



SIoux LOOKOUT Hub of the North

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MEDIA RELEASE

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~ FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ~

Kenora, Sioux Lookout, and Pickle Lake Form Coalition to Reduce Cost of Policing

Since the Government of Ontario brought in a new cost-formula in 2015, the three municipalities estimate that the cost of police services has taken \$30 million more from their communities than they should have had to pay.

SIoux LOOKOUT, Ontario, April 21, 2022 ---- The municipalities of Kenora, Pickle Lake, and Sioux Lookout have agreed to form a coalition to address the significant costs of providing police services in their respective communities. In 2015, the Ontario Government introduced a cost-formula for all municipalities using the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) to deliver local services. Since that time, taxpayers in these three municipalities have collectively paid \$4 million more a year for policing than the average cost paid in other communities – money that could have been invested in critical infrastructure projects such as shelter, housing, roads, bridges, and other community needs.

“The formula is based on a cost per property, while our three municipalities serve a population ten times the size of our tax base,” said Dan Reynard, mayor of Kenora. “We are each hubs for dozens of northern and remote communities, and each other. Our municipalities act as regional resource centres for healthcare, pharmacy, education, legal, and transportation services for First Nations peoples living in a geographical area larger than Germany.”

The OPP cost-formula is based on a combination of basic costs charged to every municipality in Ontario, then adding different costs for each municipality based on the number of calls for police services, overtime, and other items such as prisoner transportation and security for jails and court houses, plus the cost of holding people in detention cells.

Of all 306 municipalities served by the OPP, the three municipalities represent less than one percent of the total number of properties the OPP serves yet make up over four percent of the total calls-for-service hours. By a significant margin, the coalition municipalities have the highest policing costs of all communities that use the OPP to provide local police services.

The formula has resulted in per property costs of \$832 in Kenora, \$934 in Sioux Lookout, and \$950 in Pickle Lake. By comparison, the median cost for OPP services in Ontario is \$300 per property. While Pickle Lake and Sioux Lookout receive some discounts, there is no guarantee that these will be extended.



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“For our hub-based municipalities, the province’s OPP cost-formula clearly hasn’t worked,” said Doug Lawrance, mayor of Sioux Lookout. “It is one of the most important problems we face. It’s also the most easy to solve, if the provincial government is willing to work with us.”

Since the cost-formula was first introduced, each of the three municipalities has repeatedly attempted to convince the provincial government that the cost-formula is unfair and, for them, needs to be changed or scrapped. They have achieved varying degrees of success as the government has responded differently to each municipality. Kenora, for example, receives no discount. Sioux Lookout receives a partial discount on its bill and Pickle Lake, a discount on only its calls for service and overtime costs.

The goal of the coalition is to work with the Government of Ontario to seek a solution that is fair to its municipal taxpayers and financially sustainable. With the provincial election scheduled for June 2, the coalition members will be asking all local candidates and the three party leaders commit to solving this issue by the end of this year.

Pickle Lake mayor Dwight Monck said, “If the Government of Ontario fails to address this situation, we will have to take serious action. The ability of our property owners to pay higher taxes has reached the breaking point. If our policing costs rise, we may have to further reduce other services to the residents, businesses, and organizations who call our communities home.”

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