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# Evaluation of the RCMP's Musical Ride

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**Final Report**



Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : L'évaluation du Carrousel de la GRC

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# Acronyms

CO	Commanding Officer
EDI	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
GBA Plus	Gender Based Analysis Plus
PSE	Public Service Employee
RM	Regular Member
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
S/M	Sergeant Major
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States



# Executive Summary (1/2)

## Context

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Musical Ride is seen as a Canadian icon recognized at home and abroad as a symbol of tradition, honour, and pride. The Musical Ride supports front-line police operations by building positive relationships, supporting recruiting efforts, and promoting the RCMP's image in communities in Canada and around the world.

The objective of the evaluation conducted by RCMP National Program Evaluation Services was to examine the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Musical Ride in accordance with the Treasury Board Policy on Results.

The evaluation considered the historic and current role of the Musical Ride, and the present realities of the RCMP, and looked ahead to consider opportunities for continuous improvement.

## Key Findings

Overall, the evaluation found the Musical Ride has been delivering on most of its objectives. However, there are areas for improvement, both within the span of control of the Musical Ride and external to it, to ensure the sustainability of the program.

1. The Musical Ride performances and other mounted ceremonial activities contribute to the objectives of the RCMP and Government of Canada, and have important cultural and heritage value.
2. The Musical Ride supports various priorities for the Government of Canada and the RCMP.
3. The Musical Ride is an effective tool for promoting the RCMP's image and building relationships with communities and partners in Canada and around the world.
4. The Musical Ride has a well documented governance structure and an established strategic planning regime. However, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in the area of performance measurement.
5. There is a perception that the well-being of riders, both physically and mentally, is not adequately addressed.
6. The impact of the Musical Ride on recruitment is difficult to measure; however, a more strategic approach could increase effectiveness.
7. Overall, the Musical Ride operates efficiently; however, the limited availability of new riders is a significant threat to its sustainability.
8. While alternative models have been suggested for the delivery of the Musical Ride, there is strong rationale for the continued use of RCMP regular members (RMs) as riders.
9. Overall, the RCMP's investment in the Musical Ride is relatively small in comparison to its potential return.

# Executive Summary (2/2)

## Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that, overall, the Musical Ride provides value for the RCMP. In order to maximize that value, the RCMP needs to apply a more strategic approach to the Musical Ride and ensure it is resourced appropriately.

## Recommendations

1. Establish mechanisms to increase releasability from divisions to ensure the sustainability of the Musical Ride.
2. In collaboration with Musical Ride members, develop and implement a plan to prioritize physical and mental well-being by improving workplace culture, employee relations and supports.
3. In collaboration with National Recruiting, develop and implement a plan to integrate the Musical Ride as a component of the RCMP's recruiting strategy and use it more effectively as a recruiting tool.
4. Explore opportunities to expand outreach activities to augment the effectiveness of the Musical Ride in promoting the image of the RCMP and building relationships with communities and partners.
5. Strengthen the approach to performance measurement regarding the activities of the Musical Ride and its effectiveness in supporting organizational priorities and objectives to better support internal decision making.

# Approach

# Objective



- The objective of the evaluation was to examine the relevance and performance (effectiveness and efficiency) of the Musical Ride in accordance with the Treasury Board Policy on Results.
- The evaluation was national in scope and RCMP divisions and external stakeholders were engaged through interviews during the conduct phase.

## The evaluation focused on five questions:

1. Does the Musical Ride fulfill an ongoing need for the RCMP and the Government of Canada?
2. Does the Musical Ride align with RCMP and Government of Canada priorities?
3. Is the Musical Ride delivered effectively?
4. Does the Musical Ride support RCMP front-line police operations?
5. Does the Musical Ride operate in an efficient manner?



# Data sources

Interviews: 32	Staff Survey	Document Review: 144
<p>In person and video interviews were conducted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Musical Ride management and employees = 5</li> <li>▪ Divisional commanding officers (COs) = 6</li> <li>▪ Divisional sergeant majors (S/Ms) = 8</li> <li>▪ Divisional proactive recruiters = 8</li> <li>▪ National Headquarters (National Communications Services and National Recruiting Program) = 3</li> <li>▪ External stakeholders = 2</li> </ul>	<p>An online survey was conducted in April 2023 to gather insights about the delivery and effectiveness of the Musical Ride, and exploring opportunities for continuous program improvement.</p> <p>A total of 148 past and present Musical Ride employees received an invitation to participate in the survey. Of those invited to participate, 88 individuals responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 59.5%.</p>	<p>Internal documentation was reviewed, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual reports</li> <li>▪ Policy and guidance documents (previous, current)</li> <li>▪ Reviews and assessments</li> <li>▪ Meeting agendas and records of decision</li> <li>▪ Internal reports, presentations and briefings</li> <li>▪ Memoranda</li> <li>▪ Correspondence</li> </ul>
Data Analysis: 3	Post Performance Surveys: 109	Observations: 5
<p>Available RCMP administrative and financial data was collected and analyzed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial data from HRMIS and TEAM databases on expenditures for the Musical Ride.</li> <li>▪ Administrative data on human resources specific to the Musical Ride, including relief duty work, lateral search, training, and transfers information.</li> <li>▪ Administrative data from Musical Ride tour planning and client services, including data on performances, training (internal and external), and other activities within the branch (i.e. horse auctions, social media, open houses, Name the Foal contest etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>Post performance surveys, completed by host communities, were analyzed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance locations</li> <li>▪ Funds raised by communities</li> <li>▪ Attendance</li> <li>▪ Client satisfaction and opportunities for improvement</li> </ul>	<p>Observations were conducted at Musical Ride performances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Royal Winter Fair, Toronto – 2</li> <li>▪ Bryson, Quebec – 1</li> <li>▪ Sunset Ceremonies – 2</li> </ul>

# Limitations

Limitation	Mitigation
<b>Internal survey response rates</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation was voluntary and may have been influenced by respondents' shift and leave schedules.</li> <li>• Possible survey fatigue, as there were multiple RCMP surveys scheduled over the same period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder emails were sent to notify potential respondents of the survey administration period.</li> <li>• The survey was left open for as long as possible to ensure ample time for respondents.</li> </ul>
<b>Limited data</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is limited data available related to program outcomes.</li> <li>• Program outcomes are not easily quantified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple data sources were used to validate findings, including perspectives of key stakeholders through interviews and a survey.</li> <li>• Open sources of information relevant to the Musical Ride and secondary survey data were considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Observations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations of performances were limited due to the conduct phase coinciding with the off-season of the Musical Ride tour (October to April).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation team participated in all possible observation opportunities during the planning and conduct phase of the evaluation.</li> <li>• More open-ended questions were added to interviews, and secondary surveys (i.e. post-performance surveys) were used to validate information.</li> </ul>

# Context

# Program overview

## Purpose and background

- The RCMP Musical Ride is seen as a Canadian icon recognized at home and abroad as a symbol of tradition, honour, and pride. The Musical Ride supports front-line police operations by building positive relationships, supporting recruiting efforts, and promoting the RCMP's image in communities in Canada and around the world. Performances of the Musical Ride help raise thousands of dollars for local charities and non-profit groups.
- At full capacity, the Musical Ride consists of 32 riders, all of whom are, first and foremost, police officers (i.e. RCMP RMs) with at least two years of active service. Most RMs are non-riders prior to their equestrian training with the Musical Ride; however, once they complete this training, they not only become riders but ambassadors of goodwill for approximately three touring seasons.
- The Musical Ride performance consists of the riders and their horses performing intricate formations and drills set to music, lasting about 30 minutes. During the touring season, the Musical Ride tours throughout Canada and internationally, performing between the months of May and October in up to 50 communities each year.

