and systems operate, are set out in the [Police Act](#), [Police Service Regulation](#), and provincial standards.

Where the RCMP have been contracted to provide the police services, requirements of the [RCMP Act](#) also apply.

Provincial standards are in place for both police services and police oversight. These standards include the [Alberta Provincial Policing Standards](#) and Policing Oversight Standards for commissions and committees.

Civilian Oversight & Governance

Balancing the independence and authority of law enforcement on one hand, and their accountability to the public and the civilian authority, on the other, is a vital part of our democratic society. Oversight and governing bodies need to strike this balance between police independence to conduct investigations and maintain order without undue political or other influence, with the need for accountability to the public.

In accordance with the *Police Act*, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General set the standards for effective policing across Alberta, while a municipality is responsible to oversee policing in their community. The forms in which municipal oversight is provided depend on who delivers the policing services. If a municipality has an independent police service or regional police service, they are required to have a police commission. Whereas a municipality that has contracted the RCMP may establish a policing committee. Members of a police commission or policing committee are usually citizens from the local community, but they often include a small number

of city employees and/or council members. If no policing committee is established in an RCMP-policed municipality, the Municipal Police Service Agreement identifies the mayor as the de facto oversight body.

According to the Province of Alberta's *Police Act*, municipalities have the choice to enter a variety of policing agreements. These include:

- Engaging the provincial police as a municipal service (Alberta currently has an agreement with the RCMP to provide provincial policing services for the province);
- Entering into an agreement for the provision of municipal policing services from another police service;
- Establishing a regional police service; or
- Establishing a municipal police service.

Governance and oversight for each of these policing options differ. According to the *Police Act*, The Town of Olds' Council may establish a policing committee with no fewer than three (3) and no more than 12 members for a term of three years. The role of the police committee, as a civilian group is to work directly with the police agency (RCMP) to:

- Set priorities for policing in the community;
- Communicate the public and Council's interests; and
- Develop annual plans.

Enclosure II: Financial Analysis & Comparator Information

Crime Statistics

Crime Severity Index (CSI)

Violent Crime Severity Index (VCSI)

Financial Analysis

Police Expenditures & Revenues in Alberta – A Comparison

Police Costs & Expenditures Relative to Comparable Municipalities

Police Service Cost Elements

Municipal Police Service Start-Up Expenditures

Municipal Police Service Operating Expenditures

RCMP vs Municipal Police Service Expenditures

Crime Statistics

Crime Severity Index (CSI)

The Crime Severity Index (CSI) in Canada is a measure used by Statistics Canada to track changes in the severity of police-reported crime from year to year. It is designed to provide a more comprehensive view of crime in Canada than the traditional crime rate. The CSI takes into account both the volume and the seriousness of crimes reported to the police. Here's what is generally included in the CSI¹:

Range of Crimes: The CSI includes all Criminal Code violations including traffic, as well as drug violations and all federal statutes. It covers a wide range of offences, from minor ones like theft and vandalism to major ones like assault, murder, and sexual assault.

Weighting of Offences: Unlike traditional crime statistics, which count each offence equally, the CSI assigns a weight to each type of offence based on the average sentence handed down by criminal courts. More serious crimes like murder are given more weight than less serious ones like minor thefts. This means that more serious crimes have a greater impact on the overall CSI score.

Calculation Method: The CSI is calculated by multiplying the number of incidents of each offence by the weight of that offence and then summing these products. This total is then divided by the population size, and the result is multiplied by 100,000 to get the CSI value.

Comparisons Over Time & Geography: The CSI allows for the comparison of the severity of crime across different regions and over different time periods. This helps in understanding whether the nature of crime is becoming more or less serious and how it varies across different areas.

Sub-Indices: There are also sub-indices for violent crime and non-violent crime, allowing for a more detailed analysis of trends in these specific areas.

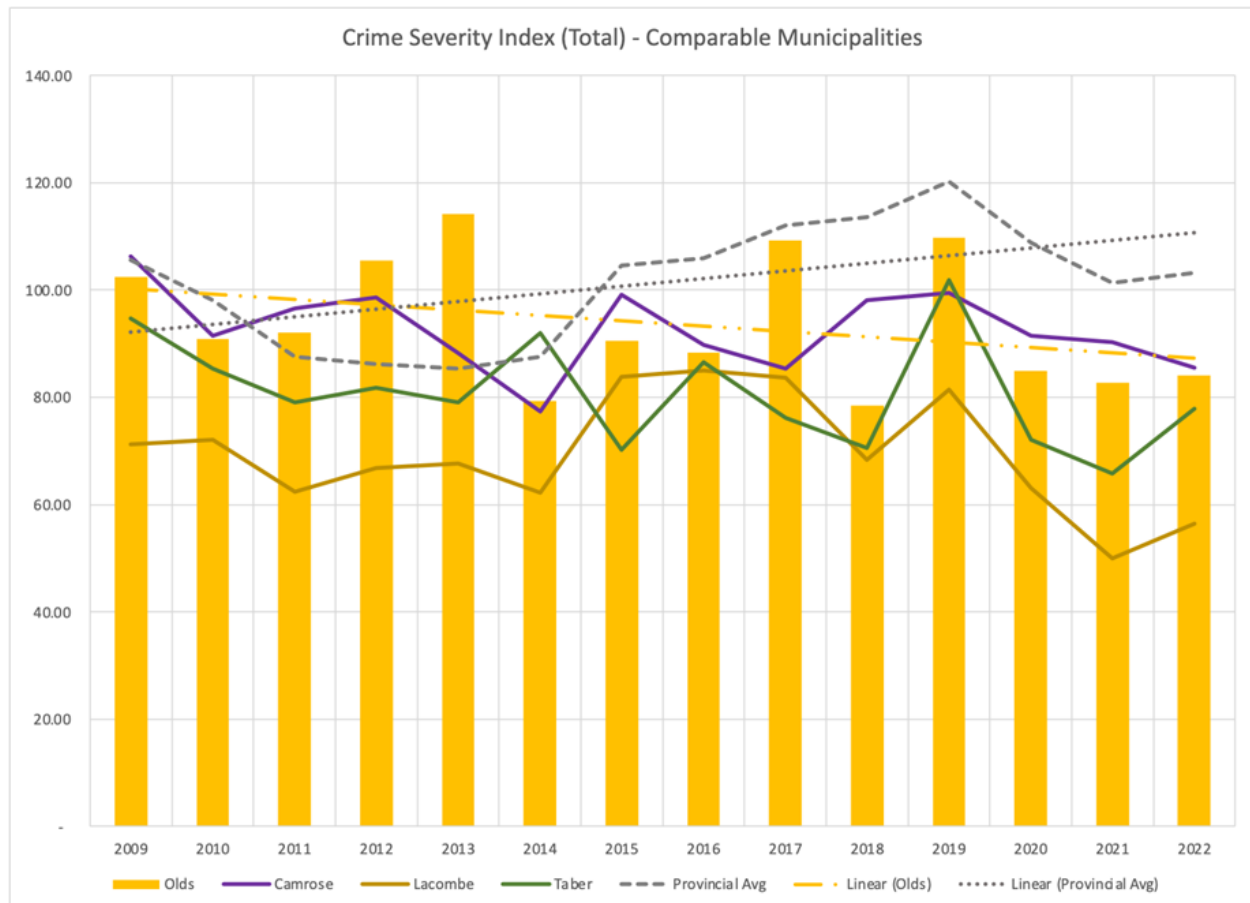
The CSI is a valuable tool for law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and the public to understand the nature and severity of crime in Canada, beyond what traditional crime rates can offer. It provides a more nuanced view of the crime landscape, considering not just the volume of crime but also its seriousness.

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023041-eng.htm>

Total CSI for Olds & Comparable Municipalities

Since 2014 the Town of Olds has had a lower CSI than the province as a whole. In relation to the comparable municipalities, Olds' CSI has historically been similar to that of Camrose and generally above that for both Lacombe and Taber.

While generally the CSI has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.



Violent Crime Severity Index (VCSI)

The Violent Crime Severity Index (VCSI) is a component of the overall Crime Severity Index (CSI) that specifically focuses on violent crimes. It measures the severity of police-reported violent crime in Canada, taking into account both the volume and the seriousness of these crimes. The VCSI includes a range of offences, which typically encompass:

Homicide: This includes first and second-degree murder, manslaughter, and infanticide. Homicides are generally given a high weight in the index due to their serious nature.

Attempted Murder: This includes serious attempts to end the life of another person.

Sexual Assaults: This category covers a range of sexual offences, including sexual assault (levels 1, 2, and 3, with level 3 being the most serious), sexual violations against children, and other sexual offences.

Major Assaults: This includes more serious forms of assault, such as assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) and aggravated assault (level 3).

Robbery: The act of stealing from a person using violence or threats of violence.

Other Violent Violations: This can include a range of other violent offences such as kidnapping, abduction, criminal harassment (stalking), uttering threats, and other offences involving the use or threat of violence.

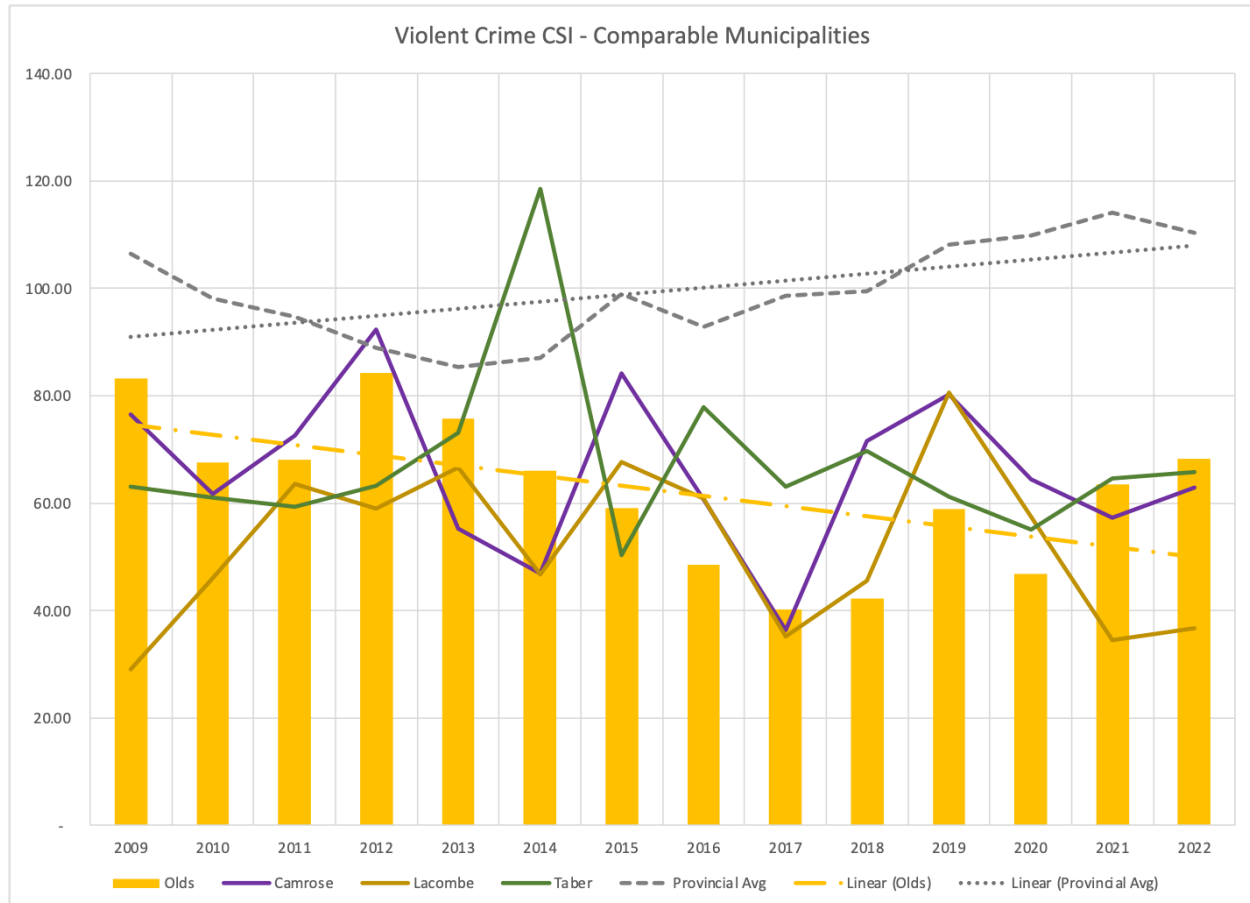
Each type of violent crime is assigned a weight based on the average sentence handed down by criminal courts for that offence. More serious crimes, such as homicide, have a higher weight, meaning they have a greater impact on the overall VCSI score.

