



SPECIAL SECTION ON POWER AND MONEY

## POLICING COSTS FOR STRATEGIC EFFECT

CHRISTIAN LEUPRECHT, ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA

---

**F**iscal restraint is the new normal. Absent a focusing event, a substantial influx in funds into policing is thus improbable. Confronting that reality are costs of policing in Canada that have been growing at about twice the rate of either inflation or GDP for over a decade. The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Ontario's Future of Policing Advisory Committee (FPAC), and the RCMP's Costs of Policing Working Group have all been studying the matter.

---

**“One of the basic premises of democracy has long been that the people with the guns and the people with the money should not be the same people. Applying this principle to the way police administer the funding they receive is fundamental to optimizing the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, productivity and accountability of the service they provide”**

---

Much of the debate is hung up on costs; it should instead target the longer-term fiscal sustainability of high-quality community safety services and outcomes. Funding is currently provided through organizational silos, based on usage rates, population, or historical service levels. This type of model offers few incentives or funds to encourage collaboration.

By contrast, funding models that address the root causes of social discord and deviance through comprehensive multi-sectoral collaboration produce a higher return on social investment. That entails pooling funding with an umbrella organization which allocates funds to agencies to meet specific collective community safety priorities. Such a mechanism optimizes the allocation to those community-safety assets best suited to achieving collective priorities as well as those with the best inter-agency cooperation to do so.

One of the FPAC's recommendations is a Community Safety Plan; and we have been hearing plenty about “hubs” that are effectively means associated with meeting the objectives of such a plan. However, those recommendations need to be accompanied by a collective funding model that incentivizes organizations to respond to such a plan, and to cooperate accordingly.

Absent what one might term a Local Integrated Community Security Network (LICS-N), independent civilian oversight agencies as well as administrators still have a significant role to play in optimizing their organization's strategic effect. Both city councils and Police Service Boards (PSBs) should be in concert with the community and the police chief, setting clear short-, medium-, and long-term objectives and priorities for their police service.

They should hold the police chief accountable by ensuring that the chief responds with a clear plan and milestones as to how these will be met, as well as a budget that demonstrates how funding is allocated. Requests for budget increases should demonstrate social investment to optimize strategic effect, rather than, say, merely justified as a function of ongoing operational expenditures, such as salary increases. This is meant to signal to the police service that the community is no longer paying for salary increases per se; it is prepared to cover only the incremental costs associated with achieving strategic effects.

Since strategic effects are part of a medium-term plan, rather than negotiating budgets on a yearly basis, PSBs can now trade the uncertainty of annual negotiations for stable multi-year funding for their respective police service at either a fixed cost, or fixed incremental cost. To this effect, Chief Administrative Officers of police services (CAOs) need to be given the authority to hold the police service to account for the way funds are spent. That means changing their reporting structure: Rather than being accountable to the chief of police, CAOs should answer directly to the PSBs on financial and policy matters.

In this bifurcated administrative structure, operations and tactics remains the exclusive purview of chiefs of police; however, no longer are CAOs responsible to the chief of police on financial and police matters, but to the PSB directly. One of the basic premises of democracy has long been that the people with the guns and the people with the money should not be the same people. Applying this principle to the way police administer the funding they receive is fundamental to optimizing the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, productivity and accountability of the service they provide.



**CHRISTIAN LEUPRECHT** is associate professor of political science at the Royal Military College of Canada and cross-appointed to the Department of Political Studies and the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University where he is a fellow of the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations and the Centre for International and Defence Policy. His recent study entitled *The Blue Line of the Bottom Line of Policy Services in Canada: Arresting Runaway Growth in Costs* can be downloaded from the Macdonald Laurier Institute at <http://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/CostOfPolicing-final-rev.pdf>.