## Program design

- The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch consists of a number of sections that support the delivery of the program and report directly to the Superintendent Officer in Charge of the Branch. Those sections include: Remount (Pakenham, Ontario), Saddler, Farrier, Musical Ride Class Section, Equitation Remount Training Section, Stables, Musical Ride Section, and Client Services.
- The Musical Ride & Heritage Branch has a total of 84 positions and an average of approximately \$11 M in annual expenditures, including approximately \$1.5 M in non-salary tour costs.
  - 52 RM positions, but only 37 filled.
  - 32 Public Service Employee (PSE) positions



# Supporting Musical Ride sections

## Breeding Farm (Pakenham)

- The farm is tasked with breeding horses for the Musical Ride.
  - Supervised by a farm manager and an assistant manager
  - 11 stable hands
  - Over 40 horses, including stallions, brood mares, weanlings, yearlings and two-year-olds



## Musical Ride Class /Equitation Remount Training

- Each year, the Musical Ride gives two basic 5-week equitation courses and a six-month intermediate equitation course to train new riders.
- Equitation Remount training section trains horses for the Musical Ride as well as to draw sleighs and carriages for ceremonial duties.



## Stables

- There are 11 stable hands/workers that tend to the stables, the horses and the grounds. After hours, they are the sole caretakers for the horses and are responsible for feed and overall cleanliness of the stables.
- There are two farriers to care for the horses. One accompanies the Musical Ride on tour.
- One saddler is located at the stables for the making and repairing of leather goods for the Musical Ride.



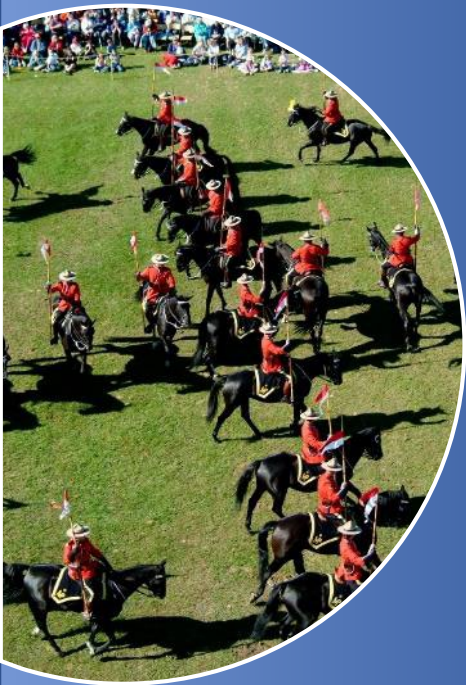
## International & Ceremonial Special Travel / Heritage & Ceremonial Section

- International & Ceremonial Special Travel manages requests from government partners and private entities seeking participation of members in Red Serge for events domestically and abroad.
- Heritage & Ceremonial Section manages and coordinates special events and projects, exhibits and presentations to the Canadian public, government partners and stakeholders (e.g. Sunset Ceremonies, and high profile domestic and international visits, including Royal visits).



# Key Findings

# Ongoing need



## FINDING #1

The Musical Ride performances and other mounted ceremonial activities contribute to the objectives of the RCMP and Government of Canada, and have important cultural and heritage value.

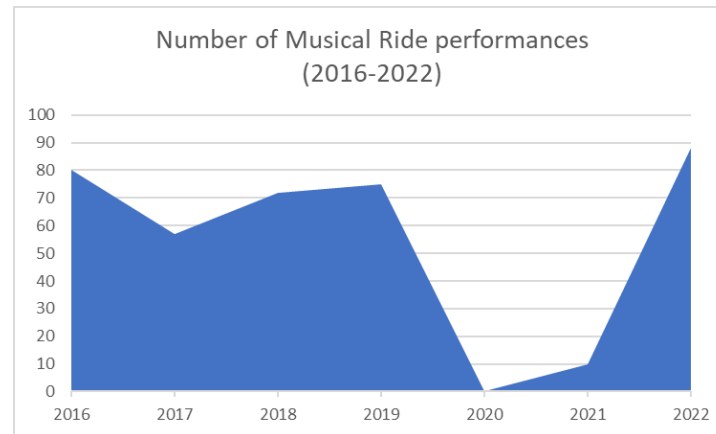
### Demand for Musical Ride performances remains consistent.

- The Musical Ride receives requests from agricultural societies, fairs, rotary clubs, cities, provinces, states and foreign countries.
- There are currently 119 open requests to host the Musical Ride from across Canada.
- Of 109 post-performance surveys completed by host communities, almost half added additional comments stating they wanted the Musical Ride to return to their community.
- Most S/Ms interviewed indicated there is a strong demand for the Musical Ride to visit communities in their division.



**From 2016 – 2022, the Musical Ride traveled to an average of 37 locations and conducted 72 performances per tour season.**

\*Excluding 2020 and 2021 as tours were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



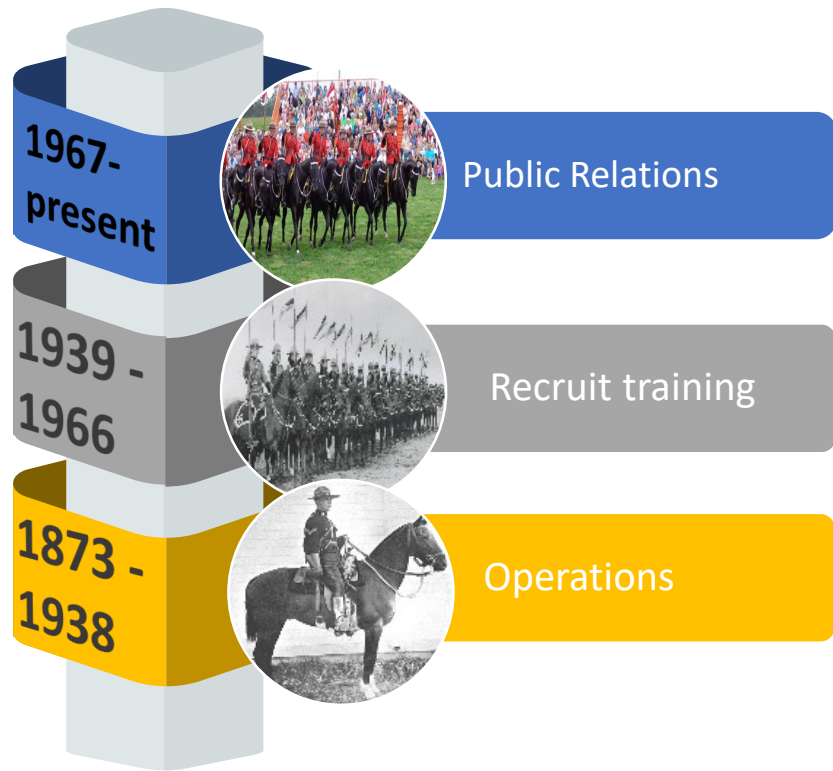
- In 2017, the Musical Ride completed a cross-country tour in celebration of Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- In 2021, private performances were held at the Musical Ride stables to honour and celebrate local first responders (i.e. “COVID heroes”).
- In 2023, the Musical Ride is scheduled to perform in nine provinces in celebration of the RCMP’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



**FINDING #1 (continued)**

**The RCMP’s Musical Ride holds a unique position within the organization.**

- An examination of documents reveals that mounted units, spanning 150 years of history, have encompassed three main roles in the RCMP, which can be classified into three eras:



- Today, the Musical Ride remains an invaluable tool for the RCMP in terms of public relations, benefiting not only the organization itself, but Canada as a whole.
- Half of COs interviewed indicated there is nothing else in the RCMP that supports community engagement on a similar scale.