The VCSI is a useful tool for understanding the nature and severity of violent crime in Canada, allowing for comparisons over time and across different regions. It provides a more detailed and nuanced view of violent crime trends than traditional crime rates, which count all offences equally regardless of their severity.

Violent Crime CSI for Olds & Comparable Municipalities

The Town of Olds has had a significantly lower Violent Crime CSI than the Province as a whole. This is generally true of the comparable municipalities used in this analysis. Olds' Violent Crime CSI as compared to these comparable municipalities is similar, with mixed results year over year.

While generally the violent crime has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.



Non-Violent Crime Severity Index (NVCSI)

The Non-Violent Crime Severity Index (NVCSI) in Canada is a subset of the overall Crime Severity Index (CSI) that focuses specifically on non-violent crimes. This index measures the severity of police-reported non-violent crime, considering both the volume and the seriousness of these offences. The NVCSI includes a variety of non-violent offences, such as:

Property Crimes:

- Theft: This includes theft over and under a certain dollar amount (e.g., theft over \$5,000, theft under \$5,000), theft of a motor vehicle, shoplifting, and other forms of theft.
- Breaking & Entering (Burglary): Unlawful entry into a structure to commit theft or any other felony.
- Fraud: This encompasses various forms of fraudulent activities, including identity theft, credit card fraud, and other types of financial deception.

Drug Trafficking, Production, & Possession: These crimes involve the illegal handling, manufacturing, and distribution of controlled substances.

Other Federal Statute Violations: This can include a range of non-violent federal offences, such as certain regulatory or administrative offences.

Mischief: This refers to the willful destruction or damage of property, vandalism, and other similar crimes.

Administration of Justice Violations: This includes offences like failure to comply with a court order, failure to appear in court, and breach of probation.

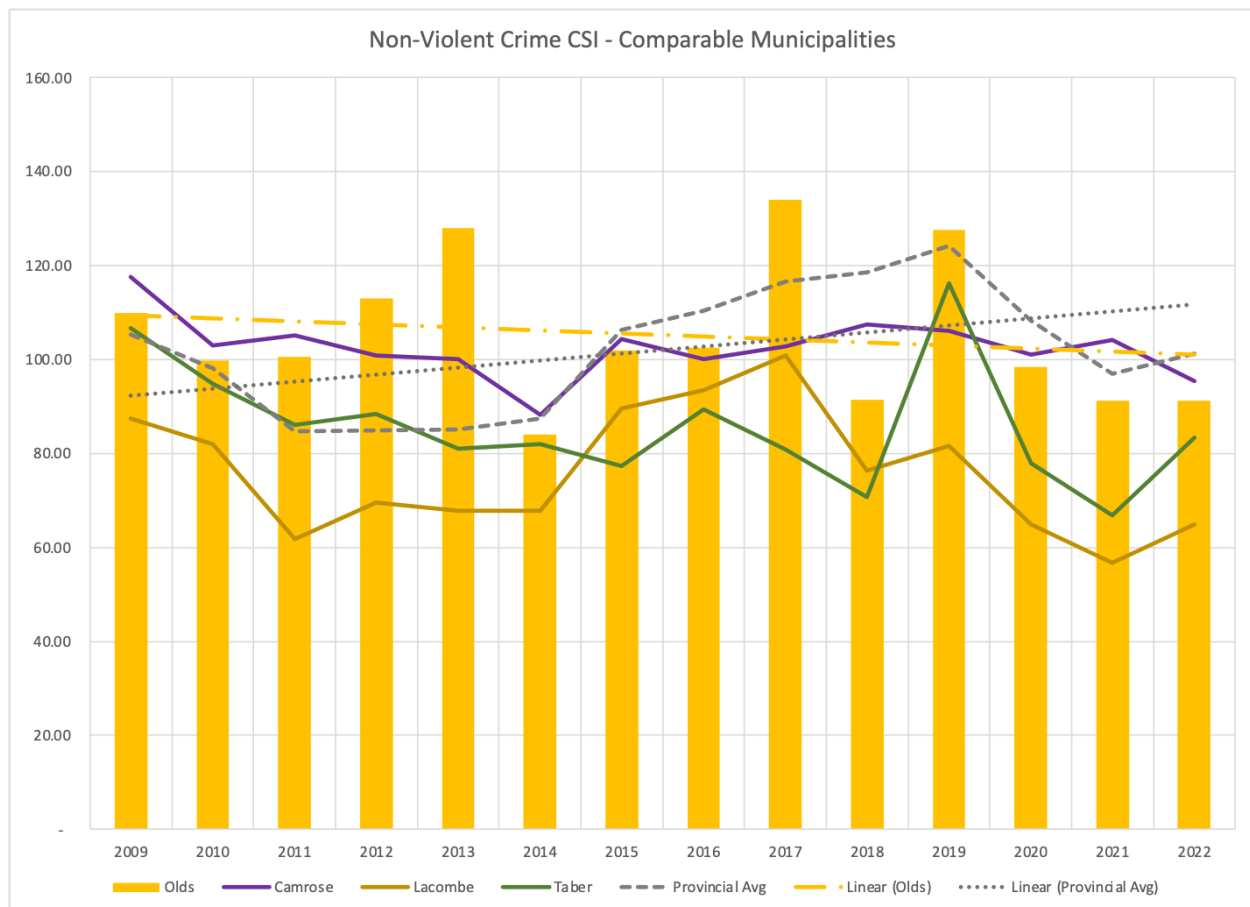
Each type of non-violent crime is assigned a weight based on the average sentence handed down by criminal courts for that offence. The weights reflect the relative seriousness of each type of crime. More serious non-violent crimes, such as major fraud cases, are given higher weights, meaning they have a greater impact on the overall NVCSI score.

The NVCSI is a valuable tool for understanding the nature and severity of non-violent crime in Canada. It allows for comparisons over time and across different regions, providing a more detailed and nuanced view of non-violent crime trends than traditional crime rates, which count all offences equally regardless of their severity.

Non-Violent Crime CSI for Olds and Comparable Municipalities

Since 2014 the Town of Olds has had a similar Non-Violent Crime CSI as that of the Province as a whole. This is generally true of the comparable municipalities used in this analysis. Generally, the NVCSI for Olds has been somewhat higher than that for the comparable municipalities included in this analysis.

While generally the non-violent crime has increased in Alberta over the historic period analyzed, the trend has been down for Olds.



Financial Analysis

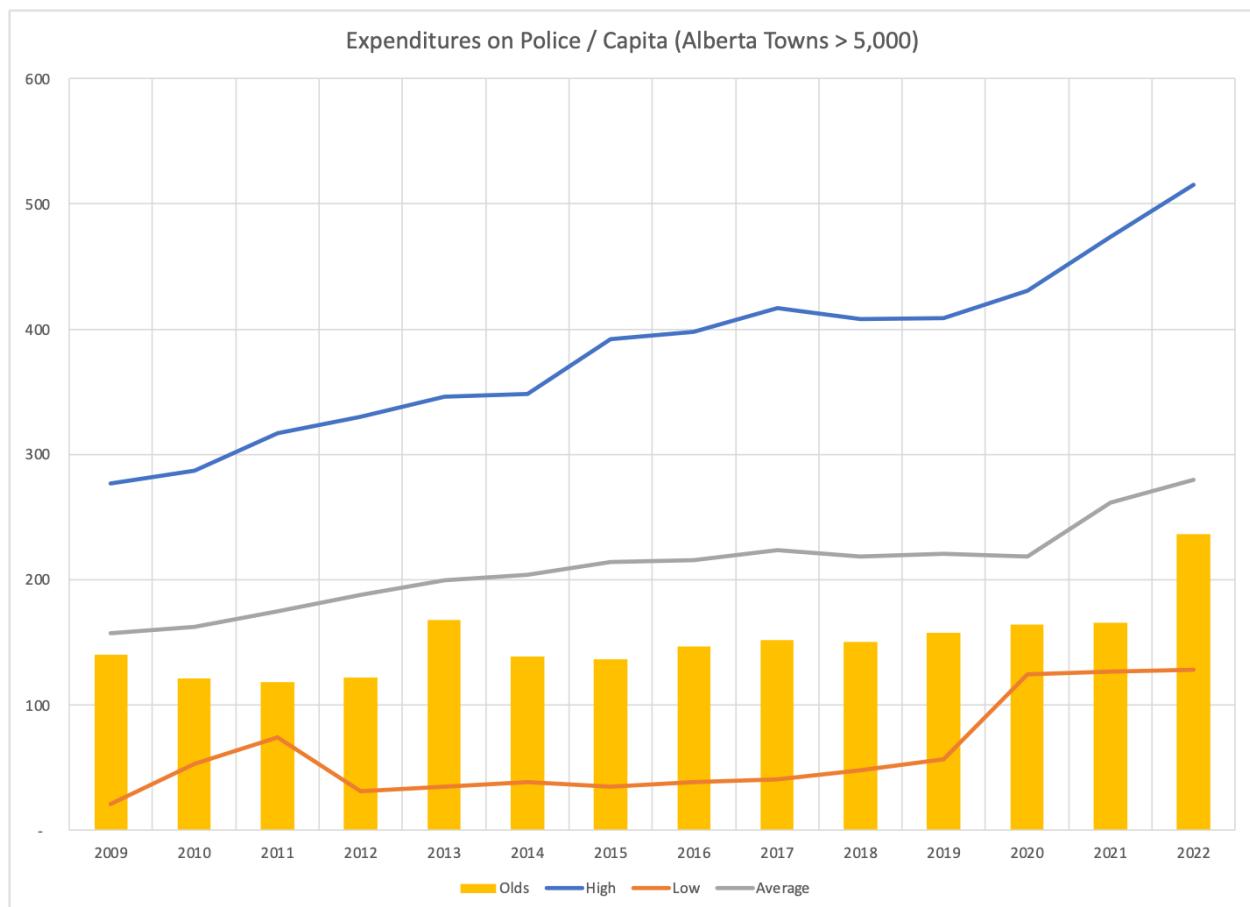
This financial analysis compares Olds with all towns having a population greater than 5,000 and thus responsible for paying for police services.

Police Expenditures & Revenues in Alberta – A Comparison

Town of Olds Expenditures on Police Services

Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for operating expenditures on Police per capita, the Town of Olds has reported significantly below average expenditures compared to 33 other Towns in Alberta whose population is greater than 5,000 or provide their own police service.² Olds' per capita expenditures on police were 72% below the average for the other Town's in Alberta.

