



# Ontario Chiefs of Police Survey 2024

A candid look at the issues facing  
the leaders of Ontario's police services

The photos in this document reflect the police representatives that [StrategyCorp](#) has served over the years. They should not be taken as an indication of the representatives who participated in the survey.

# Dedication

This study is dedicated to the women and men who serve in our police services and keep our communities safe. **StrategyCorp** wishes to acknowledge the confidential participation by this year's interviewees, without whom this report would not have been possible.

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A candid look at the issues facing the leaders of Ontario's police services.



The **StrategyCorp Institute of Public Policy and Economy** provides thought leadership on important public policy issues facing Canadians and their governments across the country by combining economic and policy expertise with key political insights.

## Designer

**Fidel Gamboa**

Graphic Designer, StrategyCorp

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# Contributors



**Brian Teefy**  
Vice-President,  
Co-lead Community  
Safety Practice



**Sabine Matheson**  
Principal and Chair of  
the Municipal Services  
Practice



**Stephen Beckett**  
Senior Advisor and  
former Assistant  
Deputy Minister



**Charles Bordeleau**  
Senior Advisor and  
former Chief of Police



**Matt Conley**  
Manager, Community  
Safety Practice



**Hannah Tobias-Murray**  
Consultant and Lead  
Writer

# Listening To Our Public Safety Leaders

The purpose of this report is to give voice to Ontario's Chiefs of Police. In Spring 2024, **StrategyCorp** interviewed 20 police leaders with responsibility to provide adequate and effective policing in Ontario communities. Participants represented a wide variety of police services, from the largest to the smallest, from those that are relatively stable in size to those that are growing rapidly.

We wanted to listen to them to find out how they are adapting to keep us safe, supporting our front-line officers, and grappling with homelessness and mental health issues that require the support of multiple public sector organizations.

Interviewees were provided with the list of questions ahead of time and while they were taken through the questions in sequential order, participants were encouraged to speak openly and not feel as if they were required to spend equal time discussing each question. As always, StrategyCorp made two promises to the participants:

- **We committed to faithfully and accurately record and report what they told us.**
- **We assured them that their comments would remain non-attributable.**

We acknowledge that there are many great ideas in this report that are worthy of attribution, but that would defeat the promise of confidentiality and potentially compromise participation or candor. It is always our intent to let the voices of the Chiefs be as we heard them: honest and forthright. In some cases, quotes have been edited for brevity, readability, or to protect anonymity, while remaining faithful to the sentiment expressed by the participant. This report should be understood as qualitative, and not quantitative, research. We do not suggest that our sample is representative or capable of scientific statistical analysis. We also acknowledge our role in collating, grouping, and analyzing the responses.

Nevertheless, we believe that the participants provided us with an honest look into the trends and challenges facing Ontario's police services and that we have done justice to what we heard in the pages ahead. We continue to believe that further work of this kind is valuable.

This survey provides Chiefs an opportunity to reflect on their roles and responsibilities and on what worries them, what keeps them up at night. We hope that this report will prove useful for those interested in understanding the opinions and experiences of Ontario's most senior leaders at this moment in time. We also hope that our findings will invite further discussion about the state of public safety in Ontario communities and provide useful context and insights for decision makers at all levels of government.

This report is a research project of StrategyCorp's Municipal Services Practice Group. It was funded solely by StrategyCorp and was not sponsored or influenced by any third party. It builds on previous research into issues in municipal governance through its Municipal Chief Administrative Officer Series (2015-2023) and its 2023 survey of Police Service Board Chairs.

## **“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US,” AND THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT**

The authors of this report have the greatest respect for Indigenous Rights Holders and the challenges of policing and Indigenous Persons in Ontario. In our view, much improvement is needed in this area. We acknowledge the importance of the issues and the dedication of First Nations chiefs of police. But as a team of non-Indigenous persons, we understand that is not our subject on which to express opinions. Accordingly, we chose to yield this very important policy terrain to others. This decision was not an omission, but a conscious act of respect.

# Introduction

Last year, we studied Ontario's Police Services Boards and the contribution that they make to police governance in Ontario.

We heard that there was much that was going well. At the same time, we heard about challenges that face board chairs and their members as they do their work.

At that time, we were urged to do similar research into the thinking of Ontario's Chiefs of Police. What follows reflects the outcome of that research.

**Ontario's traditions of policing embrace the principle of civilian governance.** Sir Robert Peel described civilian governance in his landmark Principles of 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 that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."

These principles have been reiterated many times in the Ontario context, most recently by the Expert Panel which examined issues related to the Thunder Bay Police Services Board in April 2023:

"Strong and effective civilian governance is the cornerstone of our system of democratic policing."

To be effective, civilian governance must deliver on the promise of effective leadership. Thunder Bay's Expert Panel went on to observe:

"The Board must have the caliber, expertise, political sophistication, and, most importantly, the political savvy to provide visionary leadership. It is also critical for the Board to have the financial and human resources necessary to carry out its responsibilities effectively."

In our 2023 Survey of Police Services Board Chairs, we heard that more than a few Police Services Board Chairs felt that the state of many of these "must haves" was a cause for concern in their own organizations.

This year, we look at this problem, and other aspects of policing in Ontario, from the perspective of our Chiefs of Police.

**Policing is a business for professionals.** It should be. It can literally be a matter of life and death.

Police culture thrives on training and procedure. Increasingly, everything from the optimization of deployments to the investigation of crime are data driven, requiring layers of new skill sets to be added on old. Change in policing is as fast paced and diverse as in society itself. All the old crimes still exist. But new ones evolve with every technological innovation.

There are plenty of reasons why the business of police operations should be left to the experts. For all that it is an expert business, our commitment to civilian governance comes with the expectation that there will be direct civilian input into key questions:

- What should our police be tasked to do? How much is needed to be adequate?
- Do we need to spend more? On what?
- Do we get good value for what we spend?
- How do our police interact with our diverse population?
- Are others better positioned to do it?

All of these questions create a dilemma. How do we respect the fact that policing is a dangerous, highly skilled calling that needs expert leadership, while ensuring appropriate civilian oversight? How and where do we draw the lines?

**“Who will watch the watchmen?”** The challenge of ensuring the legitimacy of the actions of those in power in our society, including our police services, has been the subject of recorded debate for over two thousand years.

It remains a challenge and preoccupation today. So, it was no surprise that sensitivity to the problem of police legitimacy was reflected in our interviews with Ontario Police Chiefs.

