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Memorandum of Understanding

Between

H Division Royal Canadian Mounted Police

(Hereinafter referred to as “RCMP”)

And

Nova Scotia Ground Search

And Rescue Association

(Hereinafter referred to as “NSGSRA”)

Collectively referred to as the “Participants”

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Background

This MOU is between the H Division Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association (NSGSARA).

In Nova Scotia the overall responsibility for land and inland water search and rescue falls to the Province of Nova Scotia. The responsibility to manage search and rescue incidents is delegated to the police force of jurisdiction which, in most areas of Nova Scotia, is the RCMP.

H Division's Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) program is a partnership between the RCMP, the NSGSARA, and the Department of Emergency Management (DEM).

Given the critical importance of rapid, coordinated, and safe response during GSAR incidents, this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a shared framework that clarifies roles, responsibilities, activation protocols, and operational expectations. It reflects the commitment of both participants to maintain an effective and collaborative relationship that enhances public safety and ensures consistent, professional search and rescue services across Nova Scotia.

The Participants Intend as Follows:

1.0 Definitions

In this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the following terms, in singular or plural form according to the context, are defined as follows:

“GSAR” means Ground Search and Rescue. It is an act of searching through a means of ground activity for a lost/missing person.

"GSAR - IC" means the GSAR Incident Commander. Always a police officer who has been specially trained. Has the overall responsibility for the execution of the GSAR operation, and who represents the Police Force of Jurisdiction for the area in which an incident has occurred.

“DEM” means Nova Scotia Department of Emergency Management. The DEM assists with the administration, coordination and training of Nova Scotia's GSAR teams.

"ICS" means Incident Command System, a nationally recognized approach to manage emergency situations;

“CISM” means Critical Incident Stress Management.

“IMT” means Incident Management Team under ICS;

“JRCC” means Joint Rescue Coordination Center;

"MOU" means Memorandum of Understanding;

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"NSGSARA" means the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association, consisting of an Executive body and 23 volunteer GSAR teams;

"NS" means Nova Scotia;

"Team" means Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Team. Are self-directed and managed community organizations that are organized, trained, and equipped, to locate, access, stabilize, and transport to safety person or persons lost and/or injured in wilderness or wilderness interface areas of the province

"Volunteer" means Ground Search and Rescue volunteer member(s).

"Search Manager" means a designated member of a GSAR team that is a subject matter specialist and familiar with the operational functions of the GSAR team. Under the direction of the GSAR-IC, will manage the ground search and lead and direct individual GSAR resources.

"SMART" means the Search Management and Records Tracking database, presently in use by NSGSARA.

"CSA" means the Canadian Standard Association.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 This MOU sets the terms and conditions of the cooperation between the Participants when they are responding to an event of missing and/or lost person(s).
- 2.2 This document will set out the respective roles and responsibilities of both organizations when called upon to respond to a complaint of missing and/or lost person(s). Each agency is responsible for ensuring that its own policies reflect the principles detailed in this common document.
- 2.3 This MOU is not legally binding and places no legal obligation on the Participants.
- 2.4 This MOU is in no way intended to be a procurement instrument. Any materiel procurement resulting from, or required by, the implementation of this MOU must be accomplished in accordance with the applicable national procurement laws and regulations to which each Participant is subject.

3.0 Responsibilities of the RCMP

As provincial police force, the RCMP is responsible to:

- 3.1 Assess and determine the need for conducting a search;
- 3.2 Activate the respective Team with area of responsibility as required;
- 3.3 Activate mutual aid assistance from additional Teams, if deemed required;

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- 3.4 Work collaboratively with Teams within ICS;
 - 3.4.1 Ensure ground searches are entered into the NSGSARA SMART system and that the Search Manager confirms all Volunteers on site are properly trained for the search.
 - 3.4.2 Cooperate with Teams during the search event utilizing the ICS structure and providing instructions to help them operate safely.
- 3.5 Provide RCMP member trained in search procedures to act as the GSAR - IC on site who will approve all search objectives and RCMP operational expenses throughout the activation;
- 3.6 Provide further investigative capabilities when required;
- 3.7 Provide staff for search site control, traffic control and crime scene for the duration of the incident;
- 3.8 Provide on-site logistical support for all personnel participating in search operations as required;
- 3.9 Provide critical and necessary details using the Missing Person Report form to the Team in a timely manner;
- 3.10 Provide or obtain air support, marine support and/or police dog services when deemed required;
- 3.11 Authorize Teams to conduct evidence searches if required. The search for evidence is a critical component of any investigation. The H Division RCMP recognizes the value that Teams bring to evidence search operations.
 - 3.11.1 NSGSARA may assist in the search for evidence relating to criminal offences only when requested by the RCMP and when operationally feasible within a reasonable time frame and when it is safe to do so.
 - 3.11.2 H Division RCMP carries liability and personal injury insurance for NSGSARA activations for evidence searches.
 - 3.11.3 Evidence searches are not part of the DEM list of approved activities for Teams. Therefore, all costs associated with these activities will be the responsibility of the RCMP. This includes, but is not limited to team mileage, equipment usage/rentals, meals and any lost/damaged equipment claims.
- 3.12 The RCMP will provide annual validation opportunity when operationally feasible to NSGSARA civilian dog teams within the national RCMP GSAR accepted standard to ensure a high level of service for search and rescue purpose;