- 
- Learning to ride horses was a key element of training until 1966.
  - 1960 – A Memorandum to Cabinet proposed the establishment of a permanent Musical Ride at N Division in Ottawa.

- 
- Horses were critical to operations and the patrol system given the vast amount of territory to cover.
  - 1938 - Constable Doug Minor’s final patrol on Timmy ends 65 years of policing on horseback.



**FINDING #1** (continued)

The Musical Ride Branch goes beyond its performances during the summer touring season, serving various ceremonial and mounted functions / activities.



**Mounted programming**

- Mounted police seminars
- Equine Theory (e.g., Saddle Up Program)



**Private/public events**

- Regimental ride for the United Kingdom (UK) and Canadian Vice Chiefs of Defence
- Open House



**Guest lectures /collaboration**

- Government/ RCMP conferences
- Collaborating with international partners



**Ceremonial parades**

- Queen Elizabeth’s funeral
- Coronation of King Charles
- Canada’s commemoration parade for Queen Elizabeth



**Stable tours**

- Private tours:
  - United States (US) Space Force Visit
  - Government security professionals
- Public tours
- School tours



**VIP escorts**

- Heads of state visits (e.g., Iceland, Germany, US, and Royal Family)



**Other duties**

- Media relations (e.g., requests for interviews, footage)

**FINDING #1 (continued)**

**The RCMP and the Government of Canada recognize the historical significance of the Musical Ride.**

- Internal and public records acknowledge the Musical Ride as a program that promotes the heritage and traditions of the RCMP, and Canada, domestically and internationally.
- Numerous documents provide insights into the historical context of the Ride, linking it to horsemanship and police force traditions, including its connections to the Royal Family.
  - The prominent role Ride members played in the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of King Charles III underscores the cultural significance of the Musical Ride, which is deeply ingrained in our nation’s identity and symbolism.
  - The Musical Ride has gifted several horses to the Royal Family over the years, most recently presenting Noble to King Charles in May 2023.



***“I can’t think of another organization that carries this level of national imagery. It’s irreplaceable and cannot be replicated.”***  
 Interviewee, Heritage Canada

**The Musical Ride has become an enduring symbol of Canada, both within the country and abroad, with a rich legacy and deeply ingrained traditions.**

- Heritage Canada recognizes:
  - The RCMP (red tunic and black horse) as an unofficial symbol of Canada. Other symbols that share this recognition include the great seal, maple leaf, and the parliament buildings.
  - Special commemorative banners including images of the Musical Ride were installed on Confederation Boulevard in Ottawa highlighting the RCMP’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone.
- Parks Canada has designated the Musical Ride as a “National Historic Event” under the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act*. The proposed inscription for the commemorative plaque concludes with the line:
 

***This popular equestrian ceremonial unit is a distinctive symbol of Canada’s national and international identity.***
- There is a City of Ottawa proposal for a park to be named "Musical Ride Park" in commemoration of the RCMP’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- The Musical Ride is a significant contributor to Heritage Canada and its functions for state ceremonial protocols as a symbol of Canada.



© Royal Canadian Mint



# Alignment to priorities

## FINDING #2

The Musical Ride supports various priorities for the Government of Canada and the RCMP.



Recognizing the colonial aspects of its history, the Musical Ride is working to advance reconciliation in alignment with Government of Canada and RCMP priorities.

### Performances

- Interviews, documents and observations indicate Musical Ride performances have been adapted to capture the spirit of reconciliation. Some additions to the performances include:
  - Land acknowledgements;
  - Indigenous music;
  - the presence of an Eagle Staff;
  - prayers/greetings by Elders; and
  - the salute being taken by Indigenous representatives.



### Locations

- The Musical Ride actively sought Indigenous communities to host performances through its 2023 tour planning cycle. A review of correspondence and strategic documents demonstrates dialogue between Indigenous communities, divisions and the Musical Ride on potential locations and their significance.
  - The 2023 tour included multiple performances in Indigenous communities including the Tk'emlúps reserve (British Columbia), Maskwacis (Alberta), James Smith Cree Nation (Saskatchewan) and Elsipogtog First Nation (New Brunswick).

### Other initiatives

- Beginning in 2023 the Musical Ride's 'Name the Foal' Contest will:
  - Include at least one Indigenous name annually. The name will be provided by an Indigenous community.
  - Prioritize name entries that recognize Indigenous persons of significance in Canadian history (e.g., recently naming a foal "Potts").
    - In 2023, the Musical Ride received 50 Indigenous name submissions, the most in its history.
- Spiritual gifts to Elders in Indigenous communities
  - When Musical Ride horse Arctic died, his tail was removed and presented to an Indigenous community for use in ceremonial activities.
    - This was a new initiative that will continue going forward.



**FINDING #2 (continued)**

**The Musical Ride is able to align with evolving priorities of both the Government of Canada and the RCMP, as and when necessary.**

- Some interviewees and observations indicated a key benefit of the Musical Ride lies in its inherent adaptability. This ensures the Musical Ride maintains a level of relevance beyond its historical and cultural value.
- The Musical Ride is working to support Government of Canada and RCMP priorities related to official languages, Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
  - Musical Ride performances include a bilingual script read by an emcee and songs in both official languages, with adjustments made to include more French music in French speaking communities.
  - Interviews, observation, and discussions with ride management found that Musical Ride members are generally representative of the RCMP’s diversity.
    - Management indicated that this is more by chance than a result of planning, as the Musical Ride is reliant on who divisions release, and does not have the luxury of selecting riders from a pool.
    - No barriers related to GBA Plus/EDI were identified within the Musical Ride.

**All COs acknowledged the Musical Ride’s current diverse group of members and stressed the importance for:**

- **building relationships with diverse communities; and,**
- **potential recruitment (i.e. if young people in particular see someone who “looks like them” they may be more inclined to join the RCMP).**
- **This is especially beneficial in communities with large immigrant populations to present the RCMP as a possible career path.**



**The Musical Ride is a key contributor to enhancing relationships with domestic and international partners and supporting the priorities of other Government of Canada departments.**

- The Musical Ride supports Government of Canada commitments outlined in the Speech from the Throne, specifically: expanding diplomatic engagement with key allies and partners.
- The Musical Ride offers programs that maintain partnerships with the Canadian Armed Forces and domestic and international law enforcement partners, including:
  - Saddle Up Soldier On (est. 2013); and
  - Mounted Police Seminars (est. 1988)
- An examination of recent requests from other departments illustrates the Musical Ride’s support for diplomatic and domestic engagements:

Requesting Department	Supporting diplomatic and domestic engagement with:
Department of National Defence	UK Ministry of Defense, US Space Force, Army Ball
Heritage Canada	The Royal Family
Global Affairs Canada	Diplomatic Corps, government security professionals
RCMP internal programs	Numerous domestic and international law enforcement partners
Governor General	Presidential visits
US Embassy	US military leaders

*“Needless to say, the entire group left with an incredibly positive impression of Canada, and the work we are doing - and the RCMP-hosted event was a key part of this engagement.”*

Senior Officer, Canadian Armed Forces

# Relationship building

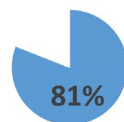
## FINDING #3

The Musical Ride is an effective tool for promoting the RCMP's image and building relationships with communities and partners in Canada and around the world.