The 2022 average population of the 33 Town's included in the analysis was 10,083 as compared to the population for the Town of Olds reported to be 9,567.³ The largest community included in the analysis is Okotoks (31,959) and the smallest Pincher Creek (3,428).⁴



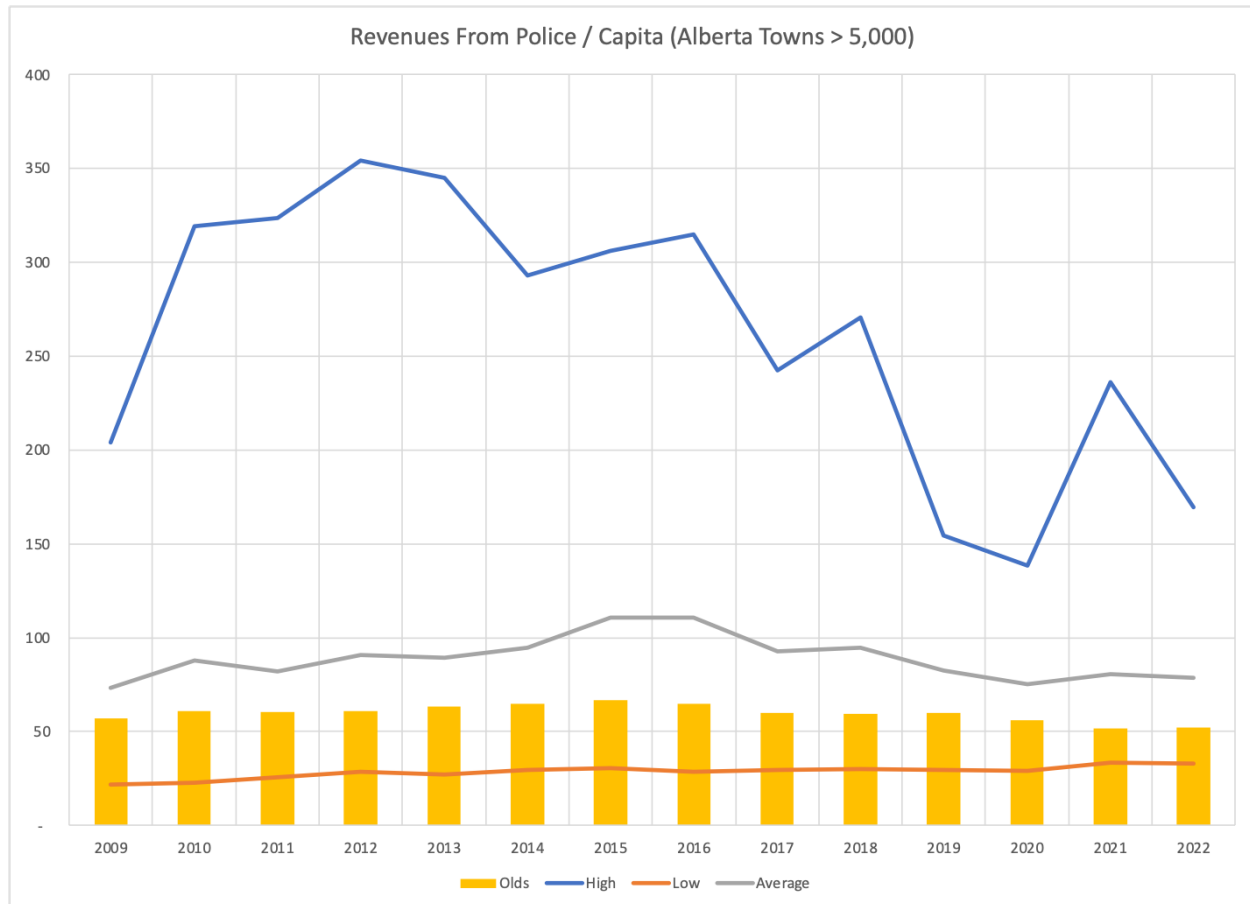
² <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/municipal-financial-and-statistical-data>

³ <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/#/>

⁴ The official population of Olds does not account for the student population attending Olds College. Typically, enrollment at the College has ranged between 1,400 and 2,700 students, averaging approximately 1,900 students.

Town of Olds Revenues from Police Services

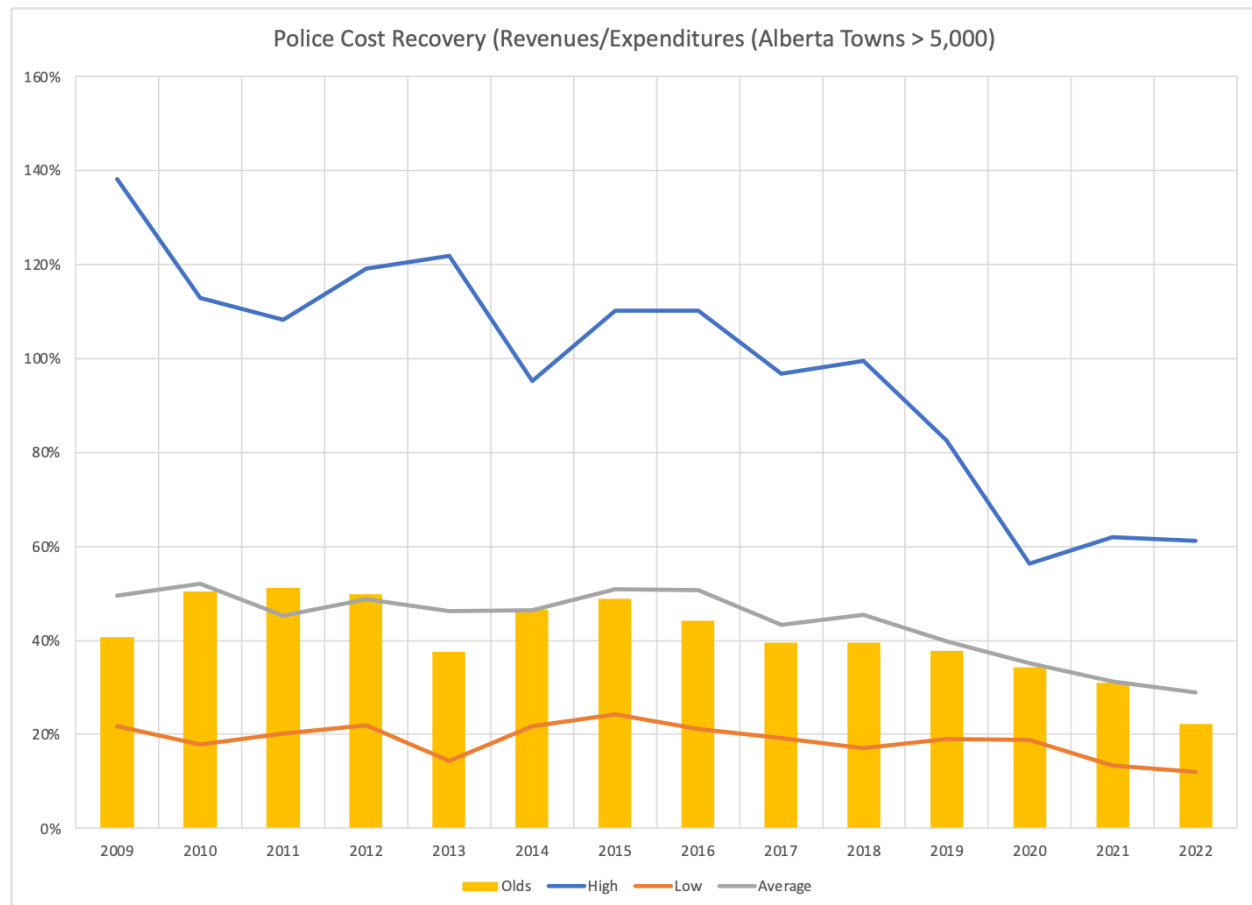
Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for operating revenues from Police per capita, the Town of Olds has reported significantly below average revenues from police operations compared to 33 other Towns in Alberta whose population is greater than 5,000 or provide their own police service.⁵ Olds' per capita revenues from police averaged 68% less than the average for the other Town's in Alberta.



⁵ <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/municipal-financial-and-statistical-data>

Town of Olds Cost Recovery Rate from Police Services

Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for operating expenditures and revenues for Police, the Town of Olds has a reported cost recovery rate (revenues/expenditures) for Police that is comparable to the average 33 other Towns in Alberta whose population is greater than 5,000 or provide their own police service.⁶



Town of Olds Amortization on Police Facilities

Amortization is a non-cash expense that approximates the annual cost associated with the depreciation of assets. Using Alberta Municipal Affairs data for amortization on Police facilities, the Town of Olds has reported an annual amortization for Police facilities that is among the lowest of the average 33 other Towns in Alberta whose population is greater than 5,000 or provide their own police service.⁷

⁶ <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/municipal-financial-and-statistical-data>

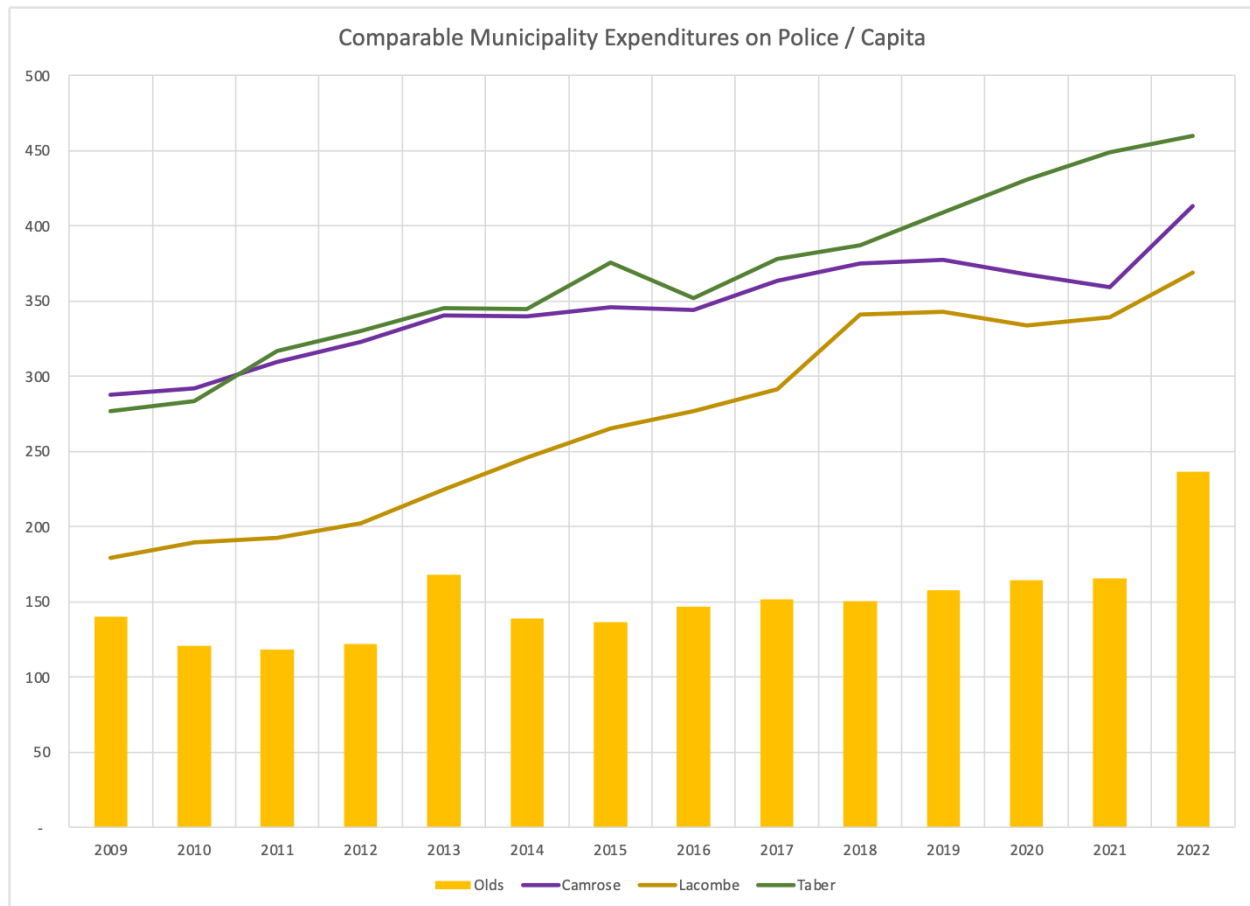
⁷ <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/municipal-financial-and-statistical-data>

Police Costs & Expenditures Relative to Comparable Municipalities

Three comparable municipalities have been proposed to compare the current and optional police services: Camrose, Lacombe, and Taber.