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- 3.13 Facilitate an operational search debriefing as soon as possible after each incident, inviting representation from each participating Team as required;
- 3.14 Decide in consultation with the (H Div EMS) on whether to continue, suspend or re-activate a search;
- 3.15 Promote and assist in the facilitation of joint training sessions with NSGSARA on an annual basis, if operationally possible;
- 3.16 Media releases and interviews are to be authorized by the RCMP. Team(s) personnel, can be authorized by the RCMP to provide information to the media so that the Team(s) efforts are identified in the media for purposes of facilitating recruiting and fundraising activities in their communities;
- 3.17 Coordinate additional resources through JRCC and other stakeholders as necessary.
- 3.18 Facilitate a recognition program of Volunteers at 10-year intervals beginning with 5 years service.
- 3.19 Will communicate the official standdown on completion of a search.

4.0 Responsibilities of NSGSARA Teams:

- 4.1 Respond on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis, if safe to do so, providing trained and qualified search management based on the requirements of the CSA Standards <https://sarvac.ca/core-training-competency-standards>;
- 4.2 Immediately deploy the Team that is responsible for the area to the incident site as requested by the RCMP and support with mutual aid GSAR resources as required;
- 4.3 Coordinate team members call-out and transportation;
- 4.4 Ensure that an appropriate response of qualified searchers and IMT staff are activated by the initially activated Team or seek mutual assistance from neighboring Teams with approval by the GSAR IC;
- 4.5 To work collaboratively with the RCMP within the ICS framework;
- 4.6 Provide and/or facilitate evacuation services for subject(s) from wilderness or urban areas as defined in CSA Core Competency Standards <https://sarvac.ca/core-training-competency-standards>;
- 4.7 Provide appropriate care within scope of training to injured parties and evacuation to advanced medical care;
- 4.8 Reserve the right to refuse any untrained volunteers based on operational or safety concerns;

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- 4.9 Maintain appropriate internal Standard Operating Guidelines, Procedures and Policies;
- 4.10 Generate and secure all search documentation and provide same to the RCMP upon request, including; sign-in sheets, standardized NSGSARA search reports, maps depicting area covered, incident objectives, situational reports, logs, as it is maintained in the SMART program;
- 4.11 Ensure team members have completed a Criminal Record Check as part of their application process, and maintain a Criminal Records Check every 24 months and document in the SMART database;
- 4.12 Maintain a current list in the SMART data base, of Volunteers and qualifications. This information shall be made available to the RCMP upon request;
- 4.13 Ensure ground searches are entered into the NSGSARA SMART system and that the Search Manager confirms all Volunteers on site are properly trained for the search;
- 4.14 Provide individual team representation at any formal debriefing with in-person or formal written input in advance of said debrief after each operational deployment as required at the cost of the RCMP;
- 4.15 Submit search data to the International Search and Rescue Database after each search, for statistical reporting;
- 4.16 Ensure a CISM program is maintained and any required debriefs are arranged in a timely manner as required.

5.0 Financial Arrangements

- 5.1 The RCMP and NSGSARA are each responsible to provide their own equipment and materials necessary to carry on their respective responsibilities for the search unless otherwise noted in this document.
- 5.2 Based on the responsibilities and activities involved during active searches, Teams will be considered to be in travel status for the purpose of this MOU.
- 5.3 Expenses considered to be the responsibility of the RCMP with approval from the GSAR- IC:
 - 5.3.1 Expenses as per Appendix “A” and “B” through a reimbursement process once a Team has been activated for deployment. The RCMP does not pay for associated travel costs (mileage, meals, accommodations) incurred to and from search sites by individual team members;
 - 5.3.1.1 While activated, payment for damaged or lost items (either personal or team) will only be processed once reviewed and signed by the GSAR-IC and accompanied with the original purchase receipt of the new replacement item.