The Musical Ride plays an important role in the RCMP's efforts to promote its image in Canada and abroad. It is seen as an iconic image of Canada and is the RCMP's largest public relations vehicle.

- Most COs and all S/Ms believe the Musical Ride is effective at promoting the image of the RCMP, some examples given include:
  - The Musical Ride promotes an image of professionalism;
  - The Musical Ride is a symbol of the RCMP (and Canada) and promotes our history;
  - The Musical Ride is inherently positive, when often the RCMP is reflected in a negative light.



of survey respondents agreed that, as Musical Ride members, they played an important role in promoting the image of the RCMP.



382

Performances



1 million +

Spectators



150 +

Communities



12

Provinces and Territories



\$ 4 million +

Raised for local organizations and charities



## FINDING #3 (continued)

## The Musical Ride plays an important role in building relationships between the RCMP and the communities it serves.

- There exists a substantial collection of current and historical documents, including reviews and analyses, that highlight the significant role of the Musical Ride in supporting front-line policing through building relationships with communities across Canada, law enforcement agencies, federal authorities, and international partners. The Musical Ride holds a vital position as an ambassador for the RCMP and Canada.

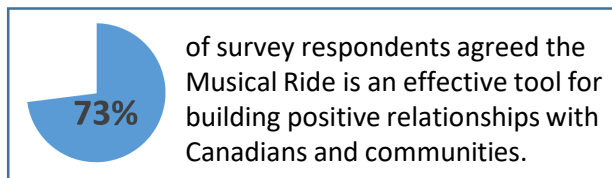
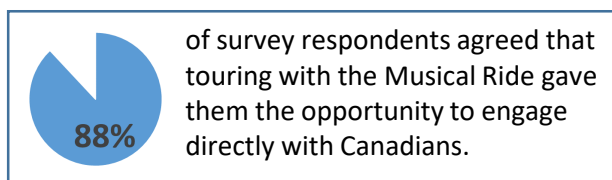


All divisional COs and S/Ms interviewed believe the Musical Ride is an effective tool for building relationships with communities the RCMP serves.

*“I would argue it’s the number one benefit of the Ride”*

A divisional CO on relationship building

## Members believe the Musical Ride is effective at building relationships with Canadians.



## Communities and the Media

- Community representatives were nearly unanimous, in post performance surveys, that the Musical Ride contributed positively to the achievement of their organization’s goals.
- Musical Ride performances raised between \$1,500 and \$100,000 to support local initiatives and charities. (e.g., Diabetes Canada, local foodbanks)
- A media scan highlighted the funds raised for local charities and non-profit organizations, and that the Musical Ride has a long-standing tradition of community outreach.

*“The riders travelling the country are part of a long tradition that has primarily become a tool of community outreach for the national police force. Each ride raises funds for the community that hosts it.”*

Postmedia, Aug 26, 2017



# EFFECTIVENESS – Relationship Building

## FINDING #3 (continued)

### Musical Ride performances are effective at building relationships with communities by creating opportunities for direct interaction between RCMP members and the public.

- A key activity for relationship-building is the interaction between the riders and the public in the ring after the performance, or in the stables. This allows the public an opportunity to interact with members and ask them questions about the Musical Ride and their personal experiences, take photos with them and the horses, and learn more about the Musical Ride, as well as the RCMP as a whole.
- Musical Ride performances allow members of the local detachment an opportunity to interact with the public in a manner outside of their usual experience, which may boost morale as they receive direct appreciation for their work.
- Interviews found the Musical Ride can be a means to establishing relationships with diverse communities and new Canadians who may have preconceived notions and be distrustful of police.

### Opportunities for increased relationship-building with communities

- When asked what else the Musical Ride can do to build relationships with communities, the most frequent suggestion from survey respondents was for Musical Ride members to spend more time in the communities and engage in other activities beyond the performances (e.g., visits to schools and other community groups, participating in other smaller scale events.)
- Some interviewees suggested the Musical Ride could be deployed more strategically where community relations have been strained, or in communities that have experienced traumatic events (e.g., performance in James Smith Cree Nation as part of the 2023 tour).

### The Musical Ride is an effective tool for building relationships with domestic and international partners, including other RCMP program areas, other federal departments, and international counterparts.

- Local partners are often present at performances, which provides an opportunity for them to interact with RCMP leadership.
- In addition to performances, there are a number of other activities (outlined in Finding #1) that the Musical Ride participates in that help establish and build relationships with domestic and international partners. The extent to which relationships are strengthened with partners through these activities is reflected in the volume of related correspondence received by Musical Ride management.
- The Musical Ride has supported the building of relationships between various RCMP programs and their specific clients/counterparts, including Federal Policing Criminal Operations, RCMP Special “O” Policy Center, Departmental Security and the Canadian Police College.



*“Your team were professional, knowledgeable, and showed tremendous pride for their corps and their service and are a credit to Canada as ambassadors. I was glad to re-emphasise the special link between the Mounties and the UK.”*

UK Vice Chief of Defense



# Governance

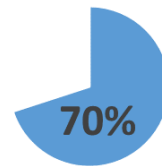


## FINDING #4

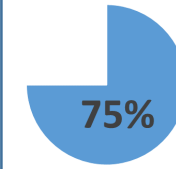
The Musical Ride has a well documented governance structure and an established strategic planning regime. However, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in the area of performance measurement.

The Musical Ride's governance structure is well documented and encompasses established policies, plans, roles and responsibilities, and procedures.

- Multiple documents outline the roles and responsibilities at the individual and unit level, as well as the obligations of host communities. Among the documents reviewed are organizational charts, role descriptions, job descriptions, and presentations prior to tours.



of survey respondents agreed that the objectives of the Musical Ride are/were clear to them.



of survey respondents agreed that the roles and responsibilities related to the Musical Ride are/were clear to them.

- Senior management interviewees indicated that the Musical Ride organizational structure is appropriate, straightforward and effective when fully staffed.
  - Current low staffing levels impede effectiveness and efficiency.
- A review of program documents found clear processes and procedures that contribute to the safety and successful execution of the program.
- There is a substantial collection of policies, plans, protocols, and procedures that support program delivery.
  - Many of these documents lacked a signatory and/or date clearly indicating the documents final and approved status.
- There is up to date and detailed planning and tracking related to building and asset management at the Breeding farm.

