



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 24, 2019

B.C. Sheriff Service working on human resources, more needs to be done

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report: *Managing Human Resources at the B.C. Sheriff Service*.

“Overall, we found that while the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) launched a plan in 2017 to overcome some of its human resource challenges, more needs to be done,” said Carol Bellringer, auditor general.

Between 2012-13 and 2016-17, the BCSS lost more staff than it was able to recruit, leading to a staffing shortage. As part of its human resource plan, the BCSS increased the number of new sheriff recruits to try to resolve the shortage. But the BCSS does not know whether the staffing figure it is targeting is sufficient to provide for the safety and security of the courts, because it does not have the data and tools to estimate this number.

The BCSS has gathered some information on the reasons sheriffs leave for other jobs, but not enough to determine the primary reasons, or how to retain them. This is important given the critical need for sheriffs and the time and cost to train them.

New sheriff recruits receive considerable high-quality training that prepares them for the job, but the audit could not see that ongoing training did the same. In 2017-18, less than 40% of sheriffs requalified on their ongoing mandatory firearm and use of force training.

“During our audit, the BCSS relaxed its training requirements by allowing staff to go longer between requalifications,” said Bellringer.

It made this change without examining the impact it would have on sheriffs’ ability to safely use their firearm or exert force.

“Even with this change, we found that 15-20% of staff had still not requalified on their firearm and use of force training on time,” Bellringer continued.

Improper use of a firearm or force can have significant consequences for courthouse staff and the public. Failure to properly train sheriffs increases the risk of incidents, accidents and injuries should a sheriff need to use their firearm or force.

Typically, courts don’t operate without sheriffs present, as a sheriff’s role is to provide for the safety and security of the courts. The office audited the BCSS because a lack of sheriffs in courtrooms can delay and close courts. As per the Supreme Court of Canada decision on *R. v. Jordan*, if cases are delayed too long, they can be dismissed.



The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website: www.bcauditor.com

Malcolm Gaston, deputy auditor general, will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference.

News conference date: Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019

Time: 12:30 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the U.S.: 1 877 353-9184

Participant pass code: 44848#

During question-and-answer period:

To ask a question: press *1

To exit the question queue: press *2

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The auditor general is a non-partisan, independent officer of the legislature who reports directly to the legislative assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the auditor general and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

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