



Royal Gendarmerie
Canadian royale
Mounted du
Police Canada

Security Classification/Designation
Classification/désignation sécuritaire
Protected A

Staff/Sergeant Kevin Kenna
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Your File Votre référence

Christina DeMarco
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Our File Notre référence

2009-06-23

Dear Ms. DeMarco:

**RE: Application for Amendments to Liquor-Primary License
UBC Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre - 6066 Thunderbird Blvd, UBC**

This is in reference to your letter dated 2009-06-11 concerning the captionally-noted matter. I would first like to state that the RCMP University Detachment is willing to work with UBC Thunderbird Centre Management but will be taking a hard stance toward ensuring that the interests of this community with respect to safety are first and foremost. I respect the Centre's management and what they are trying to achieve. However, it is my belief that they are struggling with promoting and overseeing their operations.

University Detachment Policing Overview

The RCMP University Detachment provides police services to four distinct clients: University of British Columbia, University Neighborhoods Association, University Endowment Lands, and Pacific Spirit Regional Park. The detachment is a 24/7 operation with seventeen (17) uniform members providing various operational and administrative functions.

Since 2001, our community has grown at an extraordinary rate as the area evolves into a distinct "University Town". This growth has included single family and student housing, rental condominiums/apartments and businesses. It is estimated that the area's daytime population may reach 65-75,000 persons. This commensurate growth has lead to an increased demand for police services.

The University Detachment area has twenty-one (21) licensed establishments with a total licensed seating of approximately 9,500. In addition to the routine calls for service that invariably originate from these establishments, the "Pit Pub", with licensed pup seating of 799 and a licensed restaurant/banquet seating of 1170, hosts a well-established pub night every Wednesday and Friday during the school year. The workload on these nights frequently over extends the available police response.



UBC also hosts many conferences, sporting events, motion picture film shoots, and rock concerts, many of which require an Operational Plan and extra resources. Heavy drinking is a historical "right of passage" on university campuses, and RCMP University Detachment receives an average of 500 applications for Special Occasion Licenses per year for various fraternity and club events. Many of these events require extra police patrols and often create additional calls for service due to the excessive consumption of alcohol. RCMP University Detachment also provides seasonal policing to Wreck Beach, which has its own unique issues involving alcohol/drug abuse.

Policing Concerns/Issues that RCMP University Detachment has encountered with the operation of Thunderbird Centre:

I was contacted some time ago by the UBC Athletics & Recreation Department, and was informed of their plans for numerous concerts in the seventy-five hundred (7500) seat Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre. Promoters suggested to Athletics that as many as 48 events per year could be held at the Centre with the expectation that they will be holding an event almost every weekend. It was their vision that the Centre would be like a mini "General Motors Place" and the monies derived would fund the department's programs. The aforementioned concerts were in addition to the approximately 4-5 yearly outdoor concerts planned for Thunderbird Stadium, which sometimes attract 20,000+ persons. UBC Athletics advised me that each Centre event would likely have a beer garden and that a Special Occasion Liquor License would be requested. It was their expectation that the RCMP would provide policing for all of these events.

At this initial meeting, I expressed concerns over their proposal and the fact that many of these concerts would require extra policing from University Detachment. It was explained to UBC Athletics that holding such events was not a simple matter and there was considerable planning and organizing required at the Detachment level to prepare and police these events to ensure public and police safety. While some events might not necessitate extra police personnel, many would, and these resources would have to be recruited (on overtime) from other Lower Mainland RCMP Detachments. This would place a tremendous strain on already limited police resources, especially if the number of events continued to grow in subsequent years. UBC Athletics was advised that they would have to run a first class operation right from the start or there would be repercussions from the community, police and ultimately the British Columbia Liquor Licensing Board.

Since this initial meeting, the total number of concerts projected by Athletics has not transpired. However, those that have been held have given me and other agencies cause for concern. The RCMP University Detachment does not have objections to the concept of operating Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre like General Motors Place. What the RCMP does have concerns about are primarily the music concerts that are being promoted at the Centre and some of the persons that are being attracted to these. Most music concerts seem to cater to the younger generation, and it has been our policing experience that for many patrons their purpose seems to be to get drunk on alcohol or stoned on narcotics, either before they attend or during the concert. As well, it has also been our experience that these concerts seem to attract some clientele who are drug dealers, gangsters, and unsavory characters in general.