**FINDING #4 (continued)****The Musical Ride takes a strategic approach when planning each tour season.**

- The planning phase for a Musical Ride tour season requires significant strategic considerations. The Musical Ride’s tour planner plays a crucial role in this process, which includes the following key elements:
  - **Regional coverage:** The Branch strives to provide equal coverage to all accessible regions and provinces of the country on a rotational basis every four years.
  - **Performance location selection:** The tour planner collaborates with other senior managers to select suitable performance locations.
  - **Route optimization:** The most efficient routes are mapped out, taking into account necessary stops to provide food and water to the horses and ensure proper rest for tour employees.
  - **Collaboration with divisional COs and local detachment personnel:** These individuals actively participate in identifying and prioritizing locations.
  - **Pre-tour planning site visits and presentations:** These involve travelling to locations and reviewing the grounds for safety for riders and horses, and reviewing hosting requirements.

**The collective agreement for RMs, signed in August 2021, is a major consideration when scheduling members during a tour season.**

- The unique nature of the Musical Ride was not reflected in the collective agreement.
- There is no room for flexibility in the collective agreement, and it is a challenge for management to ensure compliance at all times.
- Some of the aspects of the Musical Ride impacted by the collective agreement include travel logistics (e.g., flights and accommodations), hours of work, number of hours between shifts, changes within the 28 day posted shift period, and overtime.

**Most COs and S/Ms saw opportunities to employ the Musical Ride more strategically, specifically when deciding where it performs.**

- As an example, consideration could be given to scheduling Musical Ride performances in communities where building/improving relationships would be advantageous to the RCMP, such as Indigenous communities or specific communities where relations, or morale, have deteriorated.
- A few of the divisional interviewees indicated that this kind of strategic scheduling/use requires increased/better communication between the division and the Musical Ride.
- The recent practice of engaging divisional S/Ms was seen as an effective means to acquire input on divisional priorities and strategic considerations.
  - This practice was used by in planning the Musical Ride’s RCMP 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary cross-country tour.
  - In the past, sending letters to divisional COs was a common practice, but is seen as less effective from a tour planning perspective. (However, CO’s offices should still be engaged through the S/Ms.)

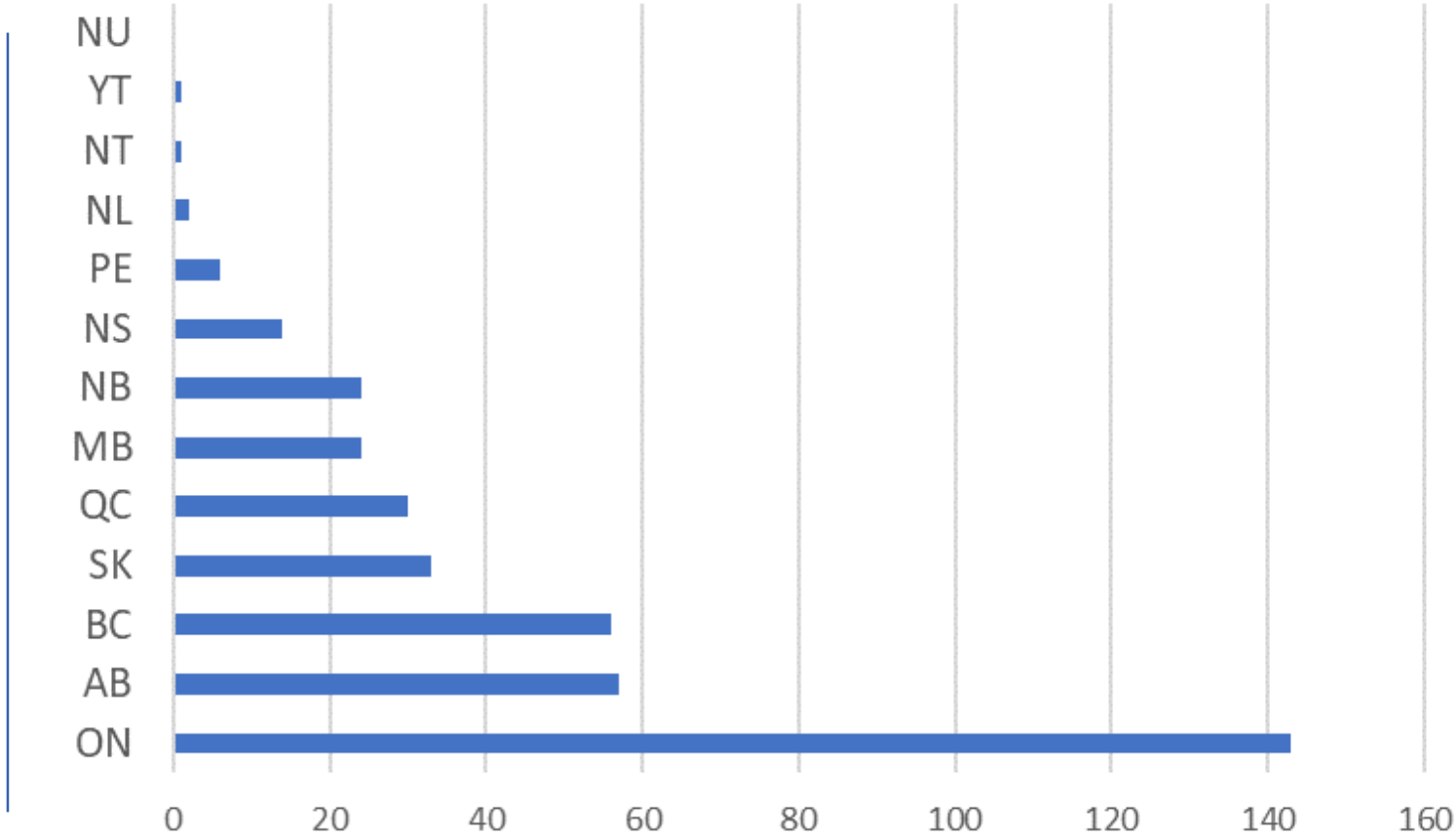




The Musical Ride has ensured national coverage from 2016 to 2023,

- visiting all provinces and two territories;
- and,
- visiting communities in large urban centres and small rural areas.

Number of performances by province (2016-2023)



\*Ontario includes performances in the Ottawa area, such as the annual Sunset Ceremonies.

**FINDING #4** (continued)**The Musical Ride undertakes limited performance measurement and reporting activities.**

The Musical Ride's objective is to support front-line police operations by:

- Building positive relationships.
- Supporting recruiting efforts.
- Promoting the RCMP's image in communities in Canada and around the world.<sup>1</sup>

- There is no evidence the Musical Ride is measuring its performance against these objectives. That said, the outcomes are by nature largely intangible and difficult to quantify.
- The Musical Ride does collect some data and uses it to inform their planning process, but this is done primarily on an ad hoc basis.
- A lack of comprehensive performance measurement limits the ability of the Musical Ride, and the RCMP, to make evidence-based and strategic decisions moving forward.



**A review of documents and management interviewees indicates there are opportunities to improve the collection and reporting of data, particularly with regard to activities beyond Musical Ride performances.**

# Employee Wellness



### FINDING #5

There is a perception that the well-being of riders, both physically and mentally, is not being adequately addressed.

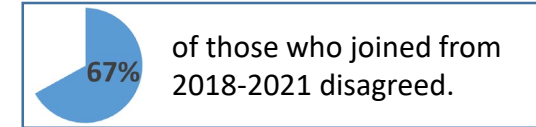
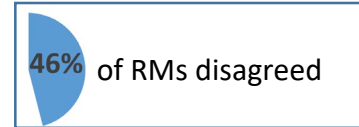
While there are some plans in place to ensure a safe and secure workplace, the morale of regular members on the Musical Ride is low and there are some areas of the workplace that need attention.

