

# STAFF REPORT TO INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

1100 Patricia Blvd. | Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9 | [www.princegeorge.ca](http://www.princegeorge.ca)

**DATE:** May 13, 2024

**TO:** STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

**NAME AND TITLE:** Garth Frizzell, Chair, Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

**SUBJECT:** Advocacy to Increase Conservation Officers

**ATTACHMENT(S):** 1. Press Release: B.C., First Nations unite to boost support for Guardians

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report titled "Advocacy to Increase Conservation officers", dated May 13, 2024.

**PURPOSE:**

To provide the committee with an opportunity to discuss advocacy options related to a referral on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from Council requesting that the committee examine options to support the conservation service.

**BACKGROUND:**

Staff understand Council's interest in this subject to broadly cover how conservation, as a function, can be enhanced in the region. As such, some information on Conservation Officers, Natural Resource Officers and the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative are provided below to help support conversation.

The Committee Liaison is seeking comments on how the committee would like to prioritize and advance this referral.

Natural Resource Officers and Conservation Officers enforce the laws that protect British Columbia's ecosystems and natural resources. These officers monitor activities on Crown land, respond to reports of misconduct and can initiate actions to apprehend and prosecute violators.

- The Conservation Officer Service (COS) focuses on natural resource law enforcement and human wildlife conflicts prevention and response. The modern Conservation Officer Service has evolved over the years into a leading natural resource law enforcement agency specializing in public safety as it relates to human/wildlife conflict, responsibilities include managing complex commercial environmental and industrial investigations and compliance and enforcement services. As an organization the COS is structured in three units; Provincial Operations (uniformed officers), Provincial Investigations Unit (investigations) and program support, and are located in 45 communities throughout British Columbia with a Headquarters located in Victoria, BC.

- Natural Resource Officers (NRO) enforce a range of laws to protect B.C.'s land, water, forests and cultural resources. The mandate of NRO's is to conduct compliance inspections and take enforcement actions, including investigations of commercial business operations and activities of individual members of the public. NRO's enforce compliance with government regulations that have been established to protect the environment, prevent revenue loss, protect economic or social interests, and improve health and safety.

Beginning in 2023, the Province of BC invested \$8.9 million over three years and partnered with First Nations representatives to develop a training initiative to support co-management of land and resources; the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative.

- Reconciliation with Indigenous governments and communities is a priority for the Government of British Columbia. Guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Province is working with Indigenous peoples to support and enhance Indigenous stewardship. The [Environmental Stewardship Initiative \(ESI\)](#) and [Collaborative Stewardship Framework \(CSF\)](#) are two examples of collaborative stewardship the Province is undertaking with many First Nations across the province. Through these initiatives, more than 60 First Nations are working in partnership on stewardship projects that support resource management and embrace local and Indigenous knowledge.

A press release with further information is attached to this report.

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

This vein of advocacy seeks to support a partner agency and to increase service levels in the region. It may be considered as advancing the strategic priority of focusing on meaningful communications and relationship development to advance shared priorities.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

No financial considerations are stemming from the recommendation in this report.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

This report offers a venue for the committee to discuss a referral from Council regarding advocacy options to support the conservation service.

#### **RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Garth Frizzell, Chair, Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

**PREPARED BY:** Eric Depenau, Acting Director, Administrative Services

#### **APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2024/05/21