## THE LEGISLATIVE ROLE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The duties of a municipal Chief of Police are set out in s. 79 of the *Community Safety and Policing Act* (2019):

*79 (1) A chief of police shall manage the members of the police service to ensure that they carry out their duties in accordance with this Act and the regulations and in a manner that reflects the needs of the community.*

*(3) A chief of police of a police service maintained by a police service board shall,*

*(a) administer the police service and oversee its operation in accordance with the board’s policies and strategic plan;*

*(b) comply with any investigations conducted by the Complaints Director or the SIU Director and any inspections conducted by the Inspector General; and*

*(c) comply with the lawful directions of the board.*

*(4) A chief of police shall establish written procedures regarding the administration of his or her police service and the provision of policing by the police service.*

In this general description Police Chiefs must be partners with Police Services Boards in managing the day-to-day realities of police governance.

In last years’ survey, we heard loud and clear about how challenging these relationships can be to manage. Many told us that though Police Service Boards are meant to be

independent of the municipality, in practice, they are not as independent as they may seem, or as they should be.

- **“Police service board governance is a dimly understood concept.”**
- **“There is a fine line between policy and operations. The board needs training to make it work.”**
- **“There is no such thing as independence from the City.”**
- **“The reality is that police services boards are not independent [from the City]. If you asked them for an 8% budget increase, they would shoot you.”**

Chiefs must deal with their half of the ill-defined police governance relationship, and they also face the same public sector organizational challenges that other local public sector organizations are grappling with; human resource demands outpacing supply, the cost of back office technology, global hacking threats to critical infrastructure.

## THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF POLICE GOVERNANCE IN ONTARIO

In Ontario, police governance relies on a three-way balance of police adequacy, independence and accountability. The legislative framework has three broad pillars:

1. **Ensuring adequacy of police service:** It has features designed to ensure its adequacy. It puts an affirmative obligation on a Police Services Board to create a strategic plan and a budget capable of delivering “adequate” police services.
2. **Maintaining political independence and freedom from operational interference of police service:** It has features that insulate police service from direct political control, ensuring that the police is there to serve and protect all citizens, not to do the will of those in government. Specifically, it is well established that the Board shall not direct the Chief of Police with respect to specific operational decisions or with respect to the day-to-day operation of the police force.



3. **Ensuring accountability and oversight for both quality and cost of police service:** It has features designed to maintain accountability over a service that, depending on the circumstances, can be criticized, fairly or unfairly, as:

- Expensive: relative to other municipally funded services
- Unresponsive or detached: how the Service sets policy on what and how to police emerging challenges, be they encampments, protests, public drug use, etc.
- Controversial or unfair: how the Service responds, or fails to respond, to issues or with diverse members of the public.

**It is a constant that there are always divisive issues to test public confidence in police services:** Some issues in policing are never far away: matters relating to the adequacy of the service, its fairness or biases, and its costs.

The Chiefs understand this. They know from experience that even if they make the “best” choice from a pure policing perspective, from a public relations and political perspective, it is unlikely that they can satisfy everyone, all the time.

Many of the Chiefs we interviewed acknowledged the challenge of preserving public confidence in the police service in the face of such inevitable issues.

They also know that they cannot carry the entire weight of police legitimacy on their own shoulders. They need to be able to rely on the overall system of police governance to earn and maintain public confidence in the Police Service.

It all seems simple enough. In practice, it’s much more complicated.

## **EACH PARTNER IN POLICE GOVERNANCE MUST DO ITS PART IN A SYSTEM BUILT ON CHECKS AND BALANCES**

**The Province:** The province must set the foundation for police legitimacy in the structures, rules, and mechanisms for oversight and redress. The proclamation of the new legislative framework was viewed as a positive change by many. Some highlighted positive on training. Others focused on potential financial challenges, as increases in standards drive costs upward, potentially creating issues for services with limited financial resources.

**The Police Service Board:** The Board must rely on the Chief and his/her executive team to provide inputs into the budget and the strategic plan. A generalist Board, that substitutes its own judgement for that of police professionals, risks making mistakes. Similarly, a Board that defers too much to the policing professionals runs the risk of failing to do its job. For more detailed discussion of the specific role of the Police Services Boards, see our 2023 Survey.

**The Municipal Council:** Council is not meant to micromanage the police budget. Police services are inevitably a large portion of the municipal budget, and many Councils are reluctant to let such a large item pass without scrutiny. Neither is Council permitted to direct matters relating to police operations. But many of the Chiefs we spoke to made it clear that they think it is essential to maintain relationships with Council members.

**The Chief Administrator and civic administration:** The police and the civic administration are meant to be operationally independent of each other. But many of the Chiefs made it clear that in their view, the challenge of addressing many social problems today requires an “all of government solution” that mobilizes the resources of police, social services, mental health and addictions, housing and income support professionals.

This multi-disciplinary aspect was recognized by the requirement that each municipality have a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, approved by the Council – of which the police are only one stakeholder.

This means that the Chief Administrative Officer or City Manager is also an important part of the governance equation. Independent, yes, but also collaborative. Again, it’s a question of appropriateness.

## WHAT WE HEARD

In many respects, the results of our interviews were a mirror image of what we learned from the Chairs of Police Services Boards in 2023. Again, some reported that things are going very well. Those that identified problems tended to speak to three broad challenges as set out below:

- **Challenges related to the public safety threats facing the community:**
  - o Mental health and addictions crisis: Many Police Chiefs expressed concern about the growth in demand for service related to mental health and addictions.
  - o Growth in the range and complexity of crime, and in overall demands for service and the failings of the judicial system.
- **Challenges related to resourcing the police service:**
  - o The challenge of ensuring that there is adequate funding to maintain adequate and effective police service.
  - o Unprecedented human resources challenges: Many reported that it is a struggle to recruit, train, and retain sufficient officers. A particular focus is dealing with mental health issues, PTSD or PTSI, and the impact of long-term disability on the service.
- **The challenge of good governance:**
  - o Challenges in managing relationships with other governance partners: Chiefs have complex and sometimes strained relationships with police services boards, Mayors, municipal councils, and police associations.
  - o Meeting public expectations and the need for public trust: many commented on meeting expectations in the current public opinion climate.

The chapters that follow elaborate on each of these themes. The following pages offer a candid look at what Ontario's police leaders are grappling with, from day-to-day public law enforcement, to public safety emergencies to budget and governance challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of the United Kingdom. (2012, Dec. 10), FOI release: Definition of policing by consent, Home Office <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-by-consent/definition-of-policing-by-consent>

<sup>2</sup> Mukerjee, A., et al., "Building Trust through Bold Action: Roadmap for real change."(2023), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Mukerjee, A., et al., Op. Cit., 14.

# What We Asked

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## Chapter 01

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# Major Crime Issues in your Community

In your community, are there crime issues that stand out as being a particularly pertinent problem?

