



**RDOS Area “D” Governance Study  
Service Level Toolkit  
June 2016**

# **ROADS & POLICING PROVINCIAL SERVICE LEVELS**

Regional districts provide a broad range of services to rural areas; however, they do not provide roads and policing. In unincorporated areas, roads and policing are provided by the provincial government. Both services were broadly identified as key service issues for Area “D” communities during the governance forums and survey. Specific issues differed locally – pedestrian safety and parking in Okanagan Falls were concerns, as was drainage in Apex and roadside vegetation for Kaleden. The purpose of this *Toolkit* is not to recommend any specific solutions, nor to provide an exhaustive list of options or service levels, but rather to identify that some tools that may be available through the regional district, perhaps in collaboration with the provincial government, to address residents’ concerns, where there is sufficient support from residents. In some instances these changes could be initiated by residents through service petitions or requests to the RDOS, and others could be explored by the RDOS in collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and the RCMP.

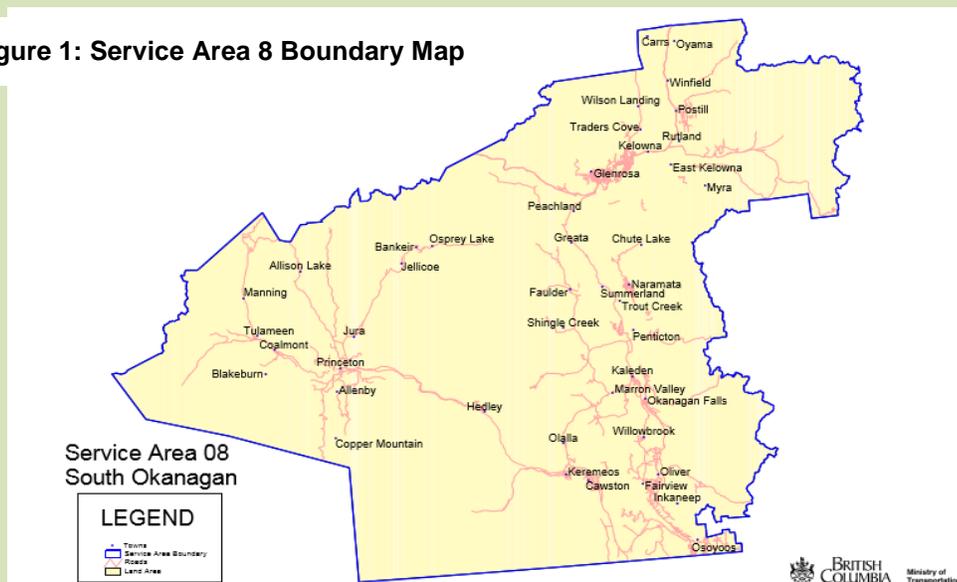
## **ROADS**

### ► **What is the current situation?**

Maintenance of provincial roads, highways and bridges is overseen by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and funded through provincial rural taxes. The province is divided into 28 service areas, and MOTI engages private contractors in multi-year agreements to undertake routine maintenance, repairs, upkeep of surrounding electrical infrastructure and application of pavement markings in each service area. Area “D” is located within Service Area 8 – South Okanagan (see Figure 1). The contractor responsible for Area 8 is Argo Road Maintenance Inc. The value of the 15-year contract (signed in 2004) is approximately \$14 million per year. The contract is scheduled to expire on April 30, 2019.

All MOTI contractors, including Argo, sign a Highway Maintenance Agreement which includes specifications related to maintenance of road surfaces, control of roadside vegetation (including noxious weeds), drainage, winter clearing, traffic

**Figure 1: Service Area 8 Boundary Map**



signs, etc. The maintenance specifications describe what services are to be provided, and set out minimum standards for completed work as well as performance timelines. For example, the contractor is obligated to remove roadside vegetation that is creating a visual obstruction at curves and intersections immediately upon detecting the issue or it being reported. Noxious weeds must be cut prior to the development of seed. Detailed specifications for all aspects of maintenance are available on the MOTI website at:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/transportation-infrastructure/contracting-to-transportation/highway-bridge-maintenance/highway-maintenance/agreement/specifications>.

Some areas have enhanced standards identified by the MOTI, which are related to specific infrastructure (typically bridges, docks and tunnels), landscaping, compact snow removal in mountain passes, etc. These are called Local Area Specifications, and they are unique to the individual service area or community.