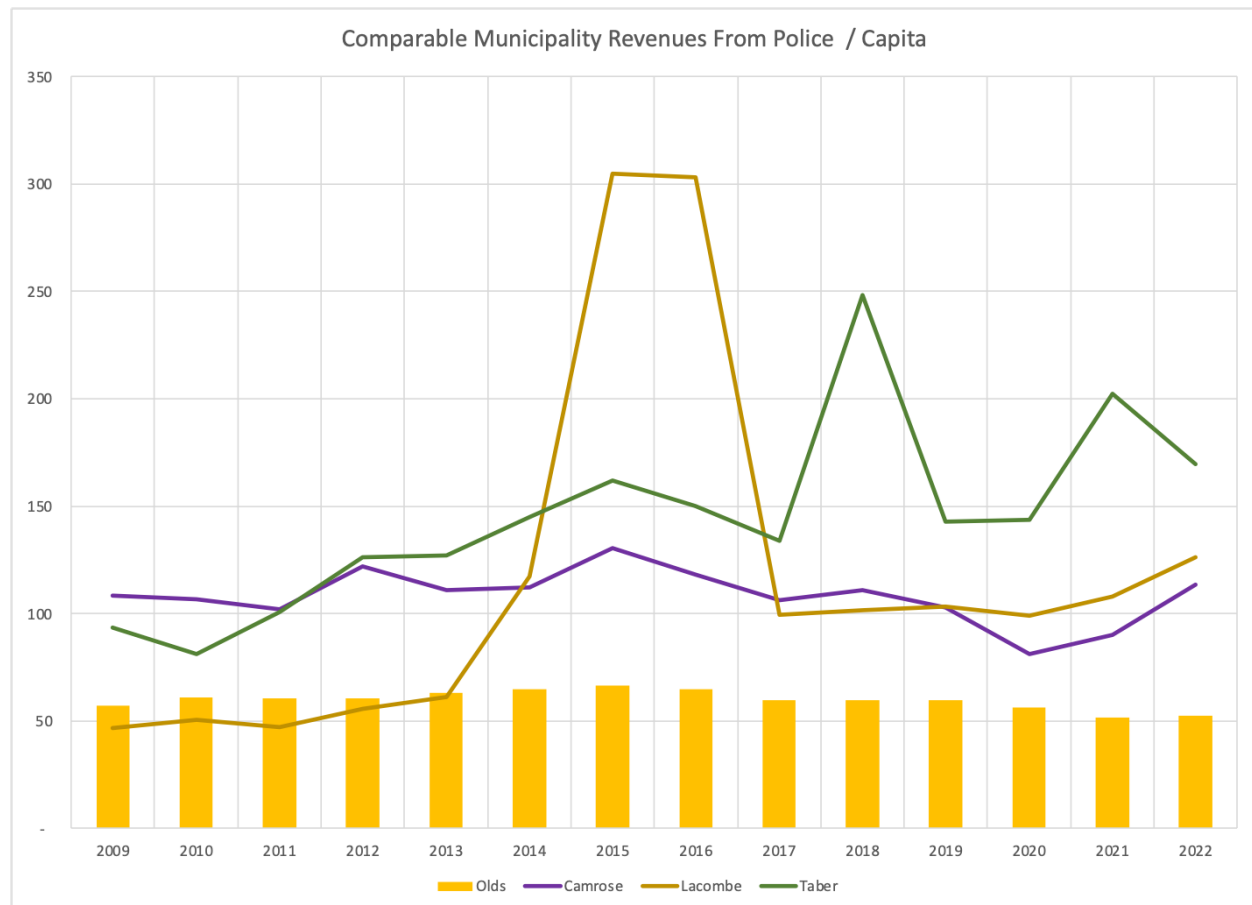
Comparable Municipal Expenditures on Police

Annual operating expenditures per capita on police services for the Town of Olds are significantly below that reported for each of the 'comparable' municipalities included in the analysis.



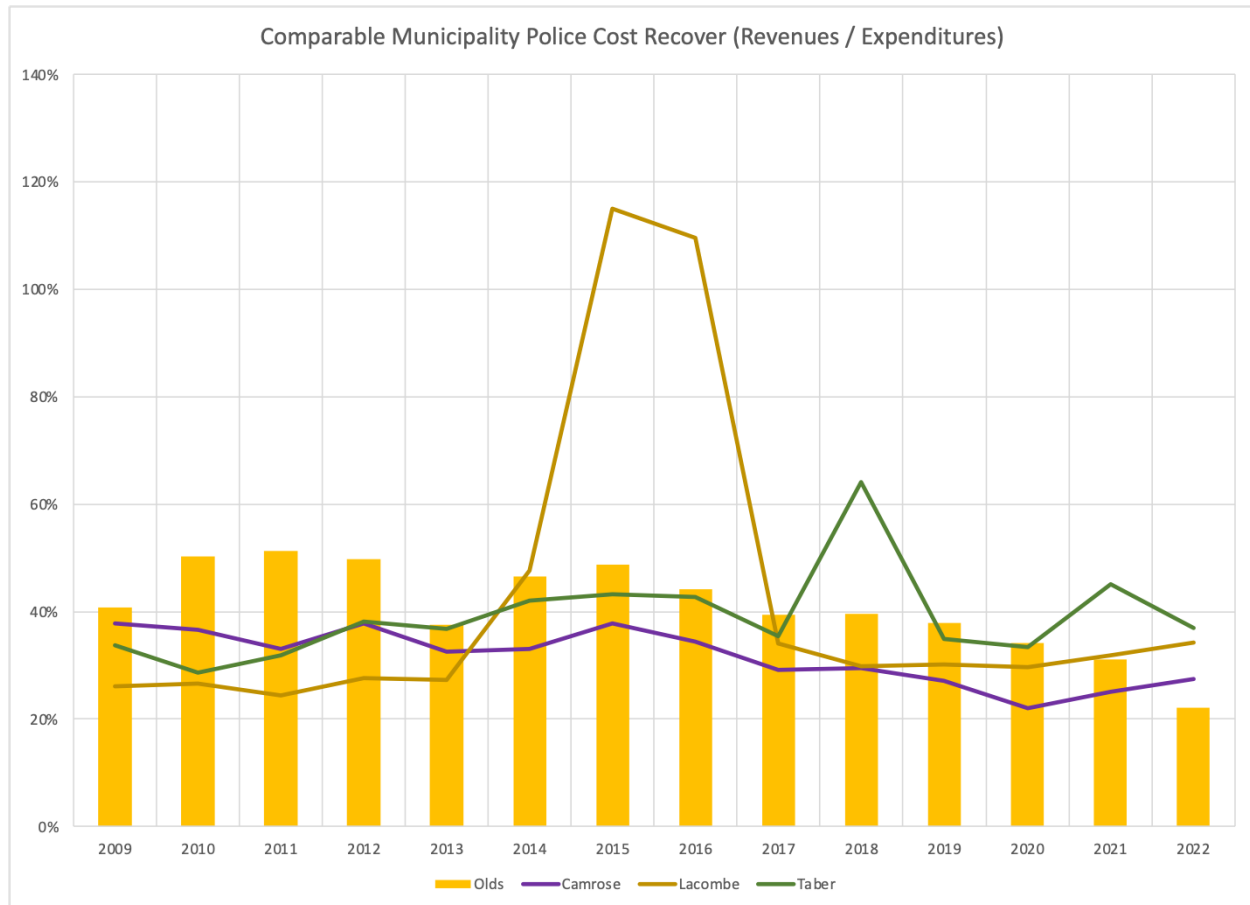
Comparable Municipal Revenues from Police

Annual revenues per capita from police services for the Town of Olds have been significantly below that reported for each of the 'comparable' municipalities included in the analysis since 2014. Prior to 2014 revenues from police services were roughly comparable to those reported for Lacombe.



Comparable Municipal Cost Recovery Rates (Revenues/Expenditures)

Annual cost recover rates (revenues/expenditures) for the Town of Olds have been roughly similar to those reported for each of the 'comparable' municipalities included in the analysis except for 2015 and 2016. For these two years Lacombe reported a significant increase in police service revenues.



Police Service Cost Elements

Providing a municipal police service involves a wide range of cost elements, reflecting the complexity and breadth of law enforcement responsibilities. These costs can vary significantly based on the size of the municipality, the scope of services provided, community needs, and regional factors.

Here's a breakdown of the primary cost elements associated with operating a municipal police service. Additionally, information is provided that distinguishes how these cost elements will vary under the Municipal Police Service option as compared to the RCMP option. Note that not all of the cost elements will be relevant for the proposed Municipal Police Service in Olds.

Personnel Costs

Personnel costs are the backbone of any police service's budget, often accounting for the largest share of expenses. This category includes:

Salaries & Wages: The largest expense, covering all police officers, administrative staff, and support personnel.

Benefits: Includes health insurance, retirement plans, life insurance, and other employee benefits.

Overtime: Pay for officers working beyond their regular hours, which can be significant depending on the municipality's event schedule, crime rate, and staffing levels.

Training & Development: Costs associated with initial training for new recruits as well as ongoing professional development and specialized training for all personnel.

Operational Costs

These are the day-to-day expenses necessary for the police force to function, excluding personnel-related costs:

Communications: Expenses related to dispatch systems, emergency communication technologies, and routine communication equipment.

- Section SS.2 of the Provincial Policing Standards Manual specifies the minimum operational requirements for a Dispatch Centre. The Dispatch Centre is required to operate 24/7, be manned by trained staff, handle public calls, maintain recordings of all communications, and monitor the location and status of on-duty officers. In some jurisdictions there are Integrated Dispatch Centres which operate police, fire, ambulance, and 911 services.
- RCMP: The RCMP Detachment is served by one of two provincial operational communications centres (OCC) operated by "K" Division.

Municipal Police Service: TBD based on municipal policies that may be put in place.

Materials & Supplies: For the police department's facilities, including electricity, water, heating, and office supplies.

Fuel & Vehicle Maintenance: For the fleet of police vehicles, including patrol cars, motorcycles, and any specialized vehicles.

Equipment & Technology: Costs for purchasing and maintaining law enforcement equipment such as firearms, body armour, tasers, and advanced technology like body cameras and mobile data terminals.

Facility Maintenance & Rent: For the upkeep of police buildings and any costs associated with leasing space.

Capital Costs

Capital costs involve significant, long-term investments in the police service's physical and technological infrastructure:

Vehicle Purchase: Initial purchase of patrol cars, specialized vehicles, and other transportation needs.

Major Equipment & Technology Investments: Such as upgrading radio systems, computer systems, and other significant technology infrastructure.

Building Acquisition & Refurbishment: For establishing or expanding police department facilities.

Administrative & Miscellaneous Costs

These costs ensure the police service operates smoothly and remains accountable and well-integrated within the community:

Insurance: Liability and other insurance types to protect against claims and other potential liabilities.

- RCMP: Section 49 of the Police Act mandates that any complaints about the RCMP must be resolved through procedures set by the RCMP itself. These complaints need to be submitted in writing and can be filed through various channels, including with a local policing committee. When a complaint is received, it is investigated by an RCMP member. The Detachment Commander, who oversees internal policy issues, completes the review and makes decisions on the matter. If the complaint involves criminal activity, the decision to prosecute is made by the Crown. The complainant is then notified in writing about the investigation's findings and the actions the RCMP will take. In cases where the complaint or incident involves serious injury or death anyone that may have resulted from the actions of an RCMP officer in Alberta, or there are other serious or sensitive issues resulting from actions taken by an officer, the Solicitor General has the option of referring the matter to ASIRT (Alberta Serious Incident Response Team). RCMP officers who have committed misconduct are accountable through a disciplinary process established by the RCMP Act. The investigation, prosecution and Hearing of discipline matters all occur internally to the RCMP. Where a complainant is not content with the outcome, they may refer the matter to the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP (CPC). Findings or recommendations of the CPC are not binding upon the RCMP.
- Municipal Police Service: Part 5 of the Police Act outlines the procedure for handling public complaints concerning the behaviour of police officers or the policies of the police force. All complaints must be submitted in writing, and any complaints regarding a police service or an officer, except for those about the chief of police, are to be directed to the chief for review. The Police Act stipulates the steps to be taken during the investigation into the complaint and in any hearing into the matter. Part 2 of the Police Act establishes the Law Enforcement Review Board (LERB), which is an independent quasi-judicial entity. According to Section 48 of the Police Act, police officers or complainants dissatisfied with the outcome of a case have the right to appeal to the LERB. The LERB conducts independent and impartial reviews of the facts. Additionally, at the Minister's request, the Board can

investigate any policing-related matter. Decisions made by the Board on appeals are final and binding. The only subsequent appeal option is to the Court of Appeal, and this can only be based on a point of law. Policy complaints, in contrast to the alleged actions of a police officer, are prescribed under Section 43 of the Act. Under Section 44 of the Act, the chief of police is required to address the matter or refer the complaint to the commission. The Section prescribes the steps to be taken by the chief and commission to resolve the matter.