# What We Heard

## #1: THE “TRIFECTA OF HOMELESSNESS, ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH.”

**A growing problem:** The majority of participants, from communities of all different sizes, mentioned the impacts of homelessness, addictions, and mental health and the effects it is having on resources.

- “The trifecta of mental health, homelessness, and addiction is a significant issue for us.”
- “Everyone I met with had concerns about vulnerable populations and their downtowns, [it is not just us], it’s all across the country and North America.”
- “Here, [a small community] one homeless person is shocking to residents.”
- “Mental health, addictions, and homelessness is just starting here. It’s more hidden, people sleeping in cars, and there are tents. There’s a lot of people drifting from apartment to apartment. It’s not in your face in the way that you see people downtown. There may be one or two people that need to move along that are sleeping in front of stores.”

Some noted that there was an intermunicipal, cross-border aspect to the problem.

- “It’s magnified even more in the hub communities where you have vulnerable people and populations coming from a variety of communities to one location.”
- “We have neighbouring municipalities dropping their homeless here.”

**A growing draw on resources:** As the issue grows, so does the draw on police resources.

- “Homelessness and mental health is not a crime but it’s still taxing on our services.”

- “That’s probably the biggest draw on all of our resources – [our community] really being the primary point of service for health and human services calls.”

**A blurred line:** Many participants voiced concern that there is a “blurred line” between the social issues and crime issues.

- “The issues of social disorder and the issues of crime might be overlapping, but the solutions are different and those who have responsibility for solutions are different.”
- “We have two different camps, or at least last year we did. One was primarily housing people who were not into drugs or criminal activity and are trying to distance themselves away from those. And then we had the other camp that was littered with social issues. Addictions for sure leads to criminal activity, and that’s definitely the opioids.”
- “So, it’s really hard to talk about crime and not talk about the social issues cause the two are intertwined at least at this point in time.”
- “[These issues] don’t always result in crime, but the community often perceives that somehow the police should be responsible for doing something about all of that.”

**The pressure of Council and community expectation:** Indeed, many participants noted there is growing public pressure to respond to highly visible issues, especially open use of illegal drugs and encampments.

- “The police are often one of the only 24/7 services, so people default us solving these issues.”

**“The public perceives us as the janitors of society.”**

- “It’s very difficult when dealing with the community, they say, ‘Chief clean it up,’ versus the social agencies who say, ‘don’t do anything we got it’. There is a balance; we need enforcement but also want to put people on a positive path.”

**Diverging views on the best role for police:** There is growing debate about what role police have in addressing these issues. Many point out that the real solutions are in housing, and support, not in police measures.

- “We have the social issues that the Council wants to criminalize. I don’t see that as the solution. We have a piece in there as the police, but it’s more connected with [non-police] services that can address it properly.”
- “Last year was a big year for us and I think the City has done a pretty good job through the winter establishing short-term housing for people. That got us through the winter, but one tent is already erected and you know that’s probably going to result in a summer full of homelessness living in our parks.”
- “Mental health. Addiction. Homelessness – we still live in a world where people are calling us to address those issues. So, we’re engaging, we’ve actually really made some gains with our partners, and we’ve done some great things.”

**Innovate and collaborate.** With these challenges increasing in volume, especially in downtown centers, Chiefs are utilizing new and innovative strategies to support community needs and their vulnerable populations.

- “We have now started a hospital program where we put part-time police officers/special constables in the hospitals. [...That will allow] our patrol and primary response to be back out on the road.”
- “We have two special constables in a mobile van. [...] We can do a hand off to [them] for transport, allowing our team to perform their core responsibilities.”
- “We have created a daily opportunity [to] talk to clients [with the other social services in the room]. It might be attending court, going to the ministry kiosk. It made a [positive difference.]
- “All of a sudden [our officers] didn’t feel like they were winging it, we’ve become better at attending those types of calls.”

**More resource, and accountability, for social service agencies:** Most participants would welcome greater investment in social services, to allow them to pick up more of the burden on dealing with mental health, addictions and homelessness. Some participants noted that increased funding should be matched with heightened accountability for results. Chiefs generally feel there is a lack of sustainable services in the social services sector for them to effectively deal with issues where they need to take a lead.

- “We share one massive problem, there is no evaluation [of social service performance]. Police are evaluated but there is no scrutiny on how we are spending our dollars on social services.”
- “Why is it that opioids are the things that is driving their day-to-day activities to the point that they lose homes, friends, any form of self-dignity? What are addiction services and mental health services and housing services doing about that and who’s holding those services accountable?”



- “As a chief of police, think about how many accountability measures we have, whether it’s annual reports on the adequacy standards or whether it’s just public communication about day-to-day enforcement, I’ve yet to hear any of the social services have to do a public report on what they’re doing and how they’re helping.”

## VIOLENT CRIME IS ON THE UPTICK...

The typical and necessary police work that supports victims and prevents further crime is becoming an increasing problem after a number of years of progress in reducing threats to the public.

- “There has been an overall increase in violent crimes, we are seeing a lot of the gangs come up to our area and carry on their business. We’ve seen an uptick in street shootings.”
- “It’s serious violent crime. If we’re not number one in the province, we’re pretty close to it.”
- “...the ever increasing criminal calls and calls for service; increasing demands with more homicides”
- “We’re concerned about human trafficking because that comes with the guns and gangs...”

Some Chiefs said that cities located along the 401 corridor are seeing an increase in various crimes including human trafficking, theft, drug trafficking and increased gang violence.

- “We are not immune to the organized crime that hits the 401.”
- “The biggest thing right now is distraction thefts. It’s really alarming.”
- “Impaired driving, theft - we still do gas drive offs - we have those types of issues. It’s something we are going to be working towards, but being right off the 401.”

**Intimate partner violence and sexual assault** is getting the attention of Chiefs of Police. Political and advocacy leadership is changing the landscape on sexual assault and violence against women crimes. More confidence for victims to come forward and better investigative tactics should improve justice and, hopefully, deter offences over time.

- “Less visibly would be intimate partner violence. Although many communities have now declared it an epidemic, it’s still something that is not talked about enough.”
- “Violence against women takes up a lot of time, also sexual assault, the numbers are going up. The partners in the community are quite critical about what we do or don’t do.”
- “Assaults make up almost half of our entire violent crime, and I would say out of that, the primary driver is intimate partner violence, which was one of the things we’re trying to deal with.”
- “Advocacy groups, who have campaigned to us to declare it an emergency, and when we did, we can’t get them to participate in any sort of solution-based stuff.”

## GUNS AND GANGS

Organized crime is creating more victims through human trafficking and deadly drug sales.

