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Wayne Plamondon

MANAGER, SUPPORT SERVICES BRANCH
ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

**ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT
OVERVIEW**

- > Population supported: 133,556 (2009)
- > Total Criminal Code Offences in community: 9,551 (2010)
10,225 (2009)
- > Department’s size: 3rd largest in BC
- > Authorized strength: 210+
- > Civilian employees: 100+
- > Branches: 6



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ABBOTSFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT (APD)

The Abbotsford Police Department (APD) was officially formed in 1995 when the Districts of Abbotsford and Matsqui amalgamated to become the City of Abbotsford. Located in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, Abbotsford is now the largest municipality by area and the fifth largest municipality by population in the province. Behind Vancouver and Victoria, the APD is British Columbia’s third largest municipal police force with more than 210 sworn police officers, 100 civilian employees and 230 volunteers. The APD also outsources enforcement duties to Commissionaires..

The APD’s vision is “Protecting with Pride” and its values are “C.L.E.A.R.”—Continuous improvement and innovation; Leadership; Ethics and integrity; Accountability; and, Respect and diversity. The police department is divided into six branches: Community Policing Branch, Criminal Investigation Branch, Finance and Budget Branch, Human Resources Branch, Patrol Branch, and Support Services Branch.

CHALLENGES

According to Statistics Canada, Abbotsford had the highest homicide rates in Canada (2008 and 2009) and ranks among the top ten Canadian metropolitan areas for volume and severity of police-reported crimes. Through its mission—to make Abbotsford the safest city in BC—the APD is committed to finding resourceful and effective ways to safely and securely prevent these and other crimes, all while enforcing the law and responding to community needs. It is making progress. In 2010, there were two gang-related homicides, (compared to eight the year before). Both property crime and reported crime were down 7% in 2010. Violent crime decreased by 8%. Also in 2010, street checks were up 32% and an anti-gang campaign reached 12,000 students and 3,000 parents across Abbotsford’s school districts.

While this progress is encouraging, one constant challenge is that the APD cannot meet its commitments at any cost. With 80% of the APD’s budget allocated to salaries, it takes smart planning to determine which roles and responsibilities are best assigned to civilians, which in turn can help free up police resources for critical assignments. At the same time, if constables are to focus on their core policing duties in the community, they need to know their civilian resources are trustworthy, reliable, experienced and fully capable of supporting them when and as needed. Overall, staffing solutions need to be affordable without compromising the safety and well-being of constables, or the community they are called on to protect.

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SOLUTION

Wayne Plamondon, Manager Support Services Branch, APD, says, “Several years ago, we decided to outsource jail guard and inventory control duties to the private security industry. We got quotes and awarded the contract, but over time we discovered the service provider that had won the bid was not able to fulfill our staffing needs. That’s when we turned to Commissionaires. They were able to come in very quickly and did a great job adapting to our contractual requirements and work culture.”

Gary Smith, Manager Enforcement Services, Commissionaires, explains, “Commissionaires who serve as jail guards perform a diverse range of tasks to assist in the care, control and transfer of citizens who are in custody—everything from managing documentation and personal effects to providing meals and conducting random checks. Before commissionaires can be considered for this assignment, we ensure they have met all the requirements for background checks, secret clearances, first aid training, specialized training and immunization. We also carefully screen their characters and backgrounds to ensure they are personally well-suited to this type of work.”

Smith continues, “Commissionaires also provide inventory control for APD. These individuals are responsible for protecting, issuing and tracking the use of APD vehicles, uniforms, computers, communications devices and a wide range of equipment. There is no question that communication, teamwork and responsiveness between commissionaires and police are of paramount importance.”

Today, there are seven full-time and two part-time commissionaires (plus reserves) who are specially trained—and in many cases cross-trained—as jail guards and inventory control personnel. Of these, a site supervisor and second-in-command (2IC) ensure there is a 24/7 presence at the site and hands-on support for the client. As an additional level of support, Smith leads a Business Unit at Commissionaires that is staffed by an Assistant Manager, a Payroll Specialist and a Human Resources Generalist who work closely together to support all enforcement sites in the field.

RESULTS

Palmondon says, “When we selected Commissionaires, we took into consideration the fact no other service provider could offer the same level of experience and formal training in guarding jail cells. From a risk management perspective that was key. It is their approach to standardized training and retraining that really sets them apart in their industry.

“Commissionaires’ management and on-site supervisor have been very responsive to our needs both during good times and also during crisis mode,” Wayne continues. “Their cooperative efforts happen at every working level. Communication is excellent. They do what it takes on a daily basis.”

Commissionaires’ first contract with the APD lasted three years. In January 2011, the APD renewed the contract for another five years.

Palmondon adds, “The APD has had a very positive experience overall. There are a lot of benefits to having commissionaires working with us and we are quite happy to continue in this direction. We certainly consider this contract renewal and our ongoing relationship with Commissionaires to be a success story.”