Legal Fees: For legal counsel related to department operations, personnel issues, and litigation.

- RCMP: In legal matters involving the RCMP, the Department of Justice provides support, including legal counsel, and covers the costs associated with defence or settlements. These expenses are not passed on to local policing committees or communities. Additionally, "K" Division offers in-house legal advice and support to the Town at no cost. However, this arrangement does not shield the Town from legal liability in cases where it is also named in a lawsuit.
- Municipal Police Service: In municipalities with their own police service, Council is responsible for any legal liabilities incurred by the police service. This includes expenses related to the prosecution and appeal of disciplinary cases, civil lawsuits, arbitration awards, and other matters related to collective bargaining. According to Section 39 of the Police Act, Council is also obligated to cover any damages and costs awarded against the chief of police, any legal costs the chief incurs, and any amounts due under a settlement agreement. Some municipalities employ in-house legal counsel to defend against legal actions and offer advice. However, certain police services maintain their own in-house counsel, recognizing that their interests might not always align perfectly with the broader municipality's interests. Additionally, having in-house legal counsel is beneficial for providing guidance during the development of policies and operational tactics.

Community Programs: Costs associated with community policing initiatives, outreach programs, and crime prevention efforts.

- RCMP: Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) typically exist between the municipality and the RCMP, outlining the management of Community Peace Officers, who are municipal employees. The RCMP agreement includes by-law enforcement within its scope, leading to RCMP officers often responding to by-law related calls, especially outside the working hours of by-law officers. This arrangement has been a point of concern within the community. It suggests that there should be some flexibility in deploying community peace officers based on safety considerations and intelligence-led strategies.
- Municipal Police Service: The integration of the Municipal Police Service operations and bylaw enforcement should be streamlined with the establishment of a Municipal Police Service.

Investigative Expenses: Specialized equipment, forensic analysis costs, and other expenses related to conducting investigations.

- RCMP: Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) typically exist between the municipality and the RCMP, outlining the management of Community Peace Officers, who are municipal

employees. The RCMP agreement includes by-law enforcement within its scope, leading to RCMP officers often responding to by-law related calls, especially outside the working hours of by-law officers. This arrangement has been a point of concern within the community. It suggests that there should be some flexibility in deploying community peace officers based on safety considerations and intelligence-led strategies.

- Municipal Police Service: Homicide and other major crime investigations in smaller communities pose significant challenges for police agencies and funders due to a number of factors.⁸ An investigative team may require 20 to 50 officers committed full time for the first few hours/days and a smaller team for several months or years. A smaller agency may require a skilled local function to triage and assess whether the matter can be addressed through the resources of the local municipal police force or whether external resources are also required.

Planning for Future Needs

This category is about ensuring the police service can continue to meet the community's needs effectively in the future:

Reserve Funds: For unexpected expenses, emergencies, or future capital projects.

Research & Development: Exploring new technologies, strategies, and improvements in policing services.

External Services

These are services that the police department outsources to external providers, which can include:

Contracted Services: For specialized services not provided in-house, such as forensic analysis by external labs, specialized training providers, and maintenance services for specialized equipment.

Municipal Police Service Start-Up Expenditures

These are services that the police department outsources to external providers, which can include:

Recruitment: Recruiting costs include advertising/outreach; application processing; assessment and testing; background checks; interviewing; and onboarding. These costs can include relocation costs and signing bonuses. It is estimated these costs would range from \$20,000 to \$35,000 per hire.

Training: Costs for training would include tuition; wages; accommodation/meals; and operational expenditures associated with training. These costs could range from \$30,000 to \$60,000 per recruit.

⁸ A rare event, large resources required especially during the first 24 and 72 hours, forensic and initial investigation expertise required, complex file management, major crime investigation experience, skills, and training required, media policies and protocols, medium term resources commitment, long term resources commitment.

Uniforms: *The Police Act* mandates that police officers must wear uniforms and insignia approved by the Commission. Recent estimates put the initial cost of equipping a police officer at \$3,000 to \$4,000, which includes a firearm, clothing allowance, and body armour. Additionally, there are ongoing costs associated with the uniform, including allowances for boots, dry cleaning, and other related expenses.

Vehicles: Vehicle costs include the base cost of the vehicle (which could be a sedan, SUV, or another type of vehicle suited for police work) and the additional cost for outfitting it with necessary law enforcement equipment such as emergency lighting, sirens, radio and communication equipment, computer systems, prisoner transport features, and specialized modifications. It is estimated the cost for a new police vehicle would range from \$75,000 to \$90,000.⁹

IT Network: The cost of information systems for a municipal police department is covered by the City. The estimated start-up costs include expenses for equipment, applications, integration, and project management. There's a possibility, for equipment to be transferred to the municipality, which could lead to cost savings.

Network Architecture:¹⁰ \$300,000 to \$400,000

Mobility/PCs:¹¹ \$200,000 to \$250,000

Systems:¹² \$200,000 to \$250,000

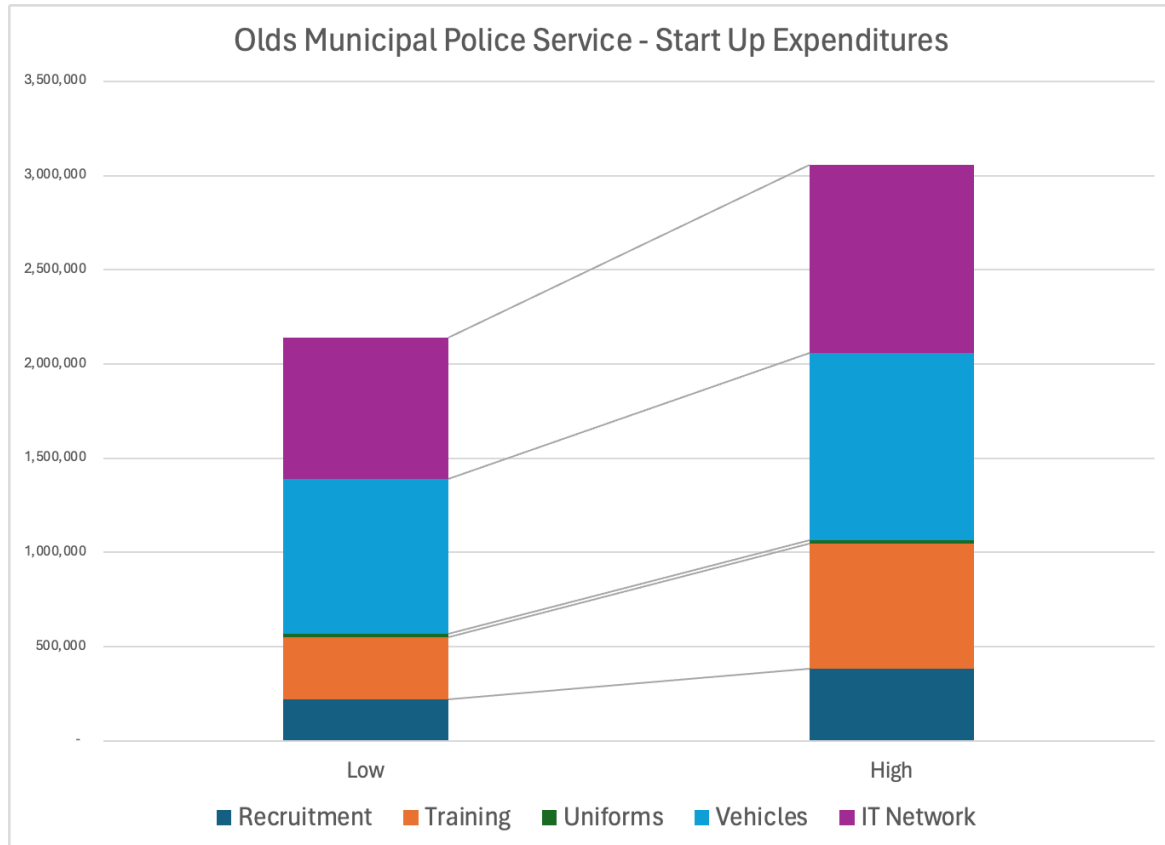
Integration & Project Management: \$50,000 to \$100,000

⁹ The cost of 14 new police vehicles for the City of Surrey's Municipal police service averaged \$77,000 in 2022.

¹⁰ Data room, uninterruptible power supply, racking equipment, switches and routers, cabling, room security.

¹¹ Portable radios, cell phones, PC's, printers, software, server, firewall/redundancy.

¹² Case management system and implementation costs, imports of historical information/integration costs, extract costs from CIIDS (RCMP) system. It is assumed that a police dispatch system and CPIC exists.



Total start-up expenditures are estimated to range from over \$2 million to just over \$3 million.

Municipal Police Service Operating Expenditures

Currently, the Red Deer Municipal Police Service Agreement provides for a 70% municipal and 30% federal cost sharing arrangement.

Personnel Costs

It has been assumed that the compliment of sworn officers required for the Municipal Police Service would be the same as proposed in the most recent RCMP budget from 2023/24 to 2028/29. This starts with 11 sworn officers, increasing by one in each year, except 2027/28, to a total of 14 by the end of the five-year forecast period. This represents an increase of 27% in officers over the next five years. The personnel costs associated with this staffing complement are estimated as follows:

Salaries: Each officer is assumed to receive an annual salary of \$120,000, increasing at a rate of 5% per year.

Benefits: Benefits are estimated to be equivalent to 25% of salary. This includes a contribution of officer pensions.

Overtime: Overtime is estimated to be 15% of salary expenditures, which is roughly equal to a 1.5 FTE's per year.

Training: Annual training costs are estimated to start at \$66,000 and increase with staff. This will cover upgrades and conferences for maintenance of officer credentials.

Note: It is assumed that the expenditures currently incurred by the Town would continue as required to support the Municipal Police Service. Currently these municipal costs total approximately \$500,000 per year and include a police secretary, related staffing costs as well as building operation and maintenance expenditures as well as principal on debentures associated with police services. Some of these expenditures would rightfully be allocated to other expenditure categories below.

Operational Costs

Operational expenditures cover costs associated with every-day operations of the force.

Communications: Operational expenditures on communication have been estimated to be \$53,000 and increase with staff. This includes all operations associated with equipment, software licenses and equipment.

Materials & Supplies: Expenditures associated with consumables required to support the municipal police service has been estimated to be \$60,000 and increase with staff. This excludes costs associated with the operations of the facilities housing the police service as these are not incremental to the Municipal Police Service option.

Fuel: Expenditures on fuel and other vehicle operating expenditures is expected to be associated with the number of active members. As a result, these expenditures are estimated to equal \$40,000 and increase with staff.

Vehicle Maintenance: Maintenance costs associated with vehicles is related to the number of vehicles in operation and the condition of these vehicles. Annual maintenance expenditures are estimated to equal \$15,000 and increase with staff and vehicles in operation.

Capital Costs

Capital costs include expenditures on assets required to support the force.

Equipment: Replacement of equipment required to support officer activity is estimated to be \$42,000 and increase with staff. This includes upgrades and replacement of communications, safety and other equipment used by officers.

Vehicle Replacement Reserve: It is expected that the Municipal Police Service would purchase 7 vehicles at Start-Up and a new vehicle for each new officer over the 5 year forecast period. A reserve fund has been assumed to accommodate future expenditures on new vehicles and replacement vehicles. The annual cost associated with vehicle purchases is estimated to be \$140,000 per year.

Building Acquisition & Refurbishment: Facility costs are already included in the Town's budget. It is not expected that additional facility related costs would be associated with the establishment of the Municipal Police Service.

Administration Costs

The expenditures associated with administering the Municipal Police Force include the following:

Insurance: Insurance has been estimated to total \$200,000 per year.

Legal Fees: It can be expected that the annual cost of external legal council will depend on any issues arising in the year requiring these services. As such, it is difficult to estimate an annual budget for these costs. It has been assumed that the cost of external legal services to council operations, personnel issues and potential litigation would average \$175,000 per year.

