

2021-2023 AAPG Strategic Priorities

Proposed Strategic Priorities

- 1. Providing improved service to our members and potential members**
- 2. Restructure our Bylaws and Board Composition to be more inclusive, with unrestricted membership participation and benefits for 'Associate' members**

The AAPG is a small membership organization which has identified as its objectives a stated intent to provide support and information to its membership, paying particular attention to;

- support excellence in community governance and oversight of police services;
- facilitate educational opportunities for members;
- create forums for members to exchange information concerning community governance and oversight of police services

This Strategic Priority(s) setting exercise is intentionally brief, for the sake of expediency and functionality, while bringing our focus onto a couple of issues that now would benefit from increased attention as a method of keeping our organization viable and relevant. Formalizing these priorities would assist both members and potential members and is an important aspect of meeting our objectives.

With a firm commitment of the Provincial Govt to revamp the Alberta Police Act, and a genuine invitation to participate at the governance review level, the AAPG can be considered a 'main player' in the quest to modernize policing oversight. These priorities can help us to ensure our organization is inclusive and reflective of the diverse communities we hope to serve.

Support for #1 (Providing improved service to our members and potential members)

The prospective change to independent policing governance and oversight is understood to be a critical advancement for all police agencies in Alberta. The current Police Act is in desperate need of modernization. For our 'Police Commission' members, the opportunity to change the 'complaint against police officer' process (amongst many other issues) is long past due. For our 'Policing Committee' members, this is an opportunity to correct many dysfunctional practices which exist within the RCMP governance and oversight process and thus their accountability to our municipalities.

Providing an improved service to our membership can result in more effective oversight at a local level, help to establish ground-breaking policies which then support other communities, and promote both the localized implementation of oversight bodies and increased membership in the AAPG.

The AAPG now enjoys full membership of all Police Commissions in Alberta. There is no real opportunity for growth in that cohort. However, there are many (30?) communities in Alberta that contract policing services to the RCMP, and who could opt to create a Policing Committee oversight body. Given the nature of current discussions about RCMP policing province-wide, this represents a real opportunity for increased oversight, increased membership in the AAPG, and a much stronger voice at the provincial table when given the opportunity.

'Improved Service' can be defined as creating an interest in the specifics of each AAPG member's oversight role, successes, difficulties or progress. This might be demonstrated by creating a standing agenda item during Board meetings that

ask for brief ‘progress reports’. When local difficulties are identified, Board members can volunteer to be the AAPG contact, provide supporting documentation or advice as needed, and report back to the Board. Each year’s efforts can easily be compiled into a report of AAPG successes for an annual membership update.

Potential members, who can review the possibilities of how governance issues are addressed, how the AAPG provides support, and see the impact in communities that have previously adopted formalized police oversight, may then be motivated to install such oversight with advice and support from the AAPG.

For the AAPG to remain viable and relevant, we must continue our important work at the provincial table. Strengthening our voice with increased membership and productivity brings additional credence to that voice.

Within the constraints of time, many of our current duties focus on process, fulfilling the responsibilities of maintenance and administrative duties critical to keeping the organization funded and in compliance with our Bylaws. Although this is time and energy consuming, and of necessity, our participation in external (for example the Sol Gen office, Police Act Review (PAR), Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) and the Alberta Interim Police Advisory Board (AIPAB)) are activities essential to achieve our advocacy role. This will enhance our service value to our members.

Support for #2 (Restructure our Bylaws and Board Composition to be more inclusive, with unrestricted membership participation and benefits for ‘Associate’ members)

This has been identified by both our current Board and by ‘associate members’ as a potential for increased participation and value to our Alberta communities who are not yet a formalized oversight body. The general stated intent is to bring ‘Associate’ members into the formal structure of the Board, as a full voting member(s), with the associated privileges offered to ‘Regular’ members. The extent of that participation is argued to be critical to developing a functional and cohesive Board.

Such a change to ‘Board’ composition and subsequent Bylaw amendments would require a wide-ranging discussion amongst the entire AAPG membership. The changes can be communicated as a desire for the AAPG to become more inclusive and to provide better representation for communities who, although not oversight enabled, nonetheless have issues with policing oversight that require attention. It would be a substantial adjustment to the manner in which the AAPG now conducts its business, but has the potential for growth, improved relevance for a wider range of communities in Alberta, and a stronger voice with the province.

Questions will be abundant. Change of this magnitude will create discomfort for some. As much as possible, the AAPG must allow for fulsome debate, alternative suggestions, input from those who are not now AAPG members, all with a view to create the most functional and inclusive ‘provincial’ policing oversight body possible.

We will need to ask, and be prepared to deliberate;

- Should we restructure the current nine-person Board to include a (or more?) representative(s) from Associate members?

- Should we differentiate how many members of the Board should be from police commissions, police committees and associate members?
- Should we include associate members as voting members?
- What are the risks / rewards?
- How would the province react to such a change? How would a stronger voice impact that relationship?
- How would this impact membership fees / individual membership benefits / financial support from the Province?
- How will a revised Police Act impact this issue?

Currently, our Associate membership is less than 20, with potential to at least double if all eligible municipalities were to join the AAPG. Many would benefit from membership in the AAPG but are constrained by the need for cost effective (inexpensive) participation to justify their funding commitment. They also need to see value for money, and as such, if they have no substantive voice in the process, may be reluctant to engage.

As a ‘strategic priority’, this is substantial. The work associated to such a change of policy direction is not trifling. If accepted as a direction for the coming years, our Board will need to be engaged in all aspects of process. ‘Pulling together’ as it were.

Adoption of this strategic priority will set a new direction for the AAPG, is an important discussion to have, has potential to amplify the AAPG voice, and can encourage many communities to become more involved. It may also provide impetus for improved policing in communities where policing oversight is not yet functional.

Recommendation

1. That the AAPG Strategic Priorities for 2021 to 2023 inclusive will be: providing improved service to our members and potential members; and
2. Restructure our Bylaws and Board Composition to be more inclusive, with unrestricted membership participation and benefits for ‘Associate’ members

Al Bohachyk
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 Dec 14, 2020