- “The presence of organized crime in our community, there’s been, (it’s always been a community that has dealt with organized crime issues) but there seems to be a larger presence of biker related activity and of course with that comes a variety of violent crimes we’ve seen certainly a stark increase in the last five to six years related to organized crime.”

## ILLEGAL DRUGS

- “One word – “drugs “- we have seen a proliferation of activity here.”
- “We have the gangs with the drugs, and we didn’t used to have that. Just this month alone we’ve had a number of shootings.”
- “Our detectives probably most of their work would be around drugs and that’s combined with what we’re doing with surrounding municipalities.”
- “Definitely drug-related, human trafficking related crime.”

**Moving to smaller communities:** Like the homelessness challenges, gang activity is spreading in new ways to smaller Ontario communities.

- “The guns and gangs. [...] They concentrate in circles outside of the GTA. It became a tidal wave we weren’t ready for. We didn’t expect displacement from the GTA as quickly as it came.”
- “It used to be we thought of it as a big city problem, now we have vehicles driving down the streets shooting at each other. It’s all drug related.”

## AUTO THEFT AND HOME INVASIONS

Several participants note the increase in theft, and particularly auto theft.

- “Auto theft, carjacking, break and enters, violent takeovers, home invasions have been taking over - those are the main violent ones.”
- “Obviously, vehicle thefts which are not just a loss and a victimization from the vehicle, but a public safety concern because a lot of these individuals are young drivers, often racialized, who are being coaxed into stealing vehicles.”

One Chief viewed auto theft as, “a GTA and Ottawa problem”, saying, “We are not seeing the same trends elsewhere.” While other survey respondents saw it coming to their community too.

- “Auto theft is a problem for us. It’s certainly not to the degree that you’re seeing in places like the GTA, but auto theft is [...] a pressure point for us.”





## CYBER CRIME & FRAUD

**A growing problem:** From CEOs to seniors, everyone needs to be wary of cybercrime. Hackers from around the world can bring down essential operating systems for public organizations and sophisticated email and phone fraud is putting individuals at risk. Police are increasingly training their officers and relying on civilian experts to help solve cases and promote community safety. The proliferation of fraud scams and the changing methods used by scammers is an issue that seems to be trending up and affecting more individuals and organizations.

- “New crimes like fraud; we don’t have a lot of capacity to address it.”
- “Cybercrime and our ability to effectively investigate cybercrime and the role that cyber plays in so many crimes these days.”
- “The lines between fraud and cybercrime have become so blurred that they are essentially one and the same.”

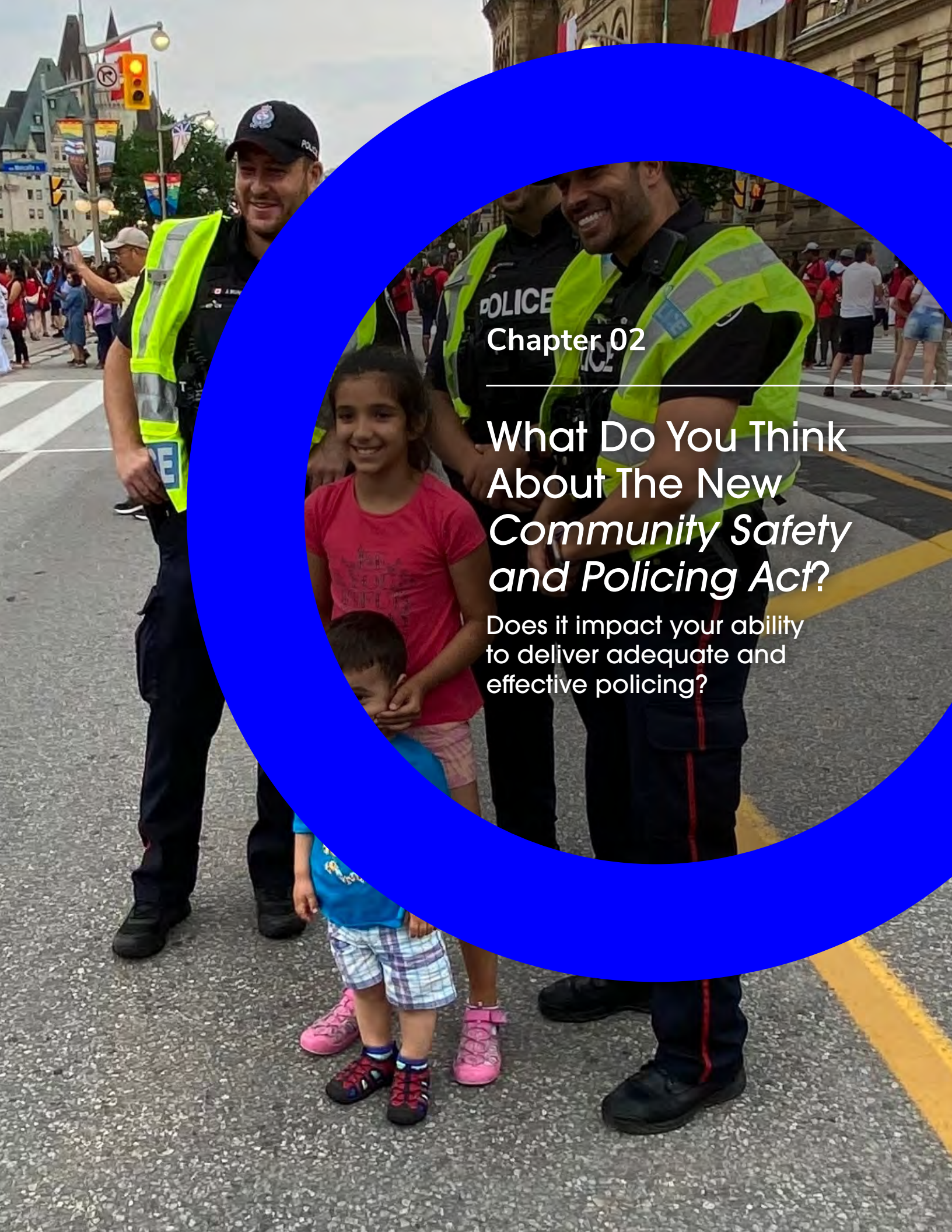
**The need for new capabilities and skills:** Even for traditional criminal investigations, the amount of digital evidence that is available poses significant investigative challenges, and opportunities, to officers. Most crimes being investigated these days have a digital component that is impacting resources and capacity.

- “There isn’t really a specific or real identifiable crime issue. It’s more about the impact of technology on investigating crimes. The large amount of evidence gathering that is occurring through technology.”