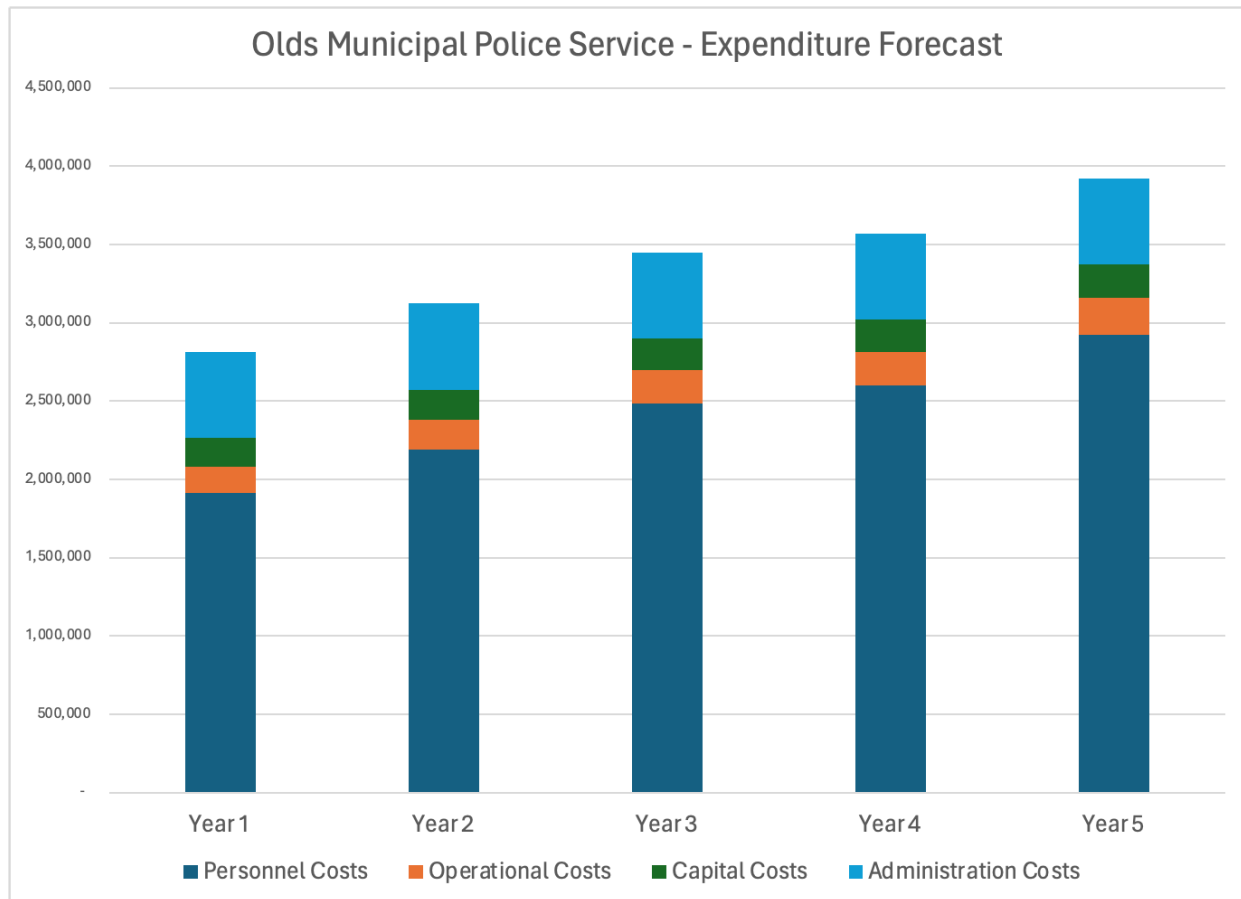
Community Programs: It is assumed that community programs delivered under the Municipal Police Service model would be the same as those delivered under the RCMP scenario. These costs are expected to be included in the existing municipal police service costs that are in excess of the RCMP contract.

Investigative Services: As with legal services, it is difficult to estimate the expenditures associated with investigative services that may be required to support specialized equipment, forensic analysis and other costs associated with complicated investigations will be case specific and difficult to predict on an annual basis. It has been assumed that these costs will average \$175,000 per year.

Summary

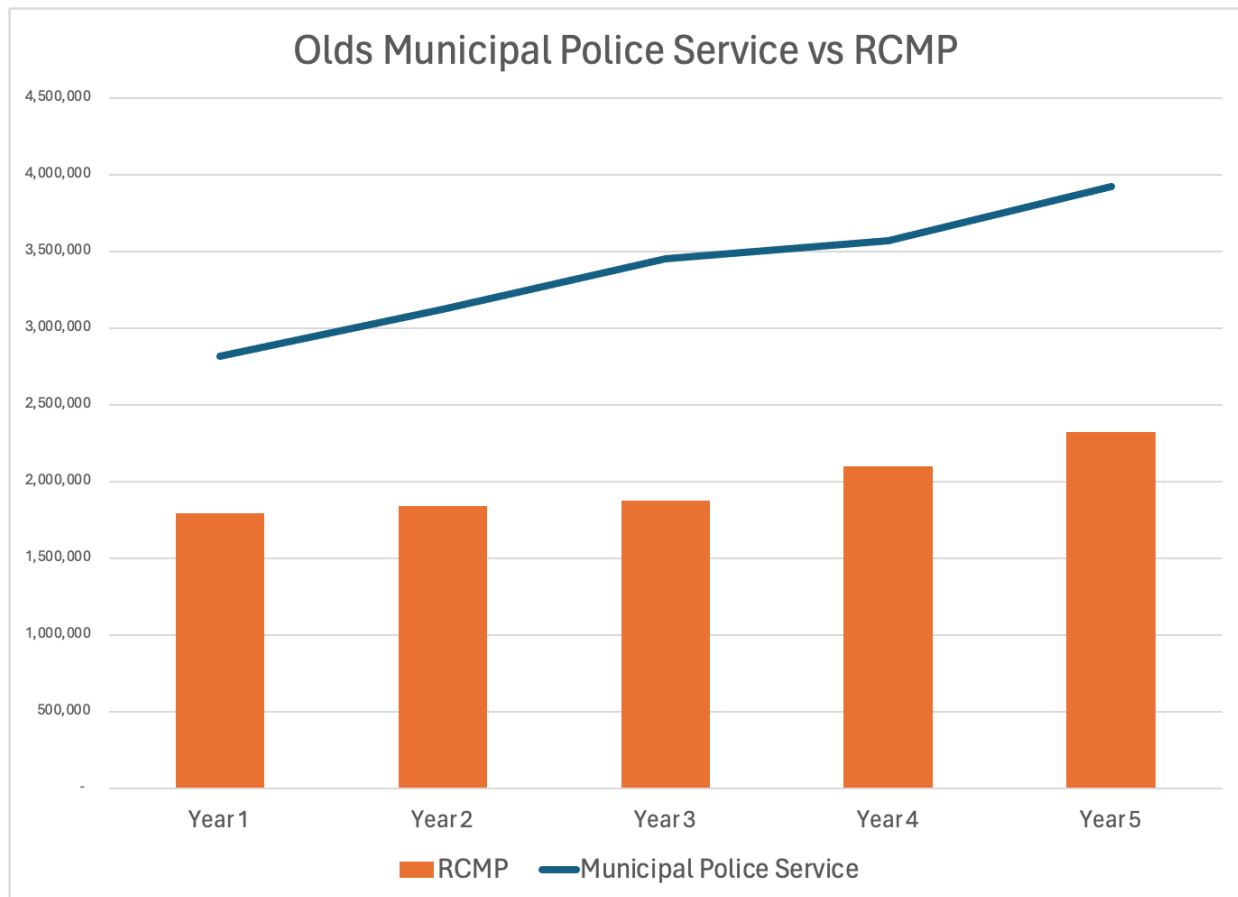
The direct expenditures associated with the proposed Municipal Police Service are projected to increase from just under \$2.8 million in the first year of operation to over \$3.9 million in five years. The most significant reason for the cost increase is the projected increase in sworn officers, set to 11 in Year 1 and increasing to 14 by Year 5.

Expenditures on personnel range from 68% to 75% of the projected costs for the Municipal Police Service. Administrative costs including legal, insurance and investigative services is the second largest expenditure category, ranging from 15% to 20% of the total.



RCMP vs Municipal Police Service Expenditures

Based on the analysis above, it is projected that the direct costs of police services provided by the Municipal Police Service would be higher than those projected for the RCMP for the Town of Olds. In Year 1 the Municipal Police Service expenditures are projected to be 57% higher than the RCMP contract costs. This increases to 84% by Year 3 and then is projected to be 70% higher in Years 4 and 5.¹³ This comparison assumes the same compliment of officers in both the RCMP and Municipal Police Service options.



¹³ To facilitate a comparison of Municipal Police Service expenditures with the projected RCMP contract costs it has been assumed Year 1 of the analysis is equivalent to the 2023-24 budget of the Olds RCMP contract.

There are two main reasons for the higher costs associated with the Municipal Police Service as compared to the RCMP.

- RCMP Cost Sharing: Thirty per cent of pooled RCMP costs are assumed by the Federal Government. This results in approximately \$50,000 of subsidy per officer for Olds.
- Economies of Scale: The integration of RCMP services allows for significant economies of scale in the cost of some cost components, including: recruiting, training, insurance, legal services, investigative services and IT.

Non-RCMP Contract Police Expenditures

It is important to note that these projected expenditures do not include those expenditures currently incurred by the Town on police services that are in excess of the RCMP contract. It is assumed these additional expenditures, which include staff costs and those associated with the operation and maintenance of the facilities used by police services, would continue and be the same (or similar) regardless of whether police services are continued to be contracted via the RCMP or if an independent Municipal Police Service is established.

Cost Risks

It is important to recognize that there are some inherent cost risks in the establishment of a Municipal Police Service that are beyond those the Town would be exposed to with the RCMP contract. These include the following:

Insurance

Legal Fees

Investigative Services

Enclosure III: Stakeholder Consultation in Detail

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As part of the Town of Olds' community policing business case project, WMC conducted a comprehensive information-gathering engagement involving individual interviews, community focus groups, and an online survey. Fourteen interviews were conducted in December 2023 and January 2024, representing a cross-section of stakeholders including Olds Town Council, town employees, RCMP officers, and community policing officers. Community-wide focus groups were held, and an online survey was conducted in February 2024.

The data gathered by WMC provided insights into various aspects of the current policing model, including strengths, gaps, opportunities, community engagement, safety and security perceptions, policing priorities, and resourcing. Stakeholders were largely positive about their engagement with the local RCMP detachment, particularly with the Staff Sergeant and Community Resource Officer, but identified gaps in visibility and broad community involvement. Concerns were raised regarding resource allocation, staffing shortages, and challenges inherent in balancing municipal and federal priorities.

Key themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups, including:

Desire for increased police force community engagement and visibility;

Improved communication, particularly about priorities and successes; and

A need for more resources.

Participants emphasized the need for long-term planning and proactive decision-making, especially with the RCMP contract set to expire in 2034.

It should be noted that survey respondents tended to have less positive opinions about the current policing model, with concerns related to:

knowing who makes policing decisions and where to go to get questions answered;

Value for money; and

Balance between proactive and reactive policing activities.

Overall, there was little support for changing the current policing model. Stakeholders were concerned about potential costs, reduction in scope of services (particularly those provided by the RCMP including forensics and investigative services), and recruitment and training challenges in transitioning to a municipal police force.

Although concerns about increased property crime, drug use, and homelessness were noted, community safety and security were highlighted as the primary value provided by the police force. Participants felt that population growth was a major factor in these issues. Service gaps, particularly the lack of on-duty officers during early morning hours were identified, along with challenges in traffic enforcement and slow response times due to resource constraints. Lack of police visibility (e.g., patrolling) was noted by almost all stakeholders, although there wasn't consensus on the reasons (e.g., not visible because they are engaged in active police work; administrative burdens reduce time available to patrol. It is also possible that lack of visibility is subject to perception.

Resource shortages were a significant concern, with participants noting gaps in the number of police officers, administrative support, and ancillary resources, such as mental health and addiction support personnel. Despite these challenges, the current police force was perceived to share the community's values, although bureaucratic processes and changing crime patterns were seen as impacting accessibility and responsiveness.

In conclusion, while stakeholders value the current policing model, there is a clear desire for increased community engagement, resource allocation, and long-term planning to address existing gaps and prepare for potential changes in the policing landscape. Any transition to a new policing model must be carefully considered to ensure alignment with community expectations and values.