- A survey conducted of past and present Musical Ride employees highlights challenges in the administration of the Musical Ride, particularly with regard to the well-being of RMs.
  - Results highlight significant differences between RMs who joined the Musical Ride between 2018 and 2021 and those who joined in 2017 or earlier. These differences provide insights into the evolving needs and experiences of the RMs over time.

Survey of Past and Present Musical Ride Employees – Highlights	PSE total	RMs joined 2017 or before	RMs joined 2018 - 2021	RM Total
% of respondents who <u>disagreed</u> :				
Open and transparent <b>communication</b> between management and employees	19%	43%	<b>80%</b>	58%
Have/had information, training and equipment needed for their <b>health and safety</b> at work	12%	30%	<b>60%</b>	43%
Receive(d) adequate support for their <b>mental well-being</b> while working on the Musical Ride	6%	31%	<b>70%</b>	48%
Receive(d) adequate support for their <b>physical well-being</b> while working on the Musical Ride	0%	33%	<b>70%</b>	49%
Overall, the Musical Ride has/had been a <b>positive experience</b>	0%	20%	<b>57%</b>	35%

**FINDING #5 (continued)****Survey respondents conveyed a general sense of feeling unsupported by their superiors.**

- This was the most common reason given by those who disagreed that they received adequate mental or physical support.
- When specifically asked if they felt supported by Musical Ride supervisors and management:

**There are a number of factors that have contributed to a decline in the morale of Musical Ride members in recent years, including challenges related to releasability and the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>**

**1. Releasability** - The extent of the challenges related to releasability are explored more thoroughly in Finding 9, but the impact on morale is significant.

- Divisions are not releasing a sufficient number of members to ensure a steady and consistent turnover of riders.
- Riders are often having to stay longer than the normal three-year posting, when in many cases their preference would be to move on to their next posting.
- The Musical Ride is a physically demanding job that leads to an above-average number of injuries to riders; the longer they stay, the higher the likelihood of being injured.
- Touring has riders on the road for the majority of the summer; more tours means more time away from home and families.
- The lower numbers of riders has increased the workload.

2. An incident in February 2022 involving a leaked group chat among Musical Ride members also had significant negative consequences regarding employee wellness and morale.

**FINDING #5 (continued)****2. COVID-19** - The pandemic created unique challenges for the Musical Ride.Programming

- Tours were cancelled for 2020 and 2021, meaning that for two years members were unable to perform and spent extended time training and keeping the horses active. The tour cancellations were the first since World War II.
- Equine wellness sessions (Soldier On), pilot projects, and international mounted police seminars were also canceled.

Employees

- While many people worked from home, the Musical Ride horses still needed to be cared for, meaning Musical Ride members were still reporting for duty on a daily basis.
- The inability to perform had a severe negative impact on morale.
- Some members provided relief duties in northern Canada, while remaining members worked shifts to care for the horses and maintain some activities.
- There were significant challenges with hiring PSEs to temporarily backfill RM positions while some RMs returned to operational duties.

Horse care

- Confined horses displayed undesirable behaviour, meaning a significant amount of time was required to exercise the horses for their physical and mental well being.
- Each year new horses are exposed to the Musical Ride in training and in preparation for joining the performance; however, over the course of the pandemic new horses were not given this exposure, which led to concerns for safety, training and preparedness.



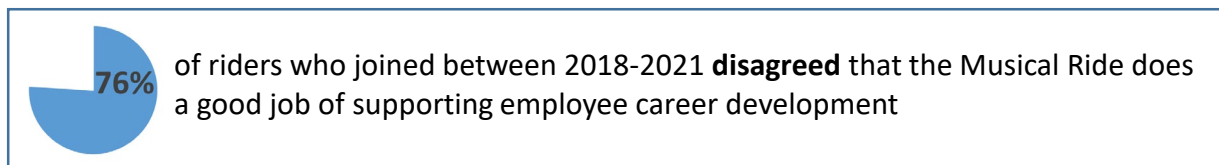


**FINDING #5 (continued)****The Musical Ride management team has introduced new initiatives to improve employee wellness and boost morale.**

- Beginning in June 2020, riders were deployed to V Division for relief duties. A total of 27 members of the Musical Ride provided support for 41 relief duties.
- In 2021, management planned Musical Ride performances for first responders in Ottawa with a view to boosting morale among members of the Musical Ride, some of whom had never participated in a performance.
- Management gave all riders time away from the Musical Ride and brought in civilian contractors to care for and exercise the horses. This included the entire 2022/2023 winter season (November-January) as well as the 2023 March Break.
- For the 2023 tour, four contractors (later increased to five) were hired to travel with the Musical Ride to support RMs in caring for the horses, allowing members more time off and fewer overnight shifts. This appears to be having a positive impact on Musical Ride members and management is planning to increase to six contractors for the 2024 tour.

**Hiring more civilians in support roles could provide RMs more time to ensure their police skills are kept up to date.**

- There is a perception among riders that the Musical Ride does not support participation in non-Musical Ride training, while management states very few requests for career development are received, and all are supported.



- Some survey respondents indicated that career development is not a priority for the Musical Ride, which can make it difficult to transition back to operational police work as they are not up to date on all of their training.





# Recruitment



## FINDING #6

The impact of the Musical Ride on recruitment is difficult to measure, however a more strategic approach could increase effectiveness.

**While the Musical Ride has a role in recruiting, it is not seen as a primary means of attracting new members.**

- Most COs and half of S/Ms believe the Musical Ride is effective at supporting recruitment to some degree.
  - COs felt the engagement between riders and the public is the most effective activity.
  - Many COs view the Musical Ride as a long-term investment in recruiting as it “plants a seed” in young people who may later pursue a career with the RCMP.
  - A few interviewees provided anecdotal evidence of people they knew of who had joined the RCMP as a result of seeing the Musical Ride as children.
- Divisional recruiters were split on whether the Musical Ride is an effective recruiting mechanism.
  - Most felt the demographic that attends the performances tend to lean heavily toward senior citizens and children.
  - However, Musical Ride performances have an indirect impact on recruiting by portraying a positive image of the RCMP and establishing relationships in the community.
- Most recruiters or their staff attend the shows to set up an information booth, and sometimes incorporate other activities/demonstrations into the show (e.g., K9 or Emergency Response Team demonstration).

36%

of survey respondents agreed the Musical Ride is used effectively as a recruiting tool by the RCMP, while 46% disagreed.

43%

of survey respondents said they always or often provided resources (e.g., contact information, website, pamphlets) to individuals curious about employment with the RCMP, while 43% said rarely or never.

48%

of survey respondents said they always or often engaged community members on the advantages of pursuing a career with the RCMP, while 28% said rarely or never.

## FINDING #6 (continued)

There are potential opportunities to expand the impact of the Musical Ride on recruiting.



Stakeholders believe the Musical Ride could be used more strategically to support recruitment, and had similar suggestions in this regard.

### Ride Members

- Ensure a recruiter is present at each performance.
- Have a dedicated member for recruitment travel with the Musical Ride.
- Give riders recruitment-specific training.
- Provide riders with recruitment materials to hand out.
- Allow more opportunity for community engagement.