## BAIL SYSTEM

We began this section with a ‘systems challenge’ that falls largely outside of the control of police chiefs and we will end with another one. The bail process is fraught with challenging decisions that are inherent to the effective functioning of a criminal justice system. Chiefs of Police will argue that the rules and guidelines surrounding bail are resulting in too many individuals at risk of reoffending being free to do so. Some thought that bail reform did not bring about the changes required to enhance community safety.

- “It’s moving the needle but unfortunately the wrong direction. I’m not a political person but our court systems are completely detached from the rest of humanity. As a result, the ignorance that comes from it is mind boggling.”
- “With bail reform; common sense has left the building.”
- “When you have the courts releasing you to a street corner, that’s a system that doesn’t work.”
- “Unfortunately for the court system to rely on deterrence and rehabilitation as their two main cruxes of the criminal justice in Canada, neither of those exist. Each decision gradually gets worse. That’s the joke. Everyone is laughing except the victims. It would appear that Canada is trying to normalize victimization.”



## Chapter 02

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# What Do You Think About The New *Community Safety and Policing Act?*

Does it impact your ability  
to deliver adequate and  
effective policing?

# What We Heard

Ten years ago, following the initial work of the Future of Policing Advisory Committee, Premier Wynne asked her Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to, “accelerate the development of a package of reforms to policing service delivery.” Now, ten years later, after several ministerial changes and a change in government, the new **Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA)** is largely in force.

Police Chiefs, both individually and through the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, played a significant role in the development of the new legislation. They are now tasked with implementing it - yet we observed varying levels of preparedness amongst police services as regulations were only finalized earlier this year.

Some of the changes are simply keeping up with industry best practices. Others may increase costs but provide better service and more protection for officers performing their duties.

Officer discipline and police service oversight have seen changes. Some Chiefs are optimistic, others less so. Some Chiefs view the Police Association of Ontario (PAO) as a significant influencer on changes to the discipline process and think that recommendations made by Chiefs have been watered down. One thing is for certain. Ontarians will continue to see debate about how best to empower and hold to account, our police officers and police services. While this new legislation will provide adjusted tools, as you will see in subsequent chapters of this survey, it may be that the people in charge of policing are more important than the legislation.

## ABILITY TO DELIVER ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE POLICING

Overall, there was a wide range of opinion about what the effect of the new legislation will be on local policing. The new regulations outlining how a police service shall provide adequate and effective policing will result in new spending requirements and new partnerships between police services and municipalities.

Many were positive, at least on a “wait and see” basis.

- “Overall, I’m optimistic.”
- “I think it’s going to help me deliver adequate and effective policing.”

**“I see many things in there, quite honestly, that should have been done a long time ago.”**

- “I would say generally the adequacy standards are a step in the right direction.”
- “I would say generally it is very good, it’s well intentioned. I think the adequacy standards will be good.”

Others are less convinced that it delivered real, positive change.

- “When you work through it, it’s not a revolution, it’s tweaking.”
- “It was supposed to modernize and create efficiencies, and I’m not convinced that it’s addressed those issues.”
- “It will not affect our ability to deliver adequate and effective policing.”

For some the devil will be in the detail of implementation.

**“April 1st isn’t the end date, it’s the start date. It’s kind of like building a plane while it’s in the air.”**

Some are concerned about the cost implications of meeting the new requirements of the Act.

- “It will come with some increased costs to police services.”
- “It’s going to cost quite a bit of money, so that’s obviously a concern to the board.”
- “It’s been really tough to drill down to the cost when there’s still things that are not clear in the regulations.”

Some forecast that the real effect of the new Act will be to drive another round of change in the structure and service models used by Ontario’s smaller and mid-sized police services.

- “It’s gonna be bumpy for medium and small services.”

**“It’s probably going to force some collaboration on resource sharing. We may see amalgamation of services just because of the stress on maintaining adequate and effective policing.”**

- “Unpacking and understanding just what those Section 14 [OPP support] agreements look like [will be important], because obviously there’s a wide swath of services that small to mid-size services are not equipped, not trained, to handle.”

## INSPECTORATE OF POLICING

One new feature of the Act that garnered a lot of attention is the creation of the Inspectorate of Policing.

- “The one advancement I would say is very positive is the inspectorate of policing. I am optimistic about the professionalization of policing standards improving for all.”
- “I think the changes that are being directed specifically at police service boards and bringing that skill set up to a level where it really should have been all along and holding them more accountable is positive.”
- “I think there’s been a lot of thought put into how [implementation] actually unfolds and what the expectation is of the Ministry and the Inspector General to allow for police services to come into alignment.”
- “I’m sort of anxious to see how the rubber hits the road on [the Inspectorate of Policing].”
- “I think the first test case will have to be a very, very strong one because I don’t want to set a bad precedent.”

## TRAINING

Officer and governance training is an important element of the updated legislation. The main challenge would seem to be capacity. How does a police service find the time and the resources to support the updated training requirements? Layer in the officer recruitment challenges and the Ontario Police College and other training venues will be pressured to deliver.

- New training requirements, “There’s some big concerns around training and the cost of training.”

**“I am a little concerned about what it looks like and what the costs are and in terms of tribunals and training.”**

- “I’m not concerned about it other than the one flag I would say collectively is related to the cost of implementing training.”



## SUSPENSION WITHOUT PAY AND OFFICER DISCIPLINE

Some like the new system.

- “I think the new adjudication system is going to work well.”
- “I do like the education process. I’m all about fairness and transparency.”

**Fairness and transparency may add cost and complexity.**  
Many Chiefs raised concerns, with increased complexity topping the list.

- “I think it’s safe to say we, as Chiefs, are a little bit disappointed in the [new process relating to] discipline and the suspension without pay.”
- “They were supposed to streamline. They were supposed to make it simpler and to be honest, I think they made it far more complicated.”
- “I feel like it’s possible we have made a bad situation worse off by taking our system of discipline and once again adding layers of complexity and bureaucracy to it.”
- “It’s going to take away a lot of the abilities for us as police managers to deal with discipline internally and make for an effective system.”

- “They’ve opened up more avenues for officers to appeal which obviously will get lawyers involved and cost boards a lot of money.”
- “I understand the concerns of having Police Chiefs appoint senior officers as tribunal officers, but I think the way that it’s designed now, you know it is going to cost boards an awful lot of money.”

The new requirement to notify anytime an officer has breached the Charter Rights and Freedoms is a source of concern:

- “They’ve already told us that we were going to need to increase the size of our professional standards branches to deal with all the complaints and how they’re dealt with. I’m not finding that to be an overly positive step forward.”

The general consensus is a wait and see approach as the regulations roll out and the interpretation of existing language gets defined through decisions made throughout the discipline hearing process.



