

Looking At Policing Differently

The Alberta Association of Police Governance

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Introduction

“We can’t solve problems if we use the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Einstein

The Changing Police Environment

- The policing environment is changing rapidly.
 - A new vision will soon emerge for the future of policing in Canada.
 - What are the forces and factors driving this change?
 - How can Police Boards ensure that they are prepared for the future?
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Outline of this Presentation

- A brief review of how we got here.
 - Consider the external and internal forces driving change.
 - Discuss 'core' policing functions by looking at the results of 2 studies: Caputo and Vallée 2005; and Madeley 2011.
 - Examine the possibilities for moving forward.
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The Challenge of Change

- Change has become a constant feature of modern organizational life.
 - As a result, many people are “change weary.”
 - The “status quo” however is not an option.
 - What is on the horizon for policing in Canada?
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“Tin soldiers and Nixon coming”

- The move toward police professionalism, the introduction of radio cars.
 - The dramatic social changes of the 60s and 70s put the police under a great deal of pressure.
 - The civil rights movement, anti-war protests, social upheaval, etc.
 - These developments seemed to pit the police against the public.
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Consequences for the Police

- Increasing loss of trust and respect from the public.
 - The development of a “thin blue line” mentality.
 - An “us versus them” approach.
 - Serious personal problems began to appear such as:
 - high rates of alcoholism,
 - family breakdown, and
 - high suicide rates.
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The Rise of Community Policing

- Strategies to address the problems of the late 60s and 70s started to emerge in the late 70s and early 80s.
 - Solutions that involved closer ties to the community began to appear which were the basis for “community policing.”
 - Practices like foot patrols and community stations were seen as a way of re-connecting with the community.
 - This was “unconventional” thinking at the time and there was a lot of lip service as well as “push-back.”
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The Lessons of Community Policing

What have we learned about change from our experience with community policing?

- Conceptual clarity – what is it and how is it defined?
 - Implementation challenges – “it was rammed down our throats!”
 - Leadership buy-in – “walking the talk” and the difference between “rhetoric and reality.”
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Security, Intelligence and Post 9/11

- Community policing was becoming widespread then 9/11 happened and this had a dramatic impact on policing.
 - The imperative to address the terrorist threat (both abroad and at home) shifted the focus away from the community towards intelligence and security functions.
 - This put an additional strain on policing budgets since they had to add this responsibility to their workload.
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Intelligence-led Policing

- The gathering and application of intelligence has become a hallmark of contemporary policing (districts, shifts, etc.)
 - While increasing efficiency, there are many unintended consequences related to what gets defined as police work.
 - Crimes known by or reported to the police are the focus while many other harms do not get addressed.
 - Confidence in the police and the justice system is at stake.
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The Imperative For Change

- You have heard about the changes that are either underway or coming.
 - These changes are being driven by both external and internal factors to the police.
 - Current thinking becomes an obstacle to meeting future needs if new challenges are ignored or poorly addressed (the GM example).
 - New ways of thinking and acting are required.
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External Forces: Demographic

An aging population:

“by 2021, one-third of Canadians will be 55 or older” (Loreto, 2009, p.32).

- Crimes against seniors are serious and extensive
 - Telemarketing frauds against seniors total hundreds of millions of dollars annually.
 - Police services have been slow to respond. Even those with dedicated units only have a few officers involved.
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External Forces: Growing Youth Population

- New immigrant and Aboriginal communities have much higher proportions of young people.
 - Many young people are finding it difficult to integrate into Canadian society (high unemployment, low educational achievement).
 - This population is growing and represents a serious social concern (especially the disenfranchised young men).
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External Forces: Social

- Canada is becoming increasingly heterogeneous with over 200 ethnic groups in the country.
 - Many of the new immigrants are from non-European countries – South Asia, China, the Middle East and Africa.
 - Some new Canadians find it very difficult to integrate.
 - We celebrate our diversity but it remains a difficult challenge, especially for the police.
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External Forces: Economic

- Long period of financial restraint and cut backs.
 - The gap between the rich and the poor is growing.
 - The top 20% of family units held 69.2% of all personal wealth in the country in 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2005).
 - In the US, the top 1% held 43% of the financial assets.
 - Over 9 million Canadian children live in poverty.
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External Forces: Mental Illness

- About 20% of the Canadian population will experience a mental illness in their lifetime.
 - Depression is a serious public health issue with disability claims rising dramatically over the past several years.
 - Mental health resources are limited and waiting times for service are long.
 - This poses serious concerns for the police who regularly deal with individuals with mental health issues.
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External Forces: Technological