The MOTI is responsible for monitoring the work and auditing the contractor. According to the MOTI website, the contractor's performance is assessed on a continual basis to ensure compliance with the maintenance specifications and contract requirements.

### ➤ **Options: Road Maintenance**

To report issues related to highway and road maintenance, residents are directed to contact their local highway maintenance contractor (Argo Road Maintenance Inc.) or use the "Report A Highway Problem" feature on the DriveBC website. Contractors are required to have a quality control and a quality assurance program, and to maintain records to demonstrate compliance to the MOTI District Manager. Where there are issues, and in particular where multiple residents notice or experience a problem, the RDOS and/or Area Director can (and has) communicated with the MOTI on behalf of local communities.

If a community feels the maintenance standards are inadequate or they want higher standards, there may be an opportunity able to work with the MOTI to create enhanced Local Area Specifications or otherwise enter into a contract for

enhanced services. The feasibility of enhanced service would need to be explored, and the RDOS would need to establish a service, enter into a legal agreement with the MOTI, and collect/administer the amount required to fund the service annually. Ultimately for any new service to be established, approval must be obtained from the electors who will benefit from and pay for the service. If sufficient interest exists throughout Area "D" or in a specific community or group of communities within Area "D," residents can begin the process by initiating a petition to the RDOS to study the overall feasibility, including service options, costs and legal implications.

As an alternative, Area "D" communities can become involved in roadside maintenance through the "Adopt a Highway" program. Organizations and volunteer groups "adopt" a section of provincial highway to carry out or sponsor activities such as landscape beautification, litter pickup and identifying and reporting invasive plant species. Detailed program information is available on the MOTI website.

### ➤ **Options: Pedestrian Safety**

Pedestrian safety was identified as a concern in Okanagan Falls, particularly near the IGA Marketplace and the Main Street/Highway 97 intersection. Generally, the MOTI's mandate is to improve the efficient flow of traffic, rather than restrict it. Pedestrian signals or traffic lights are only provided when justified by established provincial guidelines. Other forms of traffic calming are not a priority for the Ministry.

The possibility of installing pedestrian signals has been studied by MOTI, at the request of the community, on several occasions. Most recently the issue was examined in 2011, including the intersections of Highway 97 and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cedar Street. The studies have involved traffic counts and evaluation by a ministry traffic engineer. To date, according to the MOTI, traffic volume in Okanagan Falls has not justified a pedestrian signal.

While traffic calming or signalization may not be options, there may be an opportunity to collaborate with the MOTI for new and/or upgraded sidewalk infrastructure to improve pedestrian visibility and safety. Any improvements (from the design to

construction and ongoing maintenance) would need to be funded by all or a portion of Area “D” through a regional district service establishment bylaw and undertaken in partnership with the MOTI. It may also be possible to allocate some of the Area “D” Community Works Gas Tax funds toward such a project (pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is an eligible project category). As Gas Tax funds are generally earmarked for local and regional projects, there would (at a minimum) need to be a legal agreement between the RDOS and the MOTI to allow the improvements, and Gas Tax program administrators (Union of BC Municipalities) would need to be consulted throughout the process to ensure the grant requirements were being met.

➤ **Options: Parking Enforcement**

Parking enforcement and abandoned vehicles were identified as a concern in Okanagan Falls. The RDOS has no jurisdiction to regulate parking on provincial roads. Instead, the provincial *Motor Vehicle Act* applies, which authorizes police to remove parked and/or abandoned vehicles that interfere with traffic flow on a highway or are otherwise parked in contravention of the *Act* (e.g. too close to a fire hydrant, crosswalk, traffic control signal or entrance to certain types of public facilities). Parking infractions are not considered priority calls by the RCMP unless there is a significant safety concern. If there are specific areas of documented concern, it may be possible for the RDOS to work with the MOTI to improve signage (e.g. no parking signs) and request targeted enforcement (i.e. towing) from the RCMP where there are *Motor Vehicle Act* infractions. Vehicles abandoned on private property can be legally towed by the property owner or occupier.

