

Providing Salary and Wage Consistency for Fire and Police Collective Agreements in BCs Labour Market.

Introduction

There are currently 12 municipalities in B.C. policed by 11 independent municipal police departments. These municipalities pay 100 percent of their policing costs from local property taxes. These departments are governed by municipal police boards and fall under the Fire and Police Services Collective Bargaining Act.

The current provision in the Fire and Police Services Collective Bargaining Act for an arbitrated resolution provides a process to ensure police and firefighters have a way to settle collective bargaining without jeopardizing delivery of the services they provide. However, the guidelines provided under Section 4(6) of the Act have resulted in collective agreements that are consistently higher than the rest of the labour market in BC. This has resulted in a significantly increased tax burden to residential and business taxpayers in those jurisdictions.

Background

Under the Police Act, municipalities with populations 5,000 and over must provide their own law enforcement by:

- Forming their own police department
- Contracting with an existing police department
- Contracting with the provincial government for RCMP police services

There are 63 municipalities in B.C. that contract with the province for RCMP municipal police services. The RCMP operates stand-alone, integrated and regional detachments across the province.

Twelve municipalities in British Columbia have eleven municipal police departments. They are:

- Abbotsford
- Central Saanich
- Delta
- Nelson
- New Westminster
- Oak Bay
- Port Moody
- Saanich
- Vancouver
- Victoria/Esquimalt
- West Vancouver

Prior to 1996, Police and Fire Unions in British Columbia asked the Government to provide legislation that allowed for the right to arbitration to settle collective bargaining on the basis that these employees should never take strike action and jeopardize the safety of the communities they serve.

The *Fire and Police Services Collective Bargaining Act*, passed in 1996, has achieved its primary goal of ensuring police and fire fighters have a way of settling collective bargaining without ever jeopardizing the service they provide.

Section 4(6) of the *Act* provides guidelines to be used by the arbitrator or arbitration board in rendering a decision. This has Legislation has also had the unintended consequence of collective agreements that are consistently higher than the rest of the labour market in BC. Over time this factor has widened the gap between these professions and other employees in BC.

The cost of fire protective services and municipal policing is borne by municipalities whose source of funding are the residential and commercial property owners in their communities and these increasing costs are therefore borne by these people directly.

This Legislation has not been the subject of a review for over twenty years.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS:

That the Provincial Government:

| Request the Ministry of Labour undertake a review of this Legislation, and that a consideration be given to including a requirement that an arbitrator appointed under this Act give primary consideration to the local BC Labour Market jurisdiction, including settlements for other unionized employees whose employer is either the Provincial or a BC municipal government.

| **Submitted by the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and supported by the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce.**