Background

As part of WMC's community policing business case project, an information-gathering engagement with select stakeholders was conducted. The engagement process included a mix of an online survey, individual interviews, and community focus groups. Where there weren't enough participants to form a focus group, individual interviews were conducted (utilizing the focus group questions).

A community-wide online survey was open for response for two weeks in February.

Fourteen interviews were conducted in December 2023 and January 2024. Representatives spanned a cross-section of groups:

Olds Town Council

Select Town Employees

RCMP Officers

Community Policing Officers

The interview data collected included perceptions related to:

How the current policing model is working – strengths, gaps, opportunities, and threats

Policing priorities

Strategic issues that must be prioritized

Community focus group sessions were held in February 2024 to gain a wider stakeholder perspective. Representative participants included:

Town of Olds staff

Business Community and Chamber of Commerce

Findings

The following summarizes the aggregated and summarized key perspectives, common themes, and findings from this engagement.

Interviews Summary

Research Questions

Stakeholders were asked for their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What is working well with the current policing model (RCMP)?
2. What gaps in service are you aware of/hearing about?
3. What is important for WMC to consider in developing this business case?
4. If you could change/add/delete one thing to the policing service in Olds, what would it be?
5. Are you aware of any other Alberta community that handles policing in a way that you admire? In a way that you would not want to emulate?
6. Anything else you would like to add?

Thematic Analysis

Overall stakeholders held the following common perspectives.

Current Policing Model

The cost of the current RCMP model is considered affordable and effective.

There is positive engagement with the local detachment, particularly with the Staff Sergeant and Community Resource Officer.

Gaps in service include the need for more visibility and community engagement.

Challenges & Considerations

There are concerns about the balance of manpower and resources, staffing shortages, and the delineation between municipal and provincial priorities.

Stakeholders identified the need to rigorously consider the cost, staffing, and potential challenges in transitioning to a community policing model.

Community Policing Model

Stakeholders expressed desire for a true community policing focus, additional officers, and a more localized scope for the detachment.

There are concerns about the potential transition to a police force, including financial implications and the need for recruitment and infrastructure.

Several key themes emerged from the interviews related to:

Community engagement and visibility;

Resource allocation and staffing;

Cost and financial considerations;

Transition and preparedness for change;

Community policing model and service priorities; and

Comparative analysis and learning from other communities.

Community Engagement & Visibility

Interviewees expressed a desire for increased visibility and engagement from the police, particularly proactive patrolling and participation in community events. There is a perception that the current focus on traffic enforcement may not align with community priorities, and there is a call for a stronger community policing model. For example, stakeholders emphasized the importance of officers being visible on foot and on bikes; participating in community events; and engaging with residents to build trust and address local concerns. This theme may reflect a desire for a more personalized and community-oriented approach to law enforcement.

Resource Allocation & Cost Efficiency

Concerns were raised around the allocation of resources, staffing challenges, and the potential financial implications of transitioning to a municipal police force. Stakeholders noted the need for additional officers and identified that there would be significant financial implications of such a change. For instance, stakeholders emphasized the costs and challenges that would be incurred in maintaining a municipally operated full complement of staff, including training, recruitment, pensions, and infrastructure costs.

Stakeholders also reflected on the additional services provided by the RCMP (e.g., forensics, investigative unit) and the logistics and financial implications of maintaining that access with a municipal police force model. This theme reflects stakeholder concerns about the financial feasibility and resource allocation associated with transitioning to a municipal police force.

Autonomy & Bureaucracy

There was discussion about the potential benefits and challenges of transitioning to a municipal police force, including considerations of autonomy, control, and the bureaucratic processes involved in managing a local police force.

Stakeholders expressed a desire for greater local control and autonomy in decision making related to law enforcement. They also highlighted the bureaucratic processes and administrative challenges that may accompany the transition to a municipal police force. This theme reflects an interest in understanding the implications of increased local autonomy and the potential bureaucratic hurdles associated with managing a standalone police service.

Future Planning & Preparedness

Stakeholders discussed considerations around the RCMP contract set to expire in 2034, potential changes in federal and provincial involvement, and the need for long-term planning and preparedness for potential shifts in the policing landscape. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of proactive and informed decision making, highlighting the need to understand the long-term implications and challenges associated with transitioning to a new policing model.

Comparison with Other Communities

There was a focus on understanding and learning from the successes and challenges of other communities, both in terms of policing effectiveness and community engagement. Stakeholders expressed admiration for certain community policing models while highlighting concerns about potential pitfalls, particularly in the context of transitioning to a municipal police force. For instance, stakeholders discussed the need for a comprehensive review of successful policing models in other communities to inform decision making and planning for the future of policing in Olds.

For select individual interviewee perspectives, please see [Select Interviewee Perspectives](#).

Focus Groups Summary

Research Questions

Focus group participants were asked for their perspectives on the following questions:

1. What is the greatest value that the community gets from policing?
2. What gaps in service are you aware of?
3. If you could change/add/delete one thing to the policing service in Olds, what would it be?
4. Has your assessment of public safety improved or declined over the last five years? If there has been a change in your assessment, please explain why.
5. Do the police services provided in Olds match the values of the community? Can you give an example supporting your opinion?

Thematic Analysis

The focus group participants shared the following perspectives:

Safety & Perceptions of Safety

There was consensus that the greatest value that the police provide is keeping the community safe and secure. Further, participants noted that their perceptions of safety have not fundamentally changed in the last five years, although increased property crime (theft and vandalism), drug use, and homelessness were highlighted. Participants suggested that this is most likely due to increased population rather than a policing gap. Positively, multiple participants indicated that they believed Olds is safer than other comparable towns.

Of note, social media was identified as creating negative perceptions.

Service Gaps

The most cited gap was that policing resources are not sufficient at certain hours of the day and that seems to be when the most property crime and mischief occurs. Participants noted that the on-call model contributes to the problem. Two Town parks were identified as problem areas for vandalism, mischief, and drug use. This was tied to lack of regular patrolling and visibility.

Focus group participants had discussions about traffic, however, there was a wide range of opinions as to whether there are real or perceived gaps in traffic enforcement. Participants noted that there have been speeding mitigations put in place (electronic speed indicators and speed bumps).

Finally, participants discussed slow response times, however, they indicated that this is more likely a factor of insufficient resources and the need to prioritize higher-impact crimes.

Resources

There was overwhelming consensus that the current police force is under-resourced, particularly because they are responsible not only for the town of Olds, but also the surrounding rural areas.

Resource gaps identified included:

Police officers

Administrative burdens taking police away from active enforcement

Ancillary resources are understaffed to address root causes of the problems (i.e., mental health and addictions support personnel)

Retention

Focus group participants generally agreed that a change in the policing model would be unlikely to address these resourcing challenges without an increased budget.

Community Presence

Participants noted that they would like to see more police presence in the community. Again, resource challenges were acknowledged but, overall, participants desired more participation by police in community events and increased communications about police priorities and work being undertaken.

Values

The current police force is perceived to share the community's values. However, participants noted that the force has become more bureaucratic and less accessible than in the past likely, they perceive, due to the town's population growth and changing crime patterns.

Participants also suggested that the police focus and priorities do not always match community expectations (one of the reasons noted was that the RCMP is subject to federal direction and not directly accountable to the municipality).

Survey Results

WMC made an online survey available to interested citizens. Over 150 individuals participated in the survey.

Research Questions

The questions were intended to assess the perceived effectiveness of the current policing model, its fit with community values, and the degree of influence citizens felt they have over how the services are provided:

1. How would you rate public safety in Olds?
2. Has your assessment of public safety increased or decreased in the past five years? Please provide examples.
3. Do you know who makes decisions about policing policies and operations in Olds?
4. Do you have input into those policies?
5. If you had a concern or question about how policing is provided do you know where to go with your question or concern?
6. Do the police services in Olds match the values of the community? Please provide an example.
7. Do policing operations provide a good balance between proactive policing and response to unlawful incidents?
8. Do you feel you are getting value for the money invested in policing?

Not every participant answered every question, so there is variation in the total number of responses recorded for each question. Response breakdowns can be found in [Detailed Survey Results](#).

Response Summary

Public Safety & Perceptions of Public Safety (164 responses)

Based on a scale of 0% (not at all safe) to 100% (extremely safe), most respondents rated public safety positively, however, almost 40% ranked public safety as lower than 60% and 21% provided a rating of 20% or less.

Assessment of Public Safety (157 responses)

58% of respondents indicated that their perception of public safety in Olds had either not changed or had improved in the past five years, citing the school constable program, lower speed limits, and derelict property clean up. Of those who felt safety had declined, most noted that crime rates had increased and that police were not as visible or responsive.

Decision Making (163 responses)

Most respondents indicated that they were not aware of who makes policing decisions in Olds. Overwhelmingly, 77% said they did not have input into policing and safety policies.

Addressing Concerns (163 responses)

Most individuals do not know where to get answers to their questions about policing.

Values (159 responses)

While many survey participants indicated that police activities matched community values, 41% did not feel that there was good alignment.

Proactive vs Reactive Policing (158 responses)

Respondents were almost equally divided on whether there was a balance between proactive and reactive policing activities, with 53% indicating that an appropriate balance was not achieved, while 47% thought the balance was acceptable.

Value for Money (157 responses)

Again, respondents were almost equally split regarding value for money in policing with slightly more indicating that they felt Olds was getting appropriate value for money.

Select Interviewee Perspectives

The following highlights select perspectives from interviewees.

What is working well with the current policing model (RCMP)?

Positive engagement with local detachment and staff sergeant

Cost efficiency compared to standalone police service

Proximity of shared building enhances collaboration

Success in cracking down on drug houses and targeting frequent offenders

Effectively addressing traffic concerns (e.g., changing speed limits)

What gaps in service are you aware of/hearing about?

Workload versus resources, staffing challenges

Lack of focus on municipal priorities like community policing and local traffic

Concerns about visibility and community engagement, lack of meaningful interaction

On-call system

Traffic and speeding issues may be more about perceived problems

What is important for WMC to consider in developing this business case?

Cost comparison with standalone police service

Manpower and recruitment challenges

Need to educate public on challenges and potential changes

Access to support services like forensics and investigative units

Balancing the number of officers needed for community policing

If you could change/add/delete one thing to the policing service in Olds, what would it be?

Increase community policing focus and visibility

Shrink the scope of the detachment to better serve the population

Add more officers to cover transition times and improve enforcement

Need for additional officers and enforcement coverage

Desire for a true community policing focus and more engagement

**Are you aware of any other Alberta community that handles policing in a way that you admire?
In a way that you would not want to emulate?**

Admire Medicine Hat for integrated community policing and good reputation

Admiration for the town of Taber's handling of both RCMP and municipal officers

Surrey, BC is a comparator with concerns about crime, drugs, and mental health issues and inability to address root causes. Tried to change policing model without success.

