



MEDIA RELEASE

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MR# 2018008

DATE: 22 January 2018

RE: Town of Amherst, police union react to police contract arbitration ruling



Amherst Mayor David Kogon and Const. Tom Wood, Atlantic Police Association Local 104 president, look over arbitrator Bruce Outhouse's decision that granted officers a 13.75 per cent raise over five years. Both said they were happy with the decision. (Town of Amherst photo)



AMHERST, Nova Scotia – An arbitrator’s decision to give Amherst’s unionized police officers a 14.52 per cent raise over five years, when compounding is considered, has ended four years of contract negotiations between the town and its unionized police officers.

“We are happy a decision has been made and we now have a collective agreement with our officers. We can move forward into the future,” Mayor David Kogon said.

The 22 unionized officers and two administrative staff were also pleased “that a fair agreement between the union and management has been achieved,” Atlantic Police Association Local 104 president Tom Wood said.

“While we are disappointed by how long it took before we got a final decision, the agreement does show the union and management have a good working relationship. The local wants to thank the town for the professional way that negotiations took place and we look forward to working with the town in making our community safe and secure.”

Paul Calder, the Amherst Board of Police Commissioners chair, said he was “glad the report has come through” and was pleased with the decision as “it puts the members of our department on par with the other major departments in the province.”

Arbitrator Bruce Outhouse released his decision on Jan. 17.

He approved a five-year contract, retroactive to April 1, 2014. Officers were given a 2.5 per cent raise in year one of the agreement, 2.75 per cent increases in years two, three and four and a three per cent raise in year five. Officers in specialized positions, such as a member of the street crime unit, also received an additional three per cent increase.

The town had asked for 2.5 per cent raises in years one, three and five of an agreement and increases of 2.25 per cent in years two and four, while the union had asked for 2.75 per cent increase in years one and two, a three per cent raise in year three and 3.25 per cent increases in years four and five.

The increase in wages won’t have a significant impact on this year’s budget preparation, CAO Greg Herrett said.

“Since the contract with our officers expired on March 31, 2014, we’ve known that our officers would be given a raise,” Herrett explained. “As a result the town included anticipated raises in its police budget in each of the last four years. The money we anticipated for raises was accrued each year. By doing this, the town exercised due diligence and prepared for this decision by ensuring that money was set aside for the awarded salary increases.”

Bargaining with Atlantic Police Association Local 104 began in April 2015. While some agreement was reached, no monetary issues were resolved. It was followed by a conciliation meeting on May 19, 2016, that also reached an impasse when the parties couldn’t reach an



agreement on salaries.

An arbitration hearing was held with Outhouse on Nov. 17, 2016.

Kogon said the arbitrated contract puts the salaries of first-class constables in Amherst in the same ballpark as those in Truro, Bridgewater and New Glasgow.

As of April 1, 2017, a first-class constable in Truro made \$86,985, a Bridgewater officer made \$86,387 and a New Glasgow officer made \$84,514. The arbitrator's decision resulted in a first-class constable in Amherst receiving a yearly salary of \$85,551 as of April 1, 2017.

Truro's contract expires on March 31, 2018, but the Bridgewater and New Glasgow contracts end, as does the new Amherst contract, on March 31, 2019. In the last year of the contracts, a first-class constable in Bridgewater will make \$89,195, in New Glasgow \$86,627 and in Amherst \$88,118.

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