- Technology has many intended and unintended consequences for the police.
 - The new technological developments have opened up countless opportunities for criminal behaviour (hackers, fraud, e-commerce, identity theft, intellectual property).
 - Unlike the police however, the criminals are not bound by rules and regulations.
 - Many police agencies struggle to keep current.
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External Forces: Social Media

- Almost 80% of Canadians report using social networks.
 - Social media has many potential benefits but also many potential dangers.
 - The role of social media in the Arab Spring but also in the London riots ('Flash mobs' –Vancouver and London, ON)
 - Vice-Principal spends an hour each morning in cyberspace.
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Internal Forces: Demographic

- In 2007, the Police Sector Council projected that 50% of current officers would retire by 2010 (RCMP, 2007).
 - The average officer on the street has 3 - 5 years of experience.
 - These officers are training those that have been newly hired.
 - Recruitment, retention & succession planning are critical.
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Internal Forces: Economic

- Police operating costs rose for the 12th consecutive year to more than \$11 billion in 2008, up 6% from 2007 (OPP 2010).
 - A US study (PERF, 2010) found that a little over half of the police departments had experienced budget cuts in 2010. Some had cut overtime while others laid people off.
 - Policing budgets have to be considered in light of the types of services provided by sworn officers. Who else could/should do the work?
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Internal Forces: Resource Deployment

- “Municipal police are being saddled with national issues on top of the day-to-day crime but get no extra cash.”
 - In 2007, the Vancouver Police Department stated that they did not have enough patrol resources to handle their calls for service (VPD, 2007).
 - Differential response is widespread with many police agencies increasing the use of civilians (Dempsey and Forst, 2008). The police don't respond to many issues.
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The Changing Nature of Harm

- An important challenge for the police is that the nature of harm is constantly changing.
 - Some harmful behaviour becomes identified as crime and gets the attention of the police while some does not.
 - Some crimes are difficult and complex to deal with so not surprisingly they get less attention by the justice system.
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'Street' Crime versus 'Suite' Crime

- We focus on more visible street crimes -interpersonal violence and property crimes which typically involve less affluent members of society.
 - More hidden and complex crimes (fraud, financial crime and anti-trust, environmental crime, etc.) receive less attention.
 - The result is that the rich get policing while the poor get policed.
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Are We Proactive or Reactive?

- Policing is driven by “calls for service.” (Plecas, McCormick and Cohen, 2011). Many front line officers report going “from call to call to call.”
 - There is little time for proactive work since response times and clearance rates are the basis for evaluation.
 - The bulk of police resources are directed at calls for service which typically involve public order or “street crimes.”
 - There are few resources/expertise for other kinds of threats.
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Get Back to “Core Policing Functions”

- We conducted a study involving six police agencies of various sizes and locations across the country.
 - We interviewed police officers at all levels regarding their views of what constitutes core policing functions.
 - We asked a series of questions about ‘core policing functions’.
 - We also asked about the future of policing.
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What are the core functions?

- Enforce the Law and Maintain Order.
 - Emergency Response.
 - Crime Prevention.
 - Public Education and Awareness.
 - Traffic, specialized services, etc.
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What Would You Cut?

- How would they respond to a 20% budget cut?
 - They would start by cutting whole programs and not do an across the board reduction.
 - Cut 'soft' programs like school/community resource officer programs and public education.
 - The focus was on retaining the 'reactive' tasks.
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Start With A Clean Slate!

- We asked how they would redesign policing services in their community given the same budget.
 - This proved to be a very frustrating exercise.
 - There were few new ideas and most involved “tinkering” around the edges (hire civilians in communications etc.).
 - It is really difficult to move beyond current thinking. New ideas require new concepts and language.
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A Partial Replication: SPAC 2010

- 74 participants sent questionnaire and 53 responded.
 - 43% indicated that the workload for their officers had increased over the past 5 years.
 - Recent judicial decisions were seen as an important factor influencing their workloads (e.g. disclosure requirements).
 - Less than half identified terrorism and national security concerns as influencing deployment in their agencies.
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Issues Identified

- Many respondents voiced concerns from civilians that police officers are not visible in the community.
 - *“The workload has remained the same but because of the time spent by officers on report writing and desk duties, the citizens have voiced some complaints that they never see the police cars around anymore.”*
 - *“Officers are in the station more than out on patrol.”*
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Other Issues

Mental Health:

