

Notes for Remarks
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Police Leaders' Perspective on Accountability, Building
Ethical Frameworks and Civilian Oversight

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Civilian governance of policing is a prominent, important feature of effective police community interaction. Recognizing that the public has the right and the responsibility to participate in policing is a first principle.

I am encouraged to see a broad representation from the community, in addition to police services and police oversight agencies, taking part in this professional development opportunity.

These opportunities are more valuable than ever today – in the face of an increasingly complex policing environment and very high public expectations for responsiveness and accountability. They can only serve to benefit the goal we share of ensuring effective, accountable policing for our communities.

Today, demands for accountability and transparency in all segments of society are at unprecedented levels.

This is certainly true for law enforcement.

Why is accountability so important?

Accountability – effective and meaningful accountability is the one way to sustain and enhance public confidence in the administration of criminal justice.

Public trust and confidence are cornerstones of effective policing: trust in police integrity, and confidence in a fair and equitable justice system. These elements help to shape the profound and critical relationship that exists between the police and the public. They help to sustain the environment for consistent

delivery of high quality, responsible police services devoted to public safety and security.

They reflect the common Canadian values of fairness, compassion and accountability... the values that I believe, define a standard of professionalism within the context of law enforcement.

Our panel this afternoon has been asked to provide you with the police leader's perspective on accountability, on the building of ethical frameworks and on civilian oversight.

In particular, I've been asked to talk about the "focus on professionalism" initiative that my police service – the Ontario Provincial Police has been actively pursuing over the last two years.

I am pleased to do so.

Our focus on professionalism emphasizes three key elements:

- our policing responsibilities;
- relationship building with our criminal justice partners and the various communities we serve; and
- the articulation and embedding of our ethical framework.

In keeping with our theme, I would like to focus my remarks on two of these areas: on building and sustaining good relationships with the communities we serve; and on our commitment to entrench, throughout our organization, the core values and ethical standards that sustain good police work.

Let me start with a thumbnail sketch of the Ontario Provincial Police.

The OPP mandate is unique in this province. We fulfill municipal, First Nations, provincial and international policing responsibilities on behalf of the Province of Ontario.

We are North America's third largest, deployed police service with more than seven thousand four hundred (7,400) uniformed and civilian members and eight hundred and fifty (850) volunteer Auxiliary officers.

The OPP serves people in every part of this province, which, as many of you will realize, is a vast territory: larger than France and Spain combined.

At the municipal level, more than four hundred (400) communities receive their front-line policing services from the OPP. These communities range from well-established urban centers to isolated northern villages. Four of these are accessible only by air and another is accessible only by train. The OPP must provide a police service that is as relevant in these communities as here in southern Ontario.

More than a quarter of the communities we police have chosen to establish municipal policing contracts with the OPP for service delivery. Each one must have a police services board as the civilian governing authority.

Let me say that it is a daunting task to manage governance relationships with more than one hundred (100) different police services boards.

Still, given the complexity of the relationships and the numbers, it is a task that I believe is going relatively well. It is certainly my priority, and that of my organization, to ensure that our communities have the kind of efficient and effective policing service that local governing authorities deem important.

Our ability to do this speaks to the quality of the relationships and the degree of openness that exist between our governing authorities and police executives.

Successful policing today is very much about working together in a forthright manner. This is the bottom line that I have set for all local and regional OPP commanders: That we will work openly and collaboratively with our communities to identify and resolve local problems and issues.

As an example, in addition to our police services boards, we are involved in highly valued, collaborative partnerships with more than three hundred and fifty (350) community policing committees to do just this.

Recognizing the complexities of language and culture plays a big role in meaningful, effective and appropriate service ... especially when members of the criminal justice system, including police officers, interact with victims, families and communities.

The OPP has established a French language services strategy to build on the relationships and the progress achieved to date in our delivery of French language services.

It is our goal, in identifying such issues as recruiting, to lead the provincial government in the delivery of service to our francophone municipalities. We have signed agreements with the Association of Francophone Municipalities and at each annual conference they assess our progress.

We work closely with First Nations police services in Ontario to deliver pro-active, community-based programs as part of a comprehensive strategy to better serve our First Nations and Métis communities.

Now, let me turn to the OPP's own professionalism initiative and the work we are doing to strengthen the values and ethics that we believe are fundamental to good police work.

First, why?

