



Opening Remarks

at
Quality Assurance Conference

The Pursuit of Quality Assurance in Law Enforcement

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Delta Ottawa Hotel

BY
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Good morning, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this important event, on behalf of the Executive and Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

This is the CACP's first national conference on Quality Assurance, and it comes at a critical time in our profession.

"Quality Assurance" is a very technical term. It has its roots in science and is relatively new to policing.

In science, the methodology is one that begins with an hypothesis. This hypothesis is then tested through experiments. The outcomes of those experiments are reported and evaluated for results. The results are then fed into the hypothesis, thereby increasing our knowledge.

When we hear the term "quality assurance", we are likely to think about physical, manufactured products.

If you find a foreign object in your salad, or if the tires on your car lose their treads after 500 kilometres, or if your sidearm jams because of a design flaw, then you know that you have encountered a quality problem.

Canada has regulations in place to dictate standards for many of the products available to us. Government agencies are responsible for monitoring public safety in relation to what we consume, wear and drive.

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However quality assurance is more than safeguarding the public within the status quo.

The modern reason for quality assurance goes beyond controlling for quality. It aims for improvement.

As current practices improve, become more efficient and effective, and lead to further knowledge, they bring us closer to a perfect operation and output.

This is the most obvious way of illustrating how important it is that users and stakeholders have confidence in a product.

And quality assurance does not stop with the products we use. It extends to services.

This is where we are placing our focus for the next two and a half days.

Quality assurance did not form part of the vocabulary of policing until recent times.

What does it mean, in the policing context? Let's step back a moment to consider the policing environment.

Police today are very conscious of the need for public confidence:

- in the quality of our work,
- the values of our workforce,
- the effectiveness of our systems, and
- the health of our relationships with other parts of the criminal justice system, our partner agencies, and our communities.

Public confidence in the system as a whole is not as high as we would like it to be.

The CACP has been addressing this situation of public confidence in a variety of ways.

For example, at our Annual Conference in 2006 we held a bear-pit session in which our guests debated the theme: "Canadians have lost confidence in the justice system: what needs to be done to restore public confidence?"

Our most recent Annual Conference was on the theme of retaining confidence in times of crisis.

Many of our professional learning events deal with this subject indirectly:

- when we focus on cultural competency, we are addressing the question of quality of service.
- when we recommend new, tested technologies we are encouraging an improvement in our quality of service.

Why focus on quality?

Let me put this into a policing perspective.

For most people, the police are the first point of contact with the criminal justice system.

In many respects police are also the most visible part of the system, because we are in all communities across the country.

Our actions are very often in the public eye through the media and the average citizen's video camera.

Our agencies are increasingly subject to formal oversight. We live and work in an environment of accountability, a fundamental condition of democracy.

In some jurisdictions the question of quality assurance is built into legislation, standards are set out and mechanisms in place to assure that quality is attained and maintained.

In Ontario, for example, the *Police Services Act* sets out the principles that apply to policing in the province. The provincial Ministry, authorized to oversee police services, is empowered to monitor police services and police service boards, develop professional development programs, inspect and review police services, and issue directives and guidelines on policy matters.

In Quebec, the *Police Act* sets out five levels of service that a municipal police force must provide in relation to its population, with the sixth level that is assigned to the Sûreté du Québec [s. 70].

The legislation also provides for the establishment of a public security committee in each municipality, responsible for developing performance evaluation criteria [s. 78].

In the case of a municipality providing inadequate police services, the Minister is authorized to step in and direct the SQ to perform policing duties until corrective measures have been implemented [s. 79, s. 81].

We can see that there are good, externally-driven reasons for our interest in quality assurance.

But we have other, professional reasons too.

Quality of services can vary from place to place, and from situation to situation. Service levels and quality are directly tied to resources and their allocation.

In our multi-jurisdictional policing environment, there is no national standard-setting body that dictates the quality of service provided by all police agencies.

At the same time, police are striving to work together more effectively and more efficiently.

A measure of our success lies in the confidence of the communities we serve.

A measure of our maturity as a profession is that we welcome, rather than resist, the monitoring, review, analysis and audit processes that are essential to quality assurance.

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This is where the CACP plays an important role. We do not dictate what a police agency ought to do or how it ought to be done. We are not a standard-setting authority.

So, you might ask, what is our role here?

We are an Association of dedicated professionals. Our commitment is to advocate

- improvements to policing,
- innovative solutions, and
- the highest professional standards.

We promote excellence.

The mission of the CACP, *leading progressive change in policing*, is our starting point.

Our beliefs reinforce this mission:

- Quality police service must enhance the safety and development of our communities.
- It requires continuous learning.
- Quality police service is based on integrity and accountability.
- Finally, quality policing requires empowerment, leading to innovation and creativity.

As with most other professions, policing is one of continuous change. For those of us who are practitioners, it requires continuous learning.

We aim to increase our knowledge and refine our methods, systems and processes. It is this desire to improve that encourages us to import good practices from other professions.

Sometimes we must be creative and innovative in how we adapt and apply these practices to policing.

And so it is fitting that this event is taking place.

Canada's police chiefs, senior executives and managers, and police oversight bodies have many good reasons to focus on the issue of quality assurance.

That is why I welcome this event.

We have made ambitious promises here. We drew you to this conference with our assurance that you would meet three very clear objectives:

1. You would leave with a set of specific quality assurance skills and tools that you could apply within your own agency,
2. You would be able to implement a monitoring and assessment process within your home organization, and
3. You would have the opportunity to share good practices and to network with your colleagues here and after the conference.

We have brought together many specialists from across Canada, including researchers and scholars, management experts, auditors, lawyers, quality assurance inspectors.

We are honoured that the Auditor General of Canada, Sheila Fraser, will deliver our keynote address at dinner this evening. We look forward to her remarks and advice with great interest.

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We have high expectations for the quality of this conference.

It has been well planned by conference co-ordinators, Inspector Luc Delorme, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Inspector Karen Noakes, York Regional Police and the Quality Assurance Conference organizing team

I thank them for their initiative and contribution to the CACP's agenda of excellence in policing, and wish all of you an experience that is stimulating, thought-provoking, and positive.