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The dollars and sense of policing, public safety and well-being in your community

Summary Paper commissioned by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of
Police Research Foundation

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Foreword

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Research Foundation (CACP Research Foundation) is pleased to have collaborated with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) to develop a summary paper, *“The Dollars and Sense of Policing, Public Safety & Well-being in Your Community”*. This paper summarizes the complexities and issues addressed by police leaders today, and describes the factors driving the demand for and consuming the resources of police services.

Police leaders, elected officials and policy makers, and interested members of the public are encouraged to look at policing, not in isolation, but as an integral part of a community that includes other roles, institutions and groups that together contribute to community well-being. This broader approach will help to inform decisions about sustainable community safety, security and well-being, and the costs associated with achieving it.

This document summarizes our white paper distributed to CACP members in the spring of 2015, entitled, *“The Dollars and Sense of Policing and Community Safety”* which examines the sustainability of policing and community safety in depth. The white paper contains summaries of up to date research into the costs of policing along with cited references.

Both papers align with the CACP Research Foundation’s primary goals of contributing to the creation of research into policing issues and the adoption of best practices in evidence-based decision making for increased efficiency and effectiveness in challenging and changing times.

We encourage you to share both papers with colleagues and others when addressing policing issues. The full white paper is available in English and French to CACP members on the CACP website at www.cacp.ca.

Debra Frazer, Chair
CACP Research Foundation

Chief Clive Weighill, President
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The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) is a national, not-for-profit organization established in 1902 to represent police chiefs and senior executives in police services across Canada. Today, its members come from federal, provincial, regional, municipal, First Nations, military and transportation enforcement agencies, as well as from disciplines such as security, technology, victim's issues, community development, health and mental health, academic research, adult education and training and many others related to the safety, security and well-being of communities.

One of the CACP's top priorities is to be fully engaged in national and local conversations on the sustainability of policing.

The CACP is committed to informing police leaders, elected officials and community members (i.e. tax payers) about the reality and misconceptions about

- Contemporary policing in Canada,
- Drivers of policing costs, and
- How to achieve community safety and well-being

Awareness of these factors can lead to sound decisions about policing budgets and services.

Contemporary policing in Canada

Policing in Canada is community-based and oriented, with its origins in the principles set out in 1929 by Sir Robert Peel, father of modern policing:

- "to maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police..."
- "...the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence or police action in dealing with them".

Policing in Canada has always been more than crime fighting and law enforcement. Demand for more diverse services is increasing as police are called upon to deal with societal, rather than criminal, issues. Today, policing entails a broad range of activities, including:

- Maintaining public order and public safety
- Enforcing the law (Criminal Code of Canada; other federal statutes; provincial legislation; regional, municipal and Band by-laws)
- Monitoring those suspected of planning criminal acts
- Detecting and investigating crime
- Crime prevention (in all its forms: primary-social development; secondary-situational; and tertiary- use of the justice system)
- Responding to civic emergencies and events of natural and human cause

- Protecting people, especially vulnerable persons such as indigenous and trafficked females, and children vulnerable to abuse, sexual exploitation and bullying
- Protecting property and property rights
- Respecting constitutional rights and freedoms
- Supporting victims of crime
- Serving the community with attention to its cultural, linguistic and demographic characteristics
- Partnering with other police services, security agencies, first responders and social agencies
- Communicating with the public
- Conducting criminal records checks for companies, volunteer organizations and institutions
- Demonstrating accountability to authorities and the public
- Training and professional development
- Efficient and effective use of resources

Drivers of policing costs

Given the growing number of police officers, increasing police budgets and declining crime rates, many have questioned whether the most *efficient* use is being made of policing resources. Many citizens have seen and heard media headlines such as the, “exploding cost of policing in Canada”, and “Canadians are not getting all the police they pay for”.

How accurate are these statements? Does the information on what they are based reflect the real activities of police? Do these comments take into account the court decisions, legislation and public policy factors that influence how police carry out their work and conduct themselves? Do they consider the *effectiveness* of policing, a more meaningful measure of the balance of cost and result? Not necessarily.

Police understand the reality behind headlines like these, and seek to dispel misconceptions and errors that may shape public opinion and local officials’ budget decisions. For example, crime statistics do not provide a complete picture of what police do, because

- They do not capture the number of calls for police service
- They do not account for up to 80% of those calls that are not related to offences reported as criminal, but are related to social disorder, mental health and other issues.
- They do not distinguish between time spent on different types of crimes (major violent crime, organized crime, and Internet-based crime that require extensive investigative work.
- They do not record police work that is proactive, such as meeting community groups and school liaison.

- They do not account for the drain on police resources because of inefficiencies elsewhere in the criminal justice system.
- They do not record resources used to address extraordinary events or situations.
- They do not reflect the more extensive and time-consuming reporting now required as an element of police accountability.
- They do not capture the extent and cost of ongoing and special training, often mandatory, that police undertake in order to remain up to date on the use of equipment, technology and skills.
- They do not explain changes in police responses to certain types of crime such as sexual assault, or to incidents in which mental health may be a factor and de-escalation is encouraged.
- They do not address community expectations and satisfaction with the police services they receive.

A more complete picture of the role of police in the community emerges from other sources, such as the annual reports that each police agency produces as a form of accountability to the public. Reductions in victimization, decreased fear of crime, and increased safety in public spaces can be measured through mechanisms such as community surveys.

Many police services conduct satisfaction surveys of the populations they serve, and consult regularly with formal and informal consultative and advisory bodies for feedback on whether they are providing service that is timely, effective and fair. Local “community wellness” reports are produced in some municipalities, based on sets of indicators that include perceptions of safety and security. Community input, from a variety of sources, is a valuable measure of effectiveness and results of police activity.

How to achieve community safety and well-being

The basic needs of every individual and community include safety, along with other fundamentals such as adequate food, suitable shelter, health care, education and employment, all of which are essential to individual and community well-being and allow individuals to contribute to their society. When these needs are not met, social disorder increases, and crime and victimization may result, requiring an authoritative response that protects those who are vulnerable to harm, deters offenders and provides consequences for criminal acts.

Policing, therefore, is only one part of the security, safety and well-being of our communities. It is the part that is often called upon to respond when others fall short. Achieving this state is a “whole of society affair involving multiple jurisdictions and many mandates beyond the policing system”. (Expert Panel on the Future of Canadian Policing Models).

Making informed decisions on policing budgets

Police leaders are all too aware that policing today is much more than law enforcement. Our roles have expanded to embrace a wide range of activities needed and desired by the communities we serve. It is important that members of the community, including those that make budgetary and policy decisions about policing and social services are informed about the realities.

Police leaders, elected officials and policy makers, and interested members of the public may wish to refer to the following points when discussing policing issues:

- Policing is more than law enforcement, embracing a wide range of activities needed and desired by the community.
- Statistics on crime provide only a small part of the picture of policing, and must be used with caution because they can provide a distorted picture of costs and benefits.
- At the same time as police seek internal efficiencies to reduce costs within their agencies, inefficiencies in other parts of the justice system impose pressures on police budgets.
- Police are only one sector of many that contribute to community safety and well-being.
- Police do many of the things they do because of a lack of capacity in other sectors, and because the police provide round the clock, every day of the year service.
- In order for police to partner with other community agencies, those agencies must be adequately funded and viable.
- Community mobilization is the key to informed decisions about budgets.