### Musical Ride Management

- Have a dedicated member for recruitment travel with the Musical Ride.
- Give riders recruitment-specific training.
- Enhance communication / collaboration with National Recruiting.

### Divisional Recruiters

- Have a dedicated member for recruitment travel with the Musical Ride.
- Include messaging around recruitment in promotional materials advertising the Musical Ride.
- Enhance communication between the Musical Ride and divisional recruiters.

### National Recruiting

- Ensure a recruiter is present at each performance.
- Give riders recruitment-specific training.
- Provide riders with recruitment materials to hand out.

# Efficient operation

## FINDING #7

Overall, the Musical Ride operates efficiently, however the limited availability of new riders is a significant threat to its sustainability.



The Musical Ride has adopted a number of activities to make operations more efficient.

Examples of significant efficiencies include:

### RCMP horse auction:

- Previously managed by the Mounted Police Foundation, the horse auction is used to sell horses that are not suitable for Musical Ride duties due to factors such as colour, size, and temperament. The revenues generated from these sales are reinvested in the RCMP Breeding Program, ensuring cost-saving measures and transparent disposal of Crown assets.
- In 2020, the Musical Ride Branch took over and modernized the auction process by using the GCSurplus online platform. The transition to GCSurplus resulted in the highest return per horse after costs, and surplus artificial insemination stock was also sold, reducing frozen storage costs by half.

### Horse donations and divestments:

- The Musical Ride Branch has effectively managed surplus horses through various means over the years, including horse auctions, interdepartmental transfers, horse adoption/donation, divestment, and, when necessary, euthanasia.

### Breeding Farm:

- Detailed spreadsheets are maintained to provide descriptive information on building maintenance, potential projects, maintenance, upcoming projects, and a five-year rolling project plan for the farm. This helps ensure efficient management of the farm's infrastructure.
- The farm previously contracted out a number of services that they now take care of themselves, which has generated savings and proven to be equally or more effective.

### Hiring professional civilian horse trainers:

- The Musical Ride has employed professional civilian horse trainers to replace trainers at the Corporal level. This decision has enhanced the consistency and quality of basic training for young horses (remounts) and reduced the program's reliance on RMs.

**FINDING #7 (continued)**

**A lack of support from divisions for the cyclical nature of regular member transfers in and out of the Musical Ride on an annual basis has led to notable staffing challenges.**

- The Musical Ride has not been able to fully staff its positions, and has not had a full complement of 32 riders, since the 2018 tour.

Tour	2018	2019	2022	2023
Riders	32	28	24	24

- Over the last few years, divisions have not been releasing many members despite **168 showing interest**.
  - **Three** new members joined the Musical Ride in 2023, while **twelve** members were released back to divisions.
  - **Ten** members participated in the most recent Basic Equitation Courses (2 courses of 16 are possible).
  - **Four** members are currently on the Intermediate Equitation Course, which means only four Musical Ride members will transfer back to divisions after this year’s tour.
  - **Seven** members are currently in their fourth year, and **eight** members in their third year. The majority of these riders are anticipated to want to move on after the tour.



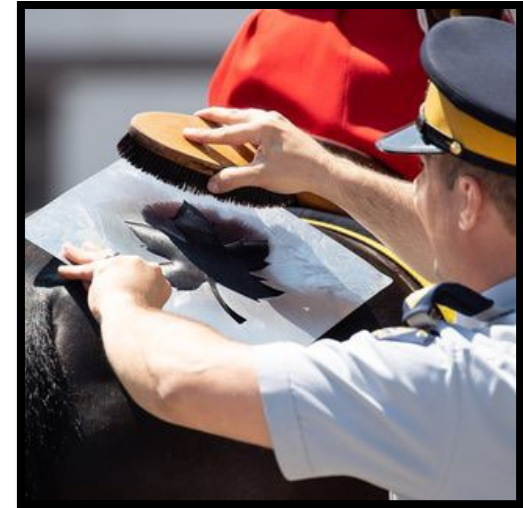
**Only three new members joined the Musical Ride for the 2023 tour, and another four are slated to join in 2024, while 15 members are in their third or fourth year with the Musical Ride.**

- Most COs interviewed are supportive of releasing members for the Musical Ride, but felt the current shortage of RMs across the RCMP makes this difficult.
- Musical Ride management made a presentation to the Senior Executive Committee in June 2023 that outlines some potential mitigation strategies to rebuild the ranks of the Musical Ride.
  - The committee officially approved the plan in July and, as a result, there has already been an increase in the number of members being released to the Musical Ride this year, compared to recent years.

**FINDING #7 (continued)****The low number of RMs joining the Musical Ride has a number of impacts.<sup>3</sup>**

- More than half of the Corporal supervisor positions on the Musical Ride are vacant as there are insufficient candidates to promote from within.
- Smaller intermediate equitation classes and a 24-person Musical Ride results in more work for members, given that the number of horses requiring care and exercise remains the same.
- Asking members to stay longer to maintain minimum capacity levels is having a negative impact on employee morale. Musical Ride members may become discouraged in the absence of a regular rotation in and out.

**34%** of survey respondents were satisfied that the Musical Ride has sufficient Human Resources.





# Alternate delivery models



## FINDING #8

While alternative models have been suggested for the delivery of the Musical Ride, there is strong rationale for the continued use of regular members as riders.

**The current approach to riders appears to be the most effective course of action.**

- A few interviewees suggested the Musical Ride could be comprised of, or supplemented by, civilians to free up RMs for police work.
- This approach could raise several challenges:
  - Legitimacy and effectiveness of the Musical Ride could be negatively impacted if the riders were not police officers.
  - The Musical Ride provides a unique opportunity to RMs who may need a break from front line policing.
  - The physical toll of the job necessitates frequent turnover of riders.
  - A hybrid of RMs and civilians could lead to challenges (e.g., difference in uniforms, pay scales, collective agreements).

**Considering the long-term interests of the program, it is beneficial for the Musical Ride to prioritize the recruitment of civilians in multiple non-rider positions going forward.**

- In addition to the benefits to employee wellness and morale outlined earlier in the report, increased use of civilians would decrease the number of RMs required to sustain the Musical Ride.
- With more civilian staff, RMs could potentially have more availability to support other areas of the RCMP in times of need.

# Return on investment

## FINDING #9

Overall, the RCMP's investment in the Musical Ride is relatively small in comparison to its potential return.



Assessing the cost/benefit ratio of the Musical Ride is challenging, as the benefits are difficult, if not impossible, to quantify.

- Multiple documents highlight the qualitative benefits of the Musical Ride, describing it as "invaluable," playing an "important role," and contributing to the RCMP's "international reputation and prestige."



**In fiscal year 2021-22, Musical Ride expenditures (approximately \$11.7 million) accounted for 0.22% of RCMP net expenditures of more than \$5 billion.**

**While discontinuing the Musical Ride could have a limited impact in addressing the shortage of regular members in operations, it would also create a void in positive public relations and potentially result in long-term negative repercussions for the RCMP.**

- Many COs indicated the Musical Ride is worth the investment.
  - COs see value in the Musical Ride and pointed out that the amount of resources dedicated to it are relatively small.
  - One CO however suggested that in times of resource shortfalls, the RCMP should consider moving resources away from the Musical Ride.
- All S/Ms indicated that the Musical Ride is worth the investment made. Many indicated that re-distributing members and budget from the Musical Ride to other areas would only be "a drop in the bucket" or "a band-aid solution" that would have little impact on current resource issues.