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- 5.3.2 Meals at the search to be provided at 4 hours intervals or when mutually agreed upon between GSAR-IC and IMT. Additional food items and fluids must be available at all times to ensure the searchers have nutrition for energy and hydration during search operations. Costing for meals, fluids and snacks shall be covered under the meal rate or actual costs with receipts when meal rates are not being utilized;
- 5.3.3 Accommodations for Volunteers attending searches at the discretion of the RCMP GSAR-IC when following their ongoing Safety and Risk Assessment when there is an elevated risk of fatigue/ injury;
- 5.3.4 Rentals of facilities, portable toilets with wash stations, halls and equipment necessary for supporting the search;
- 5.3.5 All costs associated with evidence searching. This includes, but is not limited to team mileage, equipment usage/rentals, meals and any lost/damaged equipment claims.
- 5.4 Expenses considered to be the responsibility of the NSGSARA Teams:
 - 5.4.1 All costs associated with Team and individual authorized training;
 - 5.4.2 Personal equipment required for operating in all weather conditions;
 - 5.4.3 All capital costs such as command post vehicles, photocopiers, tools, medical equipment, navigational equipment, and generator and support vehicles;
 - 5.4.4 Operating costs such as pagers, vehicle insurance, administrative costs, equipment and vehicle maintenance.
- 5.5 Approval from the GSAR-IC is required for the following items prior to use. The RCMP GSAR-IC has an immediate spending limit of \$1,000.00. When expenses are believed to be over this amount, the GSAR-IC must consult the IC of Operational Support or their delegate.
 - 5.5.1 Rentals of equipment;
 - 5.5.2 Additional deployment of unit and/or resources over and above the initial response at time of deployment;
 - 5.5.3 Accommodations and meals that are over and above those already agreed upon.
- 5.6 Claims for expenses incurred by NSGSARA will be submitted in the following manner:
 - 5.6.1 Submitted to the RCMP GSAR Coordinator for the search within 45 days. Payment for claims submitted outside this time is at the discretion of the RCMP. All claim submissions must indicate RCMP file number and name of the IC;
 - 5.6.2 RCMP has 45 days to complete reimbursement upon receipt of all necessary details to

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process the submission;

- 5.6.3 With copies of all supporting invoices and reports by each deployed team involved. Teams are responsible for submitting claims into the RCMP.
- 5.6.4 Clear cost breakdown as per Appendices “A” and “B”, and accompanied by copies of all applicable paid invoices.
- 5.6.5 With an included nominal role of all personnel engaged with hours of work identified.

6.0 Terms

This MOU shall commence on the day of signing and will be reviewed every twelve (12) months thereafter unless terminated in accordance with the provisions below.

7.0 Agency Representatives

The following officials are designated as the agency representatives for purposes of this MOU and any notices required under this MOU will be delivered as follows:

For the RCMP:

The RCMP Representative for this MOU is:
Support Services Officer
Royal Canadian Mounted Police H Division
80 Garland Avenue, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

For the NSGSARA:

The NSGSARA Representative for this MOU is:
President
Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association
Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia

8.0 Liability

- 8.1 Each Participants will be responsible for any damages caused by the conduct of its employees or agents in carrying out the terms of this arrangement. NSGSARA understand that the volunteers would not be indemnified by the RCMP and are not eligible under the *Policy on Legal Assistance and Indemnification*.
- 8.2 NSGSARA understand that RCMP is self-insured and would require a proof of insurance before accepting any assistance from one of the NSGSARA member teams and their volunteers.
- 8.3 NSGSARA agrees to, through an appropriate policy of insurance, cover any liability resulting from any action or omission by the NSGSARA, a NSGSARA team, or its employees, agents or volunteers when deployed in assistance to the RCMP under this MOU.
- 8.4 Insurance of personal vehicles and equipment is the sole responsibility of individual volunteers of NSGSARA.

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8.5 Insurance of NSGSARA member Team vehicles and equipment is the responsibility of the individual team. GSAR Teams must carry valid insurance on all team vehicles and air assets, including but not limited to boats, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), and drones.

9.0 Dispute Resolution

Any disputes regarding the interpretation or implementation of this MOU will be resolved only by consultation between the Participants and will not be referred to a national tribunal or any other third party for settlement.

10.0 Monitoring

The Participants will meet every twelve months to review and assess the operation and effectiveness of this MOU.

11.0 Termination

This MOU may be terminated by either Participant unilaterally upon sixty (60) days written notice to the other. Termination does not release a Participant from any commitment which accrued while the MOU was in force.

12.0 Amendment to the MOU

This MOU may only be amended by the written consent of both of the participants.

Reviewed and approved by the following agency representatives:

A/Commr. Dan Morrow
Commanding Officer
H Division RCMP

Sherry Veinot
President
NSGSARA

Date

Date