Other Observations

Need for proactive, objective conversation on cost, challenges, and opportunities

Importance of adult conversation and best information for decision making

Concerns about visibility, community engagement, and priorities weighting by K-division

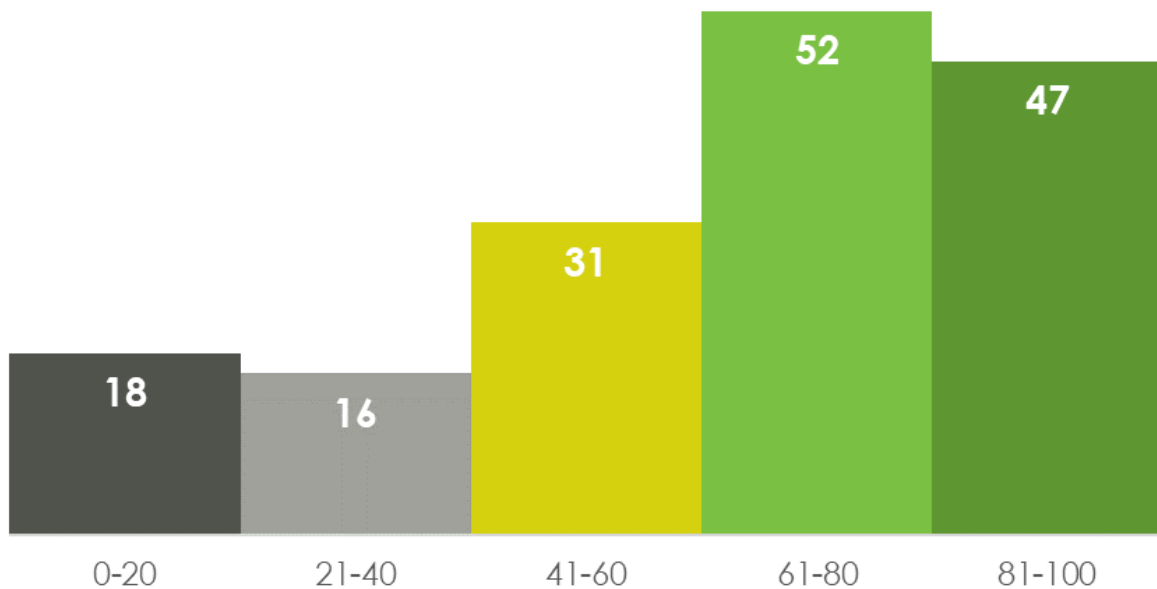
Concerns about transitioning to a police force and its financial implications

Emphasis on having proactive and informed conversations about costs and challenge

Detailed Survey Results

Question 1

How would you rate public safety in Olds?
(0-100)



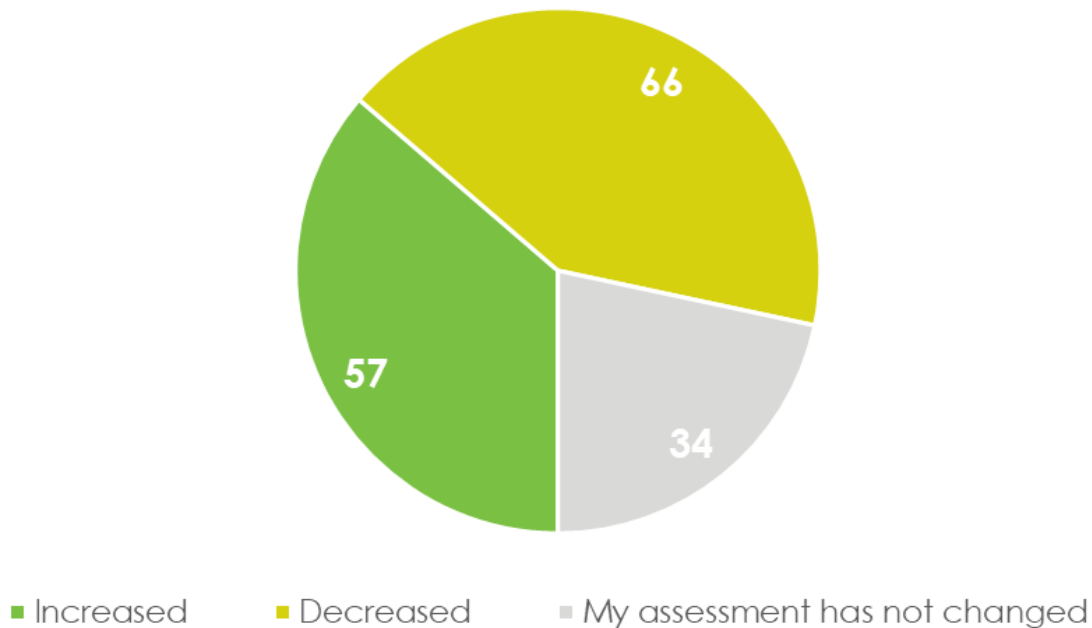
Of the people who responded to this question, more than half rated public safety at 60% or higher. Almost one in three (29%) rated it at 80% or higher.

One in five rated public safety as less than 40% and 21 percent rated it at the bottom of the chart (20% or less).

Overall, the majority of respondents provided a positive assessment of public safety in the town of Olds.

Question 2

Has your assessment of public safety increased or decreased over the last five years?



In this question, respondents were asked whether their assessment of public safety had improved or declined over the last five years. Of the 157 individuals who responded to this question, 34 recorded no change, 57 commented on improved safety, and 66 felt safety had deteriorated.

Question 3

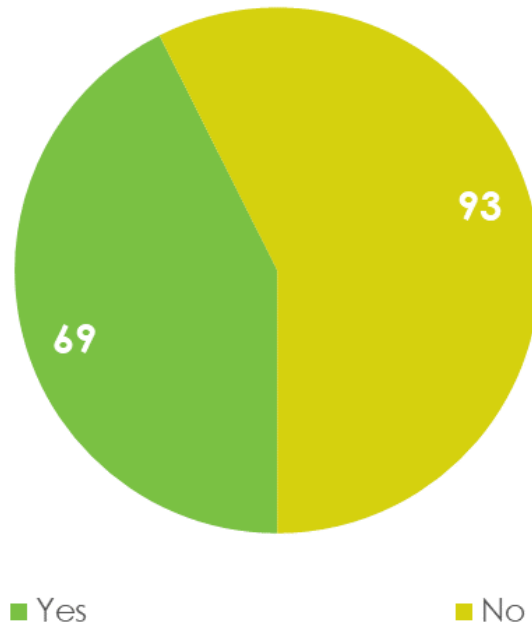
In question 3, respondents were asked to give examples of why their feelings of public safety had changed over the previous five years.

Those citing improved safety used examples of the school constable program, lower speed limits and cleanup of derelict properties as some of the reasons for improvement.

Those who felt that safety had deteriorated, most often commented that crime rates had risen, and expressed concerns about lack of police visibility and responsiveness.

Question 4

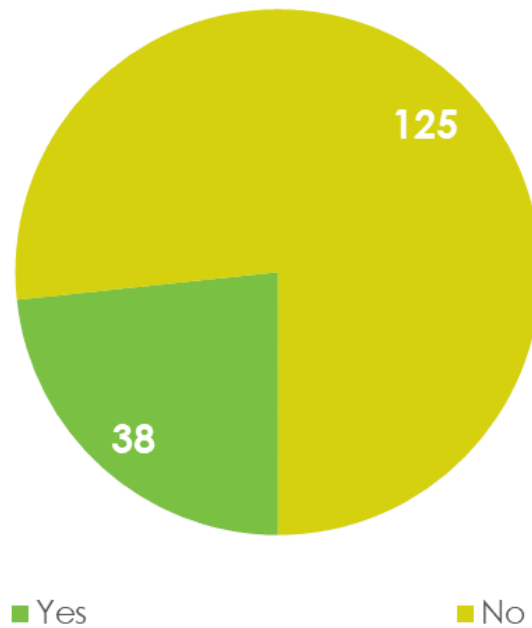
Do you know who makes decisions about
policing policy and operations in Olds?



57% of persons answering this question, said they did not know who made decisions about policing in Olds. 43% indicated they were aware of the decision-making process.

Question 5

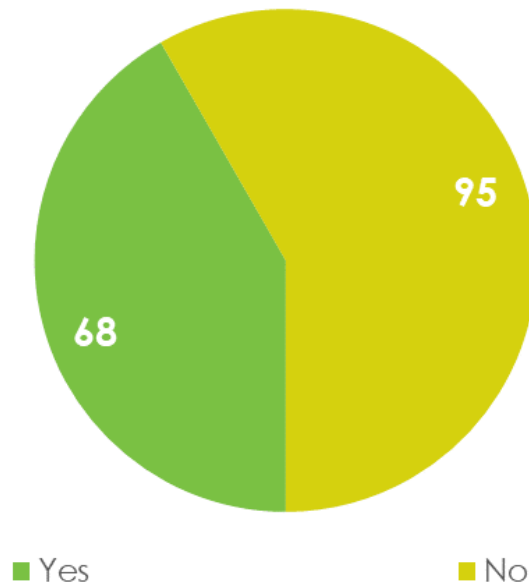
Do you have input into those policies?



77% of respondents said they did not have input into policing and safety policies, while 38% indicated they did.

Question 6

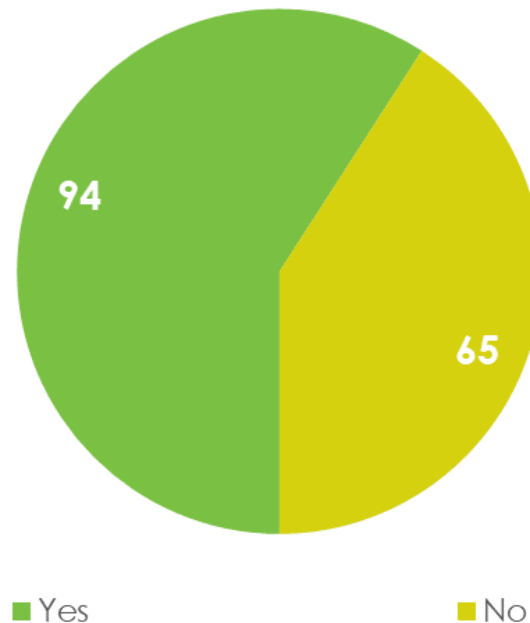
If you had a concern or question about how policing is provided, do you know where to go with your question or concern?



58% of persons responding to this question, said they did not know where to get answers to their questions about policing. 42% indicated they had the necessary information.

Question 7

Do the police services provided in Olds match the values of the community?



In question 7, citizens were asked to comment on whether community values matched those of the police activities. Of the 159 responses, 94 (59%) felt there was good alignment, while 65 (41%) did not share that view.

Question 8

In question 8, respondents were asked to provide an example to support their rating. Answers included:

Involvement of town council and police in setting police priorities

Involvement in a number of community events

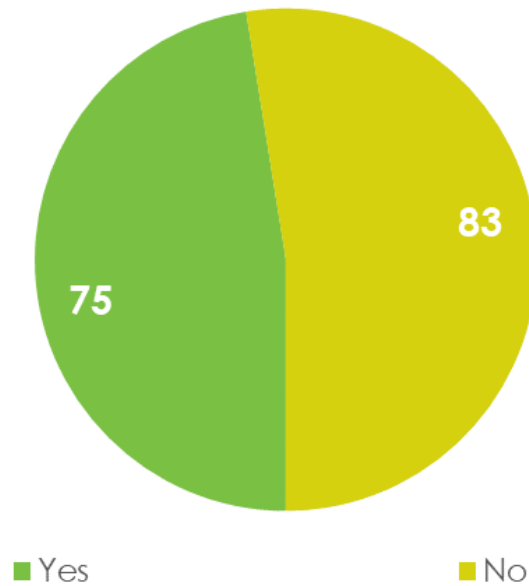
Personal experience where citizens believed that the police response was inadequate

Lack of visibility aside from community events

Lack of understanding of peace officer roles

Question 9

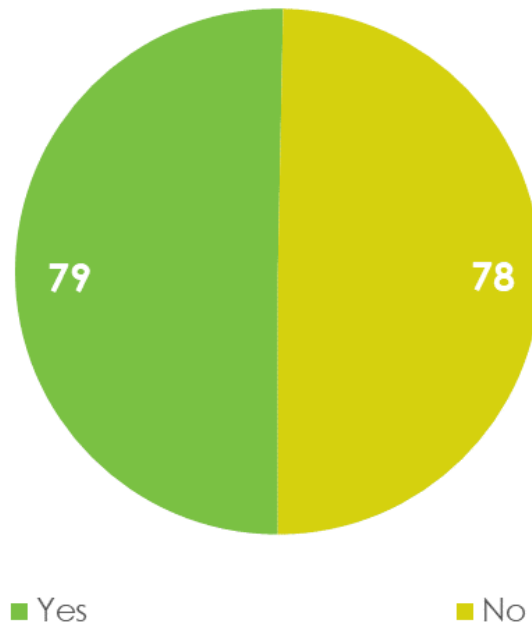
Do policing operations in Olds provide a good balance between proactive policing and response to unlawful incidents?



Respondents were almost equally divided when assessing the balance between proactive and reactive activities, with 53% (83) indicating that an appropriate balance was not achieved, while 47% (75) thought the balance was acceptable.

Question 10

Do you feel you are getting value for the money
invested in policing?



Respondents were almost equally split regarding value for money in policing. 50.3% (79) agreed that they were receiving value for money, while 49.7% (78) did not believe they were getting appropriate value.