# Conclusions

- The resource investment in the Musical Ride is relatively small, given the important contributions it makes to the RCMP by promoting the organization's image and building relationships with the communities it serves as well as domestic and international partners.
- The sustainability of the Musical Ride is at risk, as divisions are not releasing a sufficient number of members on an annual basis to ensure its effective and efficient operation.
- The mental and physical well-being of Musical Ride members has suffered in recent years and is contributing to low morale. Evidence suggests this is a pervasive issue which requires attention from management.
- The Musical Ride has not been used strategically as a recruiting tool, and opportunities exist to use it more effectively.
- As a key outreach tool for building relationships, there may be opportunities to use the Musical Ride more strategically to have an even greater impact.
- There is minimal performance measurement of the Musical ride, limiting the ability of managers and senior executives to make strategic decisions and plans to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.





# Recommendations



1. Establish mechanisms to increase releasability from divisions to ensure the sustainability of the Musical Ride.
2. In collaboration with Musical Ride members, develop and implement a plan to prioritize physical and mental well-being by improving workplace culture, employee relations and supports.
3. In collaboration with National Recruiting, develop and implement a plan to integrate the Musical Ride as a component of the RCMP's recruiting strategy and use it more effectively as a recruiting tool.
4. Explore opportunities to expand outreach activities to augment the effectiveness of the Musical Ride in promoting the image of the RCMP and building relationships with communities and partners.
5. Strengthen the approach to performance measurement regarding the activities of the Musical Ride and its effectiveness in supporting organizational priorities and objectives to better support internal decision making.

# Appendices

	Slide #
A. Management Response and Action Plan (MRAP)	42-45
B. Scale of interview responses	46

# MRAP

Recommendation	Planned Action(s)	Diary Date
<p><b>1. Establish mechanisms to increase releasability from divisions to ensure the sustainability of the Musical Ride.</b></p> <p>Lead: Musical Ride and Heritage Branch</p>	<p>In consultation with Divisions, the Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will develop a policy that will increase releasability from divisions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage Senior Executive Committee to present the challenges faced with releasability from divisions and seek support to rebuild capacity. (Completed July 2023)</li> <li>• Encourage a prompt return of members to their region of origin or other operational pressures at completion of their tour of duty. (Implement June 2024)</li> <li>• Engage divisions and Staffing representatives annually to establish systematic number of candidates to the annual Basic Equitation course according to the Senior Executive Committee record of decision. (Implement Apr 2024)</li> <li>• By distribution of an annual performance report prepared by Musical Ride management, provide education on how the Musical Ride promotes the positive image of the RCMP to address organizational challenges (image, reputation, recruiting, etc.). (Implement Apr 2024)</li> </ul> <p>These efforts are concurrent to broader efforts by the organization to develop a New Cadet Demand Model. As such, the Musical Ride will also advocate to the Strategic Partnerships Agreements Branch to explicitly capture the program in the new allocation formula for non- contract demand for experienced officers.</p>	<p>Sept 1, 2024</p>

# MRAP

<p><b>2. In collaboration with Musical Ride members, develop and implement a plan to prioritize physical and mental well-being by improving workplace culture, employee relations and supports</b></p> <p>Lead: Musical Ride and Heritage Branch</p>	<p>The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will develop a plan to prioritize mental and physical well-being of members, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By working with divisions to secure members for future Basic Equitation Courses, facilitate the releasability of Ride members as the primary focus at the expected conclusion of their 3 year commitment to the tour of duty. (Implement Sep 2024)</li><li>• Establish a Musical Ride Morale and Wellness committee as an adjunct group to the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. (Implement Feb 2024)</li><li>• Engage Divisional Fitness and Health Promotion Advisor to assist members in developing fitness plans that support the unique physical needs of the Musical Ride (e.g. back, legs, shoulder, core strength) (Implement Jan 2024)</li><li>• Conduct annual presentations from Peer2Peer and National Early Intervention System coordinators to provide support mechanisms to employees. (Implement Jan 2024)</li><li>• Provide weekly on-site access for members to Disability Management Advisors and a Career Development and Resource Advisor for support and guidance. (Completed May 2023)</li><li>• Modify the assessment criteria of the Basic Equitation Course to select future candidates that have a stronger aptitude for riding horses and physical work. (Implement December 2023)</li></ul>	<p>October 1, 2024</p>
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# MRAP

<p><b>3. In collaboration with National Recruiting, develop and implement a plan to integrate the Musical Ride as a component of the RCMP’s recruiting strategy and use it more effectively as a recruiting tool.</b></p> <p>Lead: Musical Ride and Heritage Branch</p>	<p>In collaboration with the National Recruiting Program, the Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will develop a strategy for promoting recruiting during Musical Ride tours, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain the annual commitment of divisional recruiters to participate at performances during Musical Ride tours. (Implement May 2024)</li> <li>• Train Musical Ride members to assist with proactive recruiting efforts to be able to convey knowledge of the various steps of the process. (Implement May 2024)</li> <li>• Make a QR code available on all Musical Ride promotional material for ready access to recruiting information. (Implement June 2024)</li> </ul>	<p>August 1, 2024</p>
<p><b>4. Explore opportunities to expand outreach activities to augment the effectiveness of the Musical Ride in promoting the image of the RCMP and building relationships with communities and partners.</b></p> <p>Lead: Musical Ride and Heritage Branch</p>	<p>The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will revise its annual tour planning process to include steps to explore further opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging divisions at the pre-tour stage to seek their annual priorities, interests in special events or other opportunities to promote the RCMP. (Implement Jan 2024)</li> <li>• Proactively scan open source for special events or incidents where the Musical Ride services could be opportune and promote performances on social media. (Implement Feb 2024)</li> <li>• The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will invest in the development of employees to enhance its capabilities for Mounted Escorts to support the government of Canada and Governor General with mounted escorts and state visits. (Implement May 2024)</li> <li>• The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will engage RCMP Health Services to establish a program to host employee Operational Stress Injury therapy riding/equine work sessions. (Implement Apr 2024)</li> </ul>	<p>July 1, 2024</p>

# MRAP

<p><b>5. Strengthen the approach to performance measurement regarding the activities of the Musical Ride and its effectiveness in supporting organizational priorities and objectives to better support internal decision making.</b></p> <p>Lead: Musical Ride and Heritage Branch</p>	<p>The Musical Ride and Heritage Branch will develop a performance measurement strategy to support decision making and assess the Musical Ride’s performance in achieving its objectives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect salient details post Musical Ride community visits to measure the impact on communities and the RCMP (surveys, local media, feedback from detachments and divisions, etc.) (Implement Jan 2024)</li><li>• Create a QR code for the public to express their feedback about experiencing the Musical Ride in their community (comment box). (Implement Jun 2024)</li><li>• Compile an annual report for the dissemination to CO’s and other senior managers to provide feedback on the effectiveness, successes and challenges experienced on the tour. (Implement Apr 2024)</li></ul>	<p>June 1, 2024</p>
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# Scale of interview responses

DESCRIPTOR	MEANING
<b>All</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of 100% of interviewees
<b>Most</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 100% of interviewees
<b>Many</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 51% but less than 75% of interviewees
<b>Half</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of 50% of interviewees
<b>Some</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of interviewees
<b>A few</b>	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of interviewees