## Chapter 03

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# Community Safety and Well-Being Plans

What do you think about your  
community safety and well-being  
plan?

# What We Heard

We have heard from [CAOs](#) and [Police Service Board Chairs](#) about their thoughts on Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plans. Similarly, Chiefs had a variety of views on the plans in terms of effectiveness and who should be responsible for leading the planning and development of the plans.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PLANS

Some see it as a **breakthrough in integrative thinking**.

- “The City is “really trying to develop a comprehensive integrated strategy for the vulnerable population.”

Others view their plan as a “**check box**” exercise completed to meet a legislative requirement.

- “It was hastily pulled together to meet deadlines and doesn’t seem to have a whole lot of substance.”

**The need for measurable goals:** There were a number of concerns about plans that had been created in a way that did not result in goals and actions that could be properly measured.

- “[Our plan does not] have structured, measurable outputs to the extent that I would like to see them.”
- “Often outcomes [in the Plan] can be so strategic it’s hard to measure.”



## WHO SHOULD LEAD IN CREATING THE PLANS?

When CSWB Plans were first created, responsibility for leading the plan was given to municipalities, not police services. The new CSPA maintains the requirement for CSWB plans to be created by municipalities, not police services. This remains polarizing.

**Police should be a partner, but not the lead:** Some respondents saw the benefit in this approach, because police are just one stakeholder in the complex web of agencies that contribute to safety and well-being.

- “The City has taken the lead, which is good from my perspective because I always said community safety shouldn’t be exclusively led by the police.”
- I think that it’s important that it’s ultimately the City’s plan - we’re a key stakeholder - but ultimately, they own the plan.”

**Police should be the lead:** Other respondents think that the municipality ought not to have the lead on the CSWB Plan.

- “It’s a joke, the municipality being in charge of a community safety and well-being plan.”
- “The whole idea of a municipality being the lead of it and being measured on it, I actually don’t believe in unless you can tell me otherwise.”
- “Where I struggle with that plan is that it’s in the [police legislation], but it’s a city plan and the police are simply a party to the plan.”

**The role of other interests:** Some expressed frustrations around how some community groups engaged the planning process.

- “The problem with it is that some people like to hijack it for their own special interest group.”

## REACTING TO CHANGE IN COMMUNITY NEEDS

**Responding to urgent issues.** A number of respondents saw the plan as a tool to track, change and prioritize emerging issues. One example: a number of municipalities have updated plans to reflect the growing incidence of intimate partner violence.

- “As time goes on and things change, you need to do a little bit of a shift, but I’m pretty confident in it.”
- “It’s ever evolving.”
- “They need to focus on certain areas now that aren’t acute issues, they’re turning into chronic issues, and try to address them before we try to change the world.”

Some noted that whatever they thought of their plan when it was created, it has since been overtaken by events. COVID and the increase in mental health, addictions and homelessness that followed, were identified by some as having made their plan obsolete.

**“COVID changed everything. It put tents in downtown parks and the addictions rose, and I’m sure somebody’s going to study the impact of the pandemic on social issues.”**

- “There are certainly some gaps [in our existing plan] and they all seem to circle around mental health and well-being.”

**The need for effective, on-going engagement:** Some were positive that the process added value.

- “The action tables meet quarterly, compare notes, collaborate. We identify areas of concern and we all help each other.”

Others not so much:

- “The problem we have in our area is that everybody’s doing it off the corner of their desks.”
- “We’ve also had problems even getting some of the different pillars to the table. Like education and health, they haven’t even come to the table yet.”
- “Engagement is low and as a result, I think it’s next to useless and so are the meetings that go around discussing it.”

**The need for the Plan to be adequately resourced:**

Often, plans rely on access to increased funding to succeed. That funding isn’t always forthcoming.

- “I think community wise it’s a great plan except everything costs money and there’s no money.”
- “... it becomes sort of a footnote in the To Do List of people who’ve been tasked with overseeing it. I don’t think that they necessarily really buy into it.”
- “It’s hurry up and wait.”



## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

In our previous surveys, we have always been struck by the dichotomy between those who view their CSWB Plans as effective cross-sector collaboration and solution making tools, and those who see them as a report that is collecting dust.

Chiefs of Police are no different. There are those who are strong supporters of CSWB Plans, and others who are strong critics.

Ideology does not seem to be the root of this difference of opinion. Instead, it seems to have more to do with four factors:

- **Engagement at time of creation:** the extent to which there was genuine interagency engagement in the creation of the plan.
- **Measurable outcomes:** the extent to which the plan has measurable outcomes or not. Most plans don't have clear outcome measures, which can lead to a lack of accountability. Policing has so much accountability built into its culture, but this is not necessarily the case of other sectors that need to be engaged in CSWB Planning.
- **A shopping list, or a commitment to better collaboration:** The extent to which the plan was viewed as an unfunded "shopping list" for new projects, versus a commitment to improve how agencies would improve collaboration with existing resources.
- **Ongoing engagement:** The extent to which the participant agencies actually do continue to share data and intel and collaborate on an ongoing basis.

There is certainly an opportunity prior to the next round of CSWB Plan updates to collect and share best practices, to address the observed problems from the first round.

One anecdote that signaled the continued importance of these plans came up multiple times in our survey. Aspiring Chiefs of Police were using these plans as important preparation tools when they were interviewed for their jobs as Chiefs of Police. This is an indicator that – regardless of how effective CSWB implementation has been – they are perceived as providing valid insight into the public safety priorities of the community.



## Chapter 04

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# Relationship with Community

How is your relationship with the  
community?

# What We Heard

## TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

We were told that trust is hard to build and easy to break. Some Chiefs discussed the importance of building trust with the community and that building trust is a continual process.

- “Trust is a huge issue [for the sector] but I was impressed when I got here about how trusted we were [by the community].”
- “It takes one incident for all of that trust to be called into question.”

**Relationships with the community** run the full spectrum from positive...

- “I would say that we have an excellent relationship with our community.”
- “Our local relationships are outstanding...”
- “It’s really good...”
- “I do think generally we enjoy a good working relationship with our community, which I’m thankful and appreciative of.”
- “We have all the equity seeking groups, we have either a positive or neutral relationships but no negative relationships.”

“But I would say that very broadly, we have the vast majority of our community supporting us and equity seeking groups, leaders, organizations and neighborhoods of all stripes are actually at the table.”

## To not so positive...

- “I guess it’s a mixed bag - it depends on who you talk to right?”
- “Our relationship isn’t as strong as I would like it to be with our racialized/diverse and Indigenous communities.”
- “We are still fighting the aftermath of George Floyd and defund the police – it’s about legitimacy and trust in police.”
- “We are still seeing the aftermath of George Floyd and defund the police.”