**POLICING**

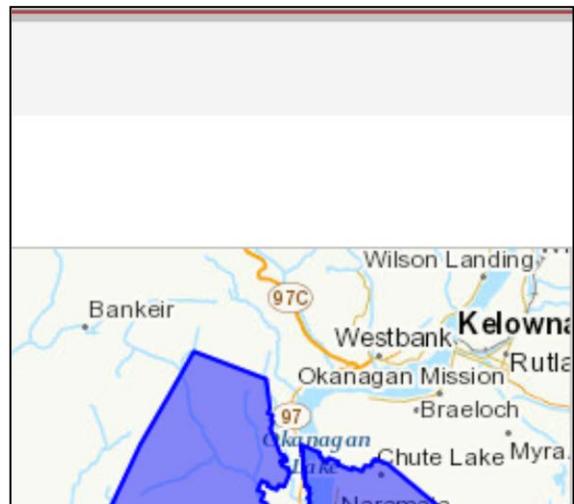
➤ **What is the current situation?**

Policing in Canada is a shared responsibility between federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments. Under the *Police Act*, rural and unincorporated areas of BC are policed by the RCMP provincial force, with the provincial government paying 70% of policing costs and the federal government paying the remaining 30%. The provincial government recovers approximately

half of their costs through the Police Tax, which unincorporated areas began to pay in 2007.

Services to unincorporated areas throughout the province include uniformed patrols, response-to-call duties, investigative services, community-based policing, traffic enforcement, and administrative support to provincial detachments. Area “D” is among the unincorporated areas served by the Penticton RCMP detachment, which has seven provincially funded rural police officers to serve a population of approximately 11,400 within the area shaded in blue in Figure 2 below. There is 24-hour police coverage and response in

**Figure 2: Area Served by Penticton RCMP**



the rural areas.

➤ **Options: Increase Policing (RCMP)**

Residents of unincorporated areas can only affect the level and nature of their police services by making requests of the provincial government or approaching the RCMP directly. Regional districts may be an effective channel through which to make such a request, particularly where there is a marked and documented increase in rural crime. However, the RDOS has no direct involvement in the decision-making process. The last time an increase was approved for Penticton’s rural force was in 2011 when it went from six officers to seven.

**Cost Impacts:**

If an increase were to be requested and approved by the provincial government (the likelihood of

which is unknown), it is probable that 50% of the added costs would be recovered through an increase to the amount of Police Tax recovered from the jurisdiction. The Police Tax is administered on the basis of assessed value (land and improvements). A residential property in Area “D” valued at \$325,000 paid approximately \$54.50 for policing in 2015. Based on the converted tax base in Area “D” that same property could expect to pay an additional \$18 (approximately) per year, per officer added.

➤ **Options: RCMP Reserve Officer Program**

The RCMP’s Reserve Officer Program brings back officers who have retired or left the force for temporary assignments including parental leaves, sick leaves, and other staffing shortages. Christina Lake (located in the Regional District of Kootenay-Boundary) has used the program very successfully since 2009 in order increase police presence on a seasonal basis (July and August) at the unincorporated lakeside community. The program is funded jointly by the RDKB and the Province of BC – the annual cost to the regional district is approximately \$20,000 per year. This includes 40 hours/week of the officer’s time (primarily weekends and evenings), as well as temporary accommodations. The officer has the same status as a regular RCMP member, and reports to the Grand Forks RCMP Detachment.

This program is appropriate where there are seasonal or temporary needs for increased policing. Within Area “D,” based on the survey results, this option would likely be best suited for Okanagan Falls, perhaps in partnership with other nearby communities that mentioned police presence as a concern, including Kaleden and Skaha Estates.

**Cost Impacts:**

The cost impact would depend on the terms of the agreement with the RCMP, particularly around the duration of the position (number of months per year), and the size of the service area. For an arrangement similar to Christina Lake (coverage during July and August at a cost of \$20,000 per year), the cost impacts are shown in Figure 3 with two different service areas – just Okanagan Falls,

and a broader area that includes Heritage Hills, Skaha Estates, Okanagan Falls and Kaleden.

**Figure 3**  
**Cost of RCMP Reserve Officer Program**  
**2015**

Area for Cost Sharing	Tax Req. <sup>1</sup>	Res. Rate	Owing <sup>2</sup>
OK Falls, Skaha Estates, Heritage Hills & Kaleden	\$20,000	0.0176	\$5.72
Okanagan Falls	\$20,000	0.0511	\$16.60

1 Tax requisition amount excludes 5.25% Surveyor of Taxes fee  
2 Impact is calculated on a home assessed at \$325,000

➤ **Options: Community Safety Programs**

The RCMP works with communities throughout Canada to deliver programs aimed at developing safer neighbourhoods and communities, often through community police offices. At one time Area “D” had community police offices in Okanagan Falls and at Apex. Although both offices have since closed (satellite office requirements have since changed, and the Okanagan Falls office was underutilized) the Penticton Community Police Office is available to assist Area “D” residents with establishing safety programs in their communities. The programs depend on volunteer participation, which can be a challenge for small communities and those with aging demographics.

