



A Position Paper on the Current State of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Une déclaration de principe sur la situation actuelle de la Gendarmerie royale du Canada

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## Toward a Red Serge Revival

It obviously isn't standard procedure for six senators to publish a joint position paper on what's going wrong at the RCMP. Then again, fixing the RCMP is going to be essential to the security of Canadians. So it's an issue worth working on – prorogation or no prorogation.

Rebuilding the RCMP as a strong national police force makes far more sense than trying to stuff more people in Canada's already overstuffed jails. Any reputable criminologist will tell you that effective crime prevention is far more useful than sending people to prison for longer stretches so they can learn how to become better criminals.

There is an RCMP reform process underway. If it doesn't produce results, Canadians are in for a lot more horror stories about this national treasure's decline. After considerable study, we believe that the transformation of the RCMP into a 21st century police service is endangered and that genuine reform is unlikely unless some key changes are made.

This paper examines three key areas in which we believe that the process is in danger of foundering:

**OVERSIGHT and REVIEW:** Despite a series of deaths and other tragic outcomes involving RCMP officers – and despite repeated recommendations that the current limp system of reviewing these kinds of incidents be strengthened – there has been no change to the system whereby the RCMP polices itself. RCMP Commissioner William Elliott finally came up with a plan to put an end to this practice, but it's full of half-measures that won't do the job [see pages 7-22, particularly page 21].

**DIVERSITY in HIRING:** You don't have to look far to find staunch traditionalists who argue that bringing more women and minorities into the RCMP will weaken the service in the name of "political correctness." Forgive us, but that's bull---- of the highest order. Bringing greater diversity to the ranks of the RCMP isn't primarily a matter of fairness.

We are convinced that hiring more women and more members of visible minorities would make the RCMP stronger internally. It would also make it stronger on the front lines, where Canada's national police force meets up with a much different face of Canada than it did 50 years ago. But the RCMP's evolution toward increased diversity is proceeded at a snail's pace. It was recently revealed that targets for the recruitment of women and minorities into the RCMP in 2009 were below the actual ratios of these groups now working in the RCMP. [see pages 23 to 34].

**POLICING ON THE CHEAP:** That the RCMP is starved for cash is a story that nobody wants to hear, so politicians stick their heads in the sand and ignore this ugly truth: part of the reason the RCMP isn't performing the way it should is that its people are stretched way too thin. There are staff vacancies everywhere, and a successful recruiting program is likely to be cut back before the holes are filled. The RCMP should be expanding to take on new roles that are vital to the security of Canadians. Instead its leaders are talking about cutting back. With federal government cutbacks in the works, we see a distinct possibility that RCMP reform will never get out of the starting blocks.

Which brings us to a fourth issue –**LEADERSHIP**. Whoever leads the RCMP after current Commissioner William Elliott leaves the job will have to stand up to a government intent on cutting costs. The new leader will also have to have the strength to shake off traditions and lead breakthroughs on the issues such as diversity and policing the police. Such a person should not be a bureaucrat this time around – bureaucrats have trouble speaking out when they are being denied the resources they need to transform their institution. Someone who has served or is currently serving in the RCMP needs to take the reins. We examine what qualities to look for in the next leader.

The six Liberal senators who produced this paper were members of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence in the last Parliament. Over the past year that Committee examined RCMP transformation, but members failed to reach agreement on the contents of a report before Parliament was prorogued.

The six of us believe that the issue of RCMP reform is too important to Canadians for the government to stall any longer. The RCMP needs to get moving if the public trust is to be restored. We sincerely hope that this paper helps stimulate that process.

The paper is available online at <http://colinkenny.ca/>

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