The OPP has a proud history of highly effective policing in Ontario and excellent relationships with its partners and diverse communities. We want this to remain the case going forward, in sync with society's changing values and standards.

In the face of heightened public scrutiny of police actions, we understand the need to continually earn public trust and confidence.

In the face of society's increasing diversity and multiculturalism, we recognize the pressing need for dialogue, learning, mutual respect and understanding.

The initiative was not, and is not, meant to address misconduct and disciplinary processes. We have regulations, processes and infrastructures in place for such matters – although we are always trying to improve these – as well as civilian oversight bodies external to our police service.

We were of the view that it was important to our staff, to our police services boards and to our public to articulate who we were, what we stand for; not only in our service to the community but in our dealings with each other as co-workers.

We knew that if we needed to pay vigilant and methodical attention to our core values that we needed to reflect these values in how we all did our work; that they needed to be part of the air we breathed.

Public confidence is fundamental to effective policing.

Our intention was to clearly define and put in place opportunities to continually reinforce those actions that are above the ever-rising bar of professionalism. By this I mean the kinds of things that the most skilled public servants continually try to do even better. The high visibility of police work makes this crucial to a police service's credibility.

A first step in reshaping our focus on professionalism was to refresh our definition of the values and ethical standards that best characterize the OPP, consistent with society's expectations today and heading into the future.

This was done with the help of a broad range of people.

Employees, auxiliary volunteers and members of the public were asked to identify specific, tangible and measurable behaviours and skills that are ideally demonstrated in a range of practical policing scenarios.

We also sought ideas on the qualities most valued in colleagues and supervisors.

Overall, about 400 people provided input.

What was said, time and again, was that policing was all about respectful relationships, fairness, courage and caring, accountability, valuing diversity and continuous learning.

Today, these are our core values.

Then we went a step further: We moved to define these values in terms of concrete, observable behaviours.

Today, these behaviours are our ethical standards.

Together, these became the OPP Promise.

The OPP Promise is something our governing authorities, the public and the people who work for the OPP can rely on. The ethical framework it provides is a touchstone for the tough, ethical dilemmas and decisions police face daily.

Having the framework is one thing. Ensuring that actions remain consistent with espoused values at all levels and across the diverse and widespread communities we serve is another.

Let me touch briefly on some of the work we are pursuing to ensure consistent implementation.

Our business planning process provides the framework for the open and transparent development of policing programs and services. Our process brings into play all levels of service delivery and most importantly, includes our civilian governing authorities in the development of priorities.

Ongoing input from our multi-cultural Community Advisory Committee and First Nations Select Liaison Council, as well as local advisory committees, also allows us to better understand and tailor our services and programs to effectively anticipate and meet the needs and priorities of Ontario's diverse communities.

Planning based on community input and a comprehensive review of issues and challenges is an essential element of OPP service delivery. In 2002, values and ethics became the foundation for our corporate business plans.

Proactive values maintenance is being methodically woven into every course offered through our Provincial Police Academy.

New learning tools, including videos and information packages, have been added to courses and are posted on our internal web site. They deal with issues of fair and equitable policing, human rights, conflict resolution and maintaining a positive workplace.

Discussions around professionalism are now part of mandatory annual training, like firearms, for all our officers and professionalism is a common theme of conferences and workshops.

We have increased the availability of an award-winning First Nations awareness course that covers Aboriginal cultural, legal and historic issues. Understanding these issues provides the basis for understanding today's community issues and developing good working relationships with First Nations communities.

Accountabilities around values and ethics are written into all staff performance plans and appraisals. Quality assurance audits are conducted with values and ethics measurements in place. We provide our middle managers with guides to the kinds of things they can do to build a culture of professionalism.

Values and ethics are integrated into the local interviews conducted with prospective OPP recruits and values and ethics are part of the competencies for our sergeants, staff sergeants and inspectors.

We conduct targeted outreach, recruitment and fast tracking of qualified applications from groups under-represented in our organization.

OPP Bound is a tremendously successful initiative designed to introduce policing as a career to under-represented groups. Last year the focus was women. More than twenty-six hundred (2,600) women vied for 100 seats. This year, it is Aboriginal women and men.

We have recently initiated discussions with the Canadian Centre for Race Relations.

Our “focus on professionalism” is a work in progress, an on-going necessary dialogue in our police service, to meet the needs of an ever-changing Ontario.

I look forward to the discussion that will follow. Thank you.