There has been a noticeable increase in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the Thunderbird Centre. It would be a safe assumption to say that most patrons to these events, especially music concerts, come from elsewhere in the Lower Mainland. While some patrons arrive by bus or are dropped off, there are just as many or more who are driving vehicles. Due to the proliferation of alcohol/drugs at these events, some patrons are likely operating vehicles while under the influence of either alcohol or drugs. They must travel through multiple police jurisdictions, either getting to the events or departing the area. RCMP University Detachment pays particular attention to this on event nights and sets up traffic check points to detect and deter such activity.

Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre is located on Wesbrook Mall, which is one of the heaviest pedestrian and vehicle traffic areas at UBC. The Centre is in relatively close proximity to residential and student housing, a sports field and a hospital. Wesbrook Mall already has a reputation for social disorder (noise, drunkenness, fighting) due to the Greek fraternities and sorority houses which are located near the Centre. Recent music concerts at the Centre have seen an increase in illegal consumption of alcohol/drugs and fighting outside (in addition to like incidents inside), and in the nearby Thunderbird Parkade.

Thunderbird Centre has held several music concerts since opening. At a recent event where a Special Occasion License was obtained for a beer garden, there was such blatant abuse of liquor service (operating two beer gardens, poor security, over service) that all future events were not allowed to apply for a Special Occasion License. Management was advised that the only alcohol products permitted on the site were to be contained to the room for the performing musicians.

Despite the fact that the next concert was non-alcohol, both drugs and alcohol did make their way into the event. The police encountered minors in possession and consuming both alcohol and narcotics. As well, there were many inebriated persons either on the main floor or in the stands or back stage. Numerous patrons were observed smoking marijuana in the "mosh pit" as well as parts of the stands. During this event a male was "head butted" and required an ambulance to take him to the hospital. Before this event even started, there was a lot of "pre-drinking" outside the Centre and in the nearby Thunderbird Parkade.

What boggles the mind is how people who were sober or sober enough to attend the concert somehow were able to get intoxicated once inside the venue and had to be escorted out. Obviously, when people arrive sober, or somewhat sober, and then have to be escorted away from the event, there is a problem with the consumption of alcohol and drugs. This leads me to believe that the Centre's management does not take security checks of persons entering the premises very seriously, nor is proper security being maintained inside the venue to detect and deter illegal consumption of alcohol and narcotics.

All of the foregoing occurred despite very clear direction from the RCMP, the BC Liquor Inspections Branch, and the Vancouver Fire Department, all of whom sought to have the Centre's management comply with the rules around liquor sales and public safety. The Centre's management was given my expectations months ago, but allowed things to go off the rails by flaunting the liquor and narcotics, contrary to criminal and provincial statutes.

Application for Amendments to Liquor-Primary License for Thunderbird Centre:

The RCMP University Detachment **does** object to the proposed amendments. The expansion of the current licensed area into the seating area of two arenas within the Centre should be restricted to a much smaller size and leave the majority of seating for those who do not wish to consume alcoholic beverages. With respect to the proposal for the addition of patios which would be used primarily during special events and the extension of hours of liquor service (which, depending on the event may be within the hours of 9 a.m. to 2 a.m.), these proposals will only tend to further erode the quality of life for persons residing in the area by increasing the social disorder, especially late at night. These amendments should be reconsidered and the hours of operation reduced, i.e. the patio to 10 p.m. and overall liquor service to 1 a.m.

Recommendations:

It is my belief that the UBC Athletics Department is moving too fast with their planned events at Thunderbird Centre, especially music concerts; and that profit is the main objective rather than ensuring that community interests are taken into consideration and looked after now and in the future.

I have suggested to UBC that they give serious consideration as to whether or not they want to continue with these types of music concerts, with emphasis on how these concerts benefit the UBC student population and/or local residents. UBC Thunderbird Centre Management should be looking at getting events working properly. What I would like to see is for UBC to rethink their plans around use of Thunderbird Centre, get their house in order and develop an operational plan including how they propose to manage alcohol and drug problems and overall security, policing concerns and issues that will arise inside/outside the Centre. I cannot support this Application without such a plan in place.

It is my recommendation that this application be held in abeyance until UBC Thunderbird Centre management have established a track record demonstrating that they can operate the facility properly to the satisfaction of all concerned parties.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 604-224-1322 or my email: kkenna@rcmp-grc.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

(K. Kenna)S/Sgt.
Detachment Commander
University Detachment