“Anyone who tells you they aren’t worried is lying. I always worry about that. My goal here is to build resiliency with the community, particularly the equity seeking communities.”

Many different reasons are identified as causes:

**Low Staffing levels** that do not allow for outreach:

- “It all goes back to staffing levels. We would like to do a lot more out there, but with the limited people we have on board...”

Service members that don’t “get it.”

- “Some great work has been done but there is also great resistance. Most of our team get it, but the older guys don’t so much. So, it’s the tale of two cities here.”
- “It’s not where I would like it to be, just in terms of our internal goal to mobilize our entire membership and our entire leadership team to be doing that work.”

Buildings that are not conducive to community engagement.

- “Our buildings are not structured to be inviting to the community, in fact only one of our stations actually has any community space; I need to change that.”

Community groups can be disenfranchised.

- “The communities that are disenfranchised, ... that relationship isn’t as strong as I would like it to be.”

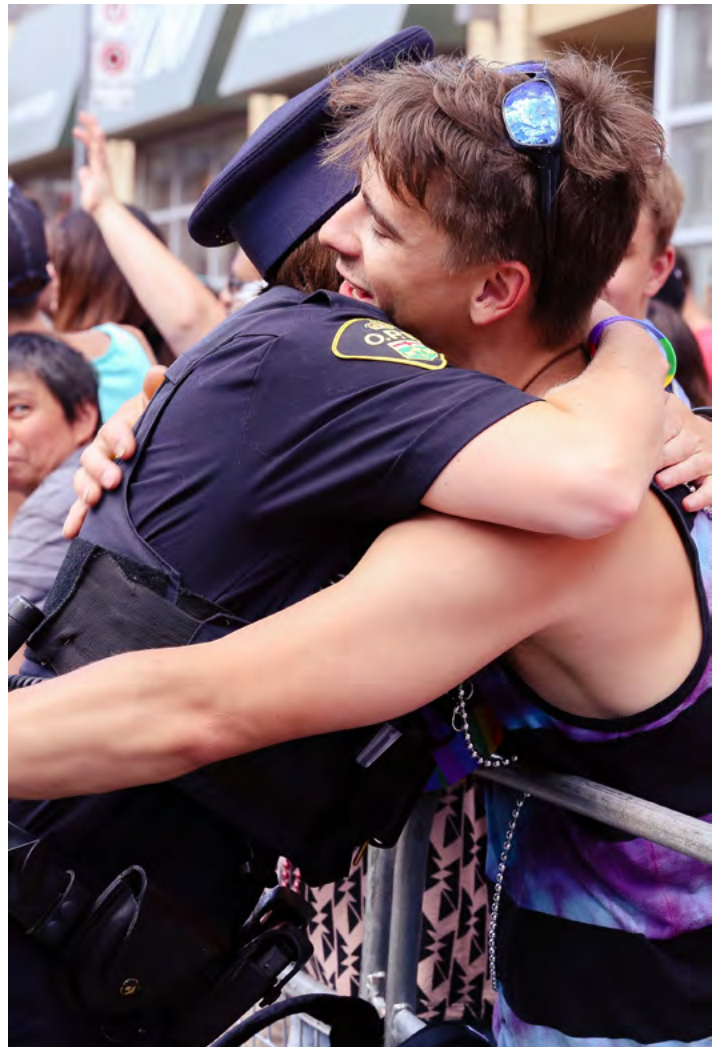
## HOW DO YOU MEASURE COMMUNITY SATISFACTION?

Some admit that it is challenging to know given the “silent majority” problem. Others are making efforts to measure public satisfaction.

- “I’d like to think and hope that we have a good relationship with the majority of the community but that community is silent. Challenging because they aren’t vocal. That silent majority is also not very ... diverse.”

**Surveys.** Many Chiefs rely on statistically significant surveys to gauge support and results are often positive.

- “One survey came back so positive that I sent it back because I was like, “90-95% community approval? You guys didn’t tabulate this properly!”
- “As part of our strategic plan we hired a professional public survey company. If you look at the aggregate of satisfaction and trust in the whole police service, its exceptional, very, very good.”
- “Our surveys always show surprisingly high confidence in our police service, high confidence in policing as an institution.”
- “Of course we have done our surveys, every three years and we traditionally have scored quite highly; the best way to put it is we are usually in the high 80s in terms of the public’s trust.”
- “It’s excellent and that includes customer service satisfaction ratings.”



**Social media feedback** can, suprisingly, be positive.

- “We get really good, positive engagement on social media. Our comments are all very positive and there is little bashing of the police.”

**New feedback solutions.** Implementing real-time feedback after calls for service seems very promising.

- [We have technology we use to determine satisfaction after we respond to a call for service.] “We can receive ratings like an Uber driver. We’d get a 4-to-5-star rating; satisfaction is quite high.”
- “We have a public safety product that gives us real time feedback on our calls for service. [The community] have the ability to fill out real time questions about our service calls and those are generally very positive, which makes me believe we get a lot of positive feedback.”

## INVESTING IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

**Small services can prioritize customer service.** It is a function of size.

- “I find in the smaller services, [with lower call volumes and stronger local presence] you’re not treating your community members as customers, you’re treating them as community members.”

**Putting in the effort.** Others made it clear that it takes patient effort and commitment.

- “Different community organizations were complaining that they didn’t have enough interaction with the police. Those were some of the first key stakeholders that I sat down with and now we have the relationship where they can call me at any time with any concerns and I believe they would say the relationship is good with the police.”
- “The police service is focusing outward; police officers take every opportunity with the community to improve trust.”
- “All these circumstances are to engage, educate and then enforce - we live and breathe it.”

**Outreach through schools.** Although Police Services have seen the program under attack in various cities across the country, specific tactics still include School Liaison Officers.

- “We invested in school liaison officers that are worth their weight in gold.”

**Identifying priorities in a strategic plan.** Using the strategic plan to build trust through making commitments and being accountable to them.

- “I come from somewhere where this [building relationships with diverse communities] was a priority and I know the benefit that can come from that. We put it in our strategic plan so that it’s something that I can be held accountable for in relation to improving those relationships.”

## POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS PAY DIVIDENDS.

A few said that investing in the relationships with the community has allowed for greater partnership during challenging community incidents:

- “I think we have made great strides in the last few years. Establishing relationships with the community was key.”
- “I think it’s given us a lot of social credit as a police service and allowed some forgiveness for some missteps on our part. It has also allowed for buy-in from our community for when we have to make some hard decisions.”
- “We’re one of the busiest cities in terms of the [Middle Eastern conflict] demonstrations. And we get a lot of community support in how we deal with that. I think that has a lot to do with the upfront relationship investments that we’re making in pure relationship strategies with our community.”