Citizens on Patrol is a program that was active at one time in Okanagan Falls. It involves local volunteers working in teams to patrol neighbourhoods (by vehicle, bicycle or on foot) serving to deter crime, operating as extra ‘eyes and ears’ for the RCMP and reporting all suspicious, criminal and nuisance behaviour they observe. Volunteers can also undertake activities relating to the awareness and prevention of crime and community safety issues, such as Speed Watch and Lock Out Auto Crime.

Block (or Neighbourhood) Watch is a neighbour-helping-neighbour program where residents within a neighbourhood form a communication network and watch out for each other’s homes and report

suspicious activity to the police, as well as to each other to reduce the likelihood of residential crime. Some insurance companies offer discounts on house insurance if a formal neighbourhood Block Watch program is in place.

The Penticton Community Police Office also oversees the South Okanagan Crime Stoppers program, which enables residents to provide anonymous information about criminal activity. The Crime Stoppers and Community Policing programs were combined in 2014.

If sufficient interest exists throughout Area “D” or in a specific community or group of communities within Area “D,” residents could petition the RDOS to explore the possibility of funding an additional community policing officer to assist with crime prevention and the development of community policing programs in the participating rural areas. Few communities within Area “D” currently take advantage of the existing programs, however if the community policing officer had additional capacity, there may be the opportunity for enhanced public education and support for local volunteer prevention and safety programs.

There is an auxiliary police program in place in Penticton; however, auxiliary constables must be under the direct supervision of an RCMP regular member and therefore the program does not increase police coverage. At Area “D” Town Hall meetings hosted by the RCMP, police continue to emphasize “target hardening” as a primary crime reduction strategy – this involves ensuring personal property is secured through the use of locks, security systems, surveillance cameras, etc.

**Cost Impacts:**

Given that community safety programs are established with volunteers, with the assistance of the community police officer, there is no direct cost other than the time and commitment from volunteers. The cost impact of adding an additional community police officer for the RDOS would depend on whether the service was funded by all electoral areas (as the current position is), all of Area “D” or a specific services area within Area “D.” Figure 4 below shows the impacts based on a few options, assuming one additional full-time community police officer.

➤ **Options: Contracted Security**

Some communities use their bylaw enforcement officers or contract with private security firms to complement policing and increase security in public areas, such as parks, beaches or during specific events and sometimes on a seasonal basis. There are limits to the authorities granted to private security personnel, and police response is still required if a crime occurs.

The RDOS has an existing contract with SOS (South Okanagan Security) for bylaw enforcement, which includes land use and zoning, unsightly premises and noise control. In addition to bylaw enforcement, SOS offers services such as uniformed site security and regular mobile patrols. Increasing enforcement personnel is an option for the RDOS through an adjustment to the contract to enable site security, mobile patrols or both. The security service could be provided in a specific area through a service established for that purpose (Okanagan Falls, for instance), or over a broader area – all of Area “D” or all of the participating electoral areas.

**Cost Impacts:**

The cost impact would depend on the level of service requested, additional resources required and the benefitting areas. Figure 4 can be used as a guide to represent what the tax impacts would be on a house assessed at \$325,000 if an additional \$70,000 was added to the SOS contract for year-round regular security patrols, based on the different service areas (i.e. \$15 if provided throughout Area “D” and \$20 if limited to the more populated communities of Heritage Hills, Skaha Estates, Okanagan Falls and Kaleden).

**Figure 4**  
**Cost of Community Police Officer**  
**on Typical Residence**  
**2015**

Area for Cost Sharing	Tax Req. <sup>1</sup>	Res. Rate	Owing <sup>2</sup>
All Electoral Areas	\$70,000	0.0140	\$4.55
Area "D"	\$70,000	0.0461	\$14.98
OK Falls, Heritage Hills, Skaha Estates & Kaleden	\$70,000	0.0616	\$20.02

1 Tax requisition amount excludes 5.25% Surveyor of Taxes fee  
2 Impact is calculated on a home assessed at \$325,000