

## **2.34 Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Firearms Review**

The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary is responsible for policing three regions of the Province - the Northeast Avalon, Corner Brook and Labrador West. The population of these regions is approximately 201,000 (2001 census). In providing these services, the RNC currently employs 308 police members and 84 civilian staff.

In 1998, members of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary were permitted to wear firearms as part of their regular uniform. The Select Committee of the House of Assembly which recommended the new arming policy also recommended that a firearms audit be performed annually and submitted to the House of Assembly. As a result, this is our sixth annual firearms audit.

Although the RNC has adequate systems in place to record, monitor and secure its firearms, each year we identify instances of non-compliance with policy. Given the serious repercussions that could result from the use of firearms, it is critical that the RNC continue efforts to improve compliance with established policies and procedures.

Our review identified a number of issues which should be addressed. For example:

- The firearms and ammunition inventory system is not accurate because not all required adjustments, including additions, dispositions or internal re-assignments of firearms and ammunition, are made on a timely basis. We found 9 firearms which were in a location other than that recorded in the system and for 3 types of ammunition, the physical count did not agree to what was recorded in the inventory system. In particular 23,484 rounds of 38 calibre training ammunition could not be accounted for.
- Members are not always complying with the Firearms Policy. Information identified during our review and information obtained from inspections performed by the RNC indicated a total of 46 infractions during 2003-04. Furthermore, we found that not all infractions are being referred to the RNC's Professional Standards Bureau for investigation as required.

- The required monthly inspections of firearms storage lockers are not always performed. No monthly inspections were performed in St. John's in 2004 for the months of July, August, and September.
- The RNC is not complying with its policy for use of force training as 185 members have not re-qualified in the use of firearms (module 1) in the required one year time frame (7 of the 185 have not received this training since 2002) and 7 members have still not completed module 4 training which was required to have been provided in 2003. Furthermore, it is unlikely, based on the prior year's performance, that all of the 123 members still requiring module 2 training will receive this training by 31 December 2004 as required.

Information in the training database is neither complete nor accurate. Of particular concern is that, as the system is used to determine what use of force training has already been provided and what training is left to be provided, inaccuracies may result in a situation where a member may not receive all of the necessary use of force training.

- Although the Use of Force Review Board is required to review all instances of use of force, the Board has not met since October 2002. Furthermore, although all Board members used to receive copies of the use of force reports, this practice was discontinued after May 2002. Instead, only one member of the Board, the Firearms and Use of Force Instructor, receives the reports. There were 743 use of force incidents reported between 1 September 2003 and 30 September 2004. Of these 743 incidents, 52 related to firearms, 43 of which involved drawing and/or pointing a firearm at a person while the remaining 9 involved the discharge of a firearm regarding animals.

On 2 December 1997, a Select Committee of the House of Assembly was appointed to enquire into the arming policy of the RNC. The Committee tabled its report to the House of Assembly on 31 March 1998 and included the recommendation that the arming policy be reviewed at the end of five years, i.e. March 2003.

As at November 2004, no Select Committee had been established to review the arming policy of the RNC.

### **2.35 Fire Commissioner's Office**

The Fire Commissioner's Office needs to do more in inspecting and evaluating the firefighting capabilities of the 297 fire departments throughout the Province and in providing training to the approximately 6,100 firefighters. In particular:

- Over the last five years, only 5 of the 297 fire departments had been formally inspected. The Office does not have a schedule to ensure all fire departments are inspected over any particular period of time. Officials at the Fire Commissioner's Office indicated that inspections performed at 5 fire departments were considered to be representative of many fire departments in the Province and had serious deficiencies relating to breathing apparatuses, vehicles, number of firefighters responding, and training.
- Since 1991, only 700 firefighters have received training to the level of Firefighter I. The Office does not keep information as to how many of the current 6,100 firefighters are trained and how many of the 700 trained firefighters are still in the system.

The Office's database was not Y2K compliant and therefore, data and information could not be captured. As a result, no annual report has been prepared since 1999 and the Commissioner does not have all of the information necessary to monitor fires in the Province including an assessment of the firefighting capabilities of fire departments.