Many mentioned formal feedback from the community as an important measure for the success of the relationship.

- “We can be transparent, and we can be also mature enough to do better when we’re told we’re doing poorly.”

Although building trust and relationships with the community is a responsibility for all members of a police service, leadership on community engagement starts with the Chief.

- “We are very engaged. I spend a lot of time going to different community events. Since I became Chief, I spend a lot of time reaching out to different cultural groups.”
- “As a police leader, engagement with the community is one of the most important things.”
- “I set 3 priorities when I became Chief; one of them is about delivering community centric policing with strategic partnerships to accomplish our goals.”

- “I on a personal level, have a phenomenal relationship with our communities including our diverse communities.”
- “I’m very careful when I speak to the community that I recognize that policing is messy and that we’re a messy partner, but with that has to come trust and when there is a schism, a challenge, a pressure, we have at least the ability to reach out somebody in a core group that we can at least talk about it with and we can find a path to step forward going.”

**Resourcing the function.** Improvements to the Community Services function can be achieved through investment in staffing.

- “Our community, we have our ups and downs, but in the city, our relationship with our community (I think because of the solid investments we made) really changed our community services from a place where people go to not have to do calls. We actually took operational people and have them operationalize community first strategies.”
- “We have a community relations officer now.”
- “We have a community mobilization and engagement unit; we try to attend all events.”
- “We got feedback from community on creating a full-time indigenous relations position; we are building that.”

**Don’t go it alone.** Collaboration and partnership is a key to success.

- “We partnered with [a community organization] that helped us to redefine relationships with the police and engage with communities that haven’t always had a place at the table.”
- “The one thing that we do extremely well is collaborate and partner, and I think it probably is primarily because we’re so small, like in order to get things done, you really need other people and I think we’re seen as a very strong partner.”
- “We have a unique relationship with the black community here. We now have people doing our community advisory panel and willingly stepping up to work with race-based identity data. These are things that have been absent for years because again we are demonstrating that we can be authentic.”
- “We have done a lot of community engagement on body cams and another for the downtown.”
- “We right now have got an amazing opportunity to work with our 2SLGBTQIA community, specifically the LGBTQ committee that puts on pride.”
- “Some of our community partnerships have increased. We are opening lines of communication with a lot of equity groups that haven’t been at the table in the past.”

## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

Sir Robert Peel said, 'the police are the public and the public are the police'.

Increasing efforts to empower disenfranchised or disregarded voices have given rise to an increased focus on community relationships for police leaders. The only constant for police leaders looking to successfully engage with their communities is change.

How public sector leaders listen and how they communicate with the public is an increasing challenge. The news and media environment is constantly changing. Work environments are shifting people's travel patterns, and global actors can influence local public safety. As Artificial Intelligence platforms grow in popularity and power, they will put a new burden on our police services.

Gauging the pulse of the community, gaining their trust, and inspiring action to keep people safe will continue to be a key obligation for a Chief of Police.



## Chapter 05

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# Relationship with Indigenous Communities

How is your relationship with First Nations and/or urban Indigenous populations?



# What We Heard

Only a fraction of the Indigenous policing agenda was discussed during these interviews. StrategyCorp only interviewed Chiefs responsible for municipal policing in Ontario. Our process did not include the 9 stand-alone First Nation Police Services in Ontario. Those services provide policing in areas close to the GTA and across large areas of northern Ontario. The CSPA allows for First Nations Police Services to receive funding tied to the delivery of adequate and effective police if they meet the requirements of the CSPA and its regulations and are approved by the Minister. So read the below section with the understanding that there is a lot more underway when it comes to Indigenous policing.

## ASSESSMENTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP

**Good:** Some describe their relations with Indigenous communities in positive terms.

- [We have a large urban Indigenous population and are adjacent to an indigenous community]. “I think the relationship is generally positive, with good and very collaborative and cooperative relationships with the leadership and a good relationship with their policing services.”
- “There’s some issues that pop-up like they do in any community, but overall, you know, our relationship with the Indigenous communities in this area is fantastic.”
- “We are always, always working together, where we can. Is there work to be done? Always? But I would say generally it’s good.”
- “We have a great formal relationship [with one of the Band Councils] We meet with them on a regular basis.”
- “That relationship is good because I’m known and have personal relationships.”

**Improving:** Others focused the narrative on the arc of improvement. They recognize that only a short while ago things were not so good, they are getting better.

- “It’s on the positive side of things... it has actually swung from major challenges maybe two years ago to, now, more positive momentum.”
- “I think overall, not to be naive and unaware, it is a positive relationship, one that has really progressed.”
- “We don’t always nail it. Every once in a while, it feels like I’m never going to be able to alleviate a grievance in a community. But in this particular case, it’s been really, really positive. Probably because it couldn’t have gotten any worse. I wouldn’t even say it was bad before: it was more that there was an absence of any relationship. So [from that starting point], the improvement has been great.”
- “We have very little Indigenous presence in our community. But we continue to listen and learn.”

**Not so good.** Not everyone is satisfied with the state of their relationships and interactions with Indigenous persons.

One reported that efforts to build relationships had only started with their term as Chief of Police:

- “When I arrived here there wasn’t really a relationship. I said you had to build relationship before it is a problem.”

One noted that the relationship was still lacking in genuine and frank engagement.

- “I would use the words respectful but at an arm’s length.”

Several described it, like many relationships, as a constant work in progress.

- “It ebbs and flows, like any relationship.”
- “When everything is good its good and when it’s bad it’s bad.”

Some admitted continued blind spots.

- “We don’t always know what we don’t know.”
- “We are always trying to evolve and do better.”



## BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT

Participants were pretty much unanimous in acknowledging the importance and benefits of improved engagement capacity.

**Building trust through steady interaction.** Most commented that interaction builds trust – an essential asset for a police service.

- “Networking brought an Indigenous Friendship Centre into our community consultation committee, so now we are working with them on a daily basis. That was a relationship that we really had to repair [...] Now we are getting a lot of traction with our members and that community.”
- “We have an all-indigenous police team that has done very well to build more trust and legitimacy.”

**Interaction creates access to authentic advice and intel on the needs of the community:** They want access to feedback on what is going on, and advice on what to do about it.

- “We are revamping some policy for indigenous victims of crime to make sure that we have what they think they need as a community.”
- “I have local Indigenous representation sitting on my community inclusionary council, which provides advice to me as a Chief to better provide services and policy that has diversity and inclusivity in mind.”
- “Our urban indigenous community faces mental health, homelessness