A Chief's Perspective on Strategic Foresight:

A MODERN, IN-DEMAND SKILL FOR CANADA'S FUTURE POLICE LEADERS



According to the Forbes article entitled The 5 Most In-Demand Skills in 2025, strategic foresight is listed as number 4. It is anticipated that "individuals possessing the acumen to craft strategic roadmaps and untangle multifaceted challenges — those involving the orchestration of numerous interdependent variables — will find their cognitive competency in unprecedented demand."

As a member of the CACP Executive Global Studies Program in 2019, my colleagues and I recognized a common gap as we were studying our sector's ability to foresee and respond to seismic shifts in public policy. Impressed by emerging models we examined in Australia and New Zealand, in Europe, and here at home, we encouraged the CACP Executive to break with tradition, and to develop and operate a new learning program aimed not at executive leaders, but one specifically designed for the next generation of police leaders.

CACP Strategic Foresight (SF) is currently accepting nominees for its sixth cohort. Already, almost 90 of our best and brightest police professionals, from 24 municipal, federal and First Nations agencies across the country, have completed this unique and challenging program. Our 2019 cohort members worked with Program Director, Lisa Taylor, a strategic foresight professional and a recognized innovator in Canadian policing, to create a learning program that would aim to produce "transformative outcomes."

Chief Mark Crowell, Waterloo Regional Police Service

" I believe that one of the most important duties of a police leader is to continually assess the individual and collective capacities of our members and our organization, and to lead the development of essential skills and knowledge that will continue to meet the future demands of our profession. Strategic foresight is one such essential skill. It is a modern-day, cognitive competency that is increasingly being recognized as a core skill leaders should possess."



This program is not specifically focused on how to respond to or resolve issues by understanding or fine-tuning existing strategies in the short-term, but rather on how to identify and think about the issues from a new, strategic and more long-term perspective, building resiliency and adaptability. It is about creating a new mindset that allows you to move beyond conventional thinking and to challenge assumptions and the status quo. I have heard it described as 'envisioning the future and then working backward to achieve/address it.' This program is truly transformative and I now look at and approach issues, programs, and strategies in a new way. The program is like a key that literally opens the box so you can think outside of it.

Program participants will emerge with transferable skills, the ability to advocate for SF thinking among their peers and, most importantly, lead with a new and evidence-informed worldview on the future, one that extends well beyond their typical policing-based exposure.

At the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS), we have 15 members who have participated in this learning program. In my conversations with these alumni members, they have described how the program content has broadened their ability to see and prepare for emerging trends in society in the near, middle and long-term; how the interactions and project work among a nation-wide cohort has unleashed and inspired amazing creativity; and how working from outside a traditional policing lens has changed and strengthened the way they understand the communities we serve.

The WRPS has enrolled 2 more members into the upcoming cohort. I believe we are all fortunate that the CACP is continuing to provide this innovative learning opportunity as we all face very challenging and uncertain futures.

"If you haven't already done so, I strongly encourage my fellow police leaders across the country to introduce your agency and your mid-career members to this program."

-Chief, Mike Crowell