- *“Unfortunately, we are dealing with more and more mental health cases since the province eliminated many projects and facilities. We apprehend these persons and face a 3-4 hour wait at the hospital.”*
 - *“Closure of provincial mental health facilities, resulting in Police Officers having to deal with mental health issues on a far more regular basis. With no place to go, persons who were once institutionalized are now living, with little or no support, in the community.”*
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Other Issues

Adequacy Standards:

- *“Provincial policing guidelines and standards have created a vast amount of work that did not exist in the past. Such as: use of force reporting, domestic violence investigative guidelines etc. Although these guidelines and standards assist in the totality of the investigation, they require an increased amount of time to complete..”*
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A 20% Increase vs a 20% Decrease

- *“the entire policing profession should be overhauled to ensure sworn officers are conducting law enforcement duties and ALL other duties should be handled by civilian staff. There are too many police officers doing a job that a civilian should be doing”*
 - A 20% increase = more front line officers.
 - A 20% decrease would result in the dismantling of specialized units.
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“If you can’t think it, you can’t do it!”

- The changing policing environment will require the development of new ways of doing business.
 - Conventional thinking will result in **conventional** strategies which will not meet the new challenges (you’ll get more of the same).
 - Leaders in the policing community will have to engage in **unconventional** thinking and be creative and innovative in order to move forward but this is risky!
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Asking the Right Questions

- Conventional thinking leads to conventional questions such as: what, when, where, why, how much, how long, how do we measure it?
 - These are important but operational in nature.
 - What do we need to do to get people thinking about policing in new and different ways.
 - They need to learn how to ask unconventional questions.
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Unconventional Thinking

- Unconventional thinking leads to questions that are strategic, holistic and meaningful.
 - Unconventional thinking moves forward from core **values** to what matters now and what will matter in the future.
 - Unconventional thinking explores organizational **structures** and their contribution to achieving organizational priorities.
 - Unconventional thinking examines the **processes** we use to do our work and whether this is what we should be doing.
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THE VSP TOOL

- The VSP Tool is a diagnostic and planning tool.
 - VSP stands for Values, Structures and Processes.
 - The VSP Tool is based on in depth research with 15 communities from across the country.
 - The research examined factors contributing to successful and sustainable community safety initiatives.
 - The police were key players in these initiatives.
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Getting Beyond the “Talk”

- The VSP Tool builds on shared values and a common vision to develop a plan for moving forward.
 - It goes beyond the “talk” stage by focusing on creating an appropriate organizational structures to implement plan.
 - It addresses the processes we use to put the plan into action including communication and coordination.
 - It includes ongoing evaluation and assessment to guide action.
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Possibilities

- Given our discussion, what are some of the possibilities for the role of the police in the future?
 - Police are highly trained and well paid professionals and should be used in a capacity that reflects their expertise.
 - As first responders, they should address law enforcement demands,
 - However, they could play a “triage” role as they facilitate the involvement of other service providers.
 - Their knowledge and experience should be the basis for responding to existing and emerging harm.
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Re-imagining Policing

- Law enforcement as part of an integrated strategy that address immediate concerns and root causes.
 - Police resources used where appropriate with other service providers working as part of an integrated team.
 - Resources directed at emerging harm including the development of the required expertise.
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Existing Examples

- Various multi-agency mental health strategies.
 - Edmonton's NET Teams.
 - Many examples of integrated teams working on domestic violence, child abuse and border security.
 - These examples contain elements of an integrated approach but are limited – we need new structures and processes to make them effective.
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A New Formula

- Law enforcement functions are the primary responsibility of the police but not their only responsibility.
 - Past experience shows that their proactive role receives support in theory but few resources in practice.
 - A new formula is needed so that resources can be directed at preventing crime and intervening long before a law enforcement response is required.
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The Challenge Moving Forward

- New strategies are likely to run into resistance based on the strength of existing police culture and practice.
 - Start with Values and work toward the development of a new vision with all key stakeholders.
 - Develop a plan based on what we know is effective.
 - Put the appropriate structures into place including joint training for integrated teams, information sharing, etc.
 - Create processes that meet people's needs.
 - Evaluate and base decisions on evidence.
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Final Thoughts

“Leaders establish the vision for the future and set the strategy for getting there; they cause change. They motivate and inspire others to go in the right direction and they, along with everyone else, sacrifice to get there.”

John Kotter
Harvard Business School

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Workshop Questions

What is (should be) at the heart of a new policing model?

Workshop Questions

What challenges do you see to moving this new policing model forward?

Workshop Questions

What opportunities are there in your communities to create partnerships and/or efficiencies in this new policing model?

Workshop Questions

How will you know that your police service has been successful in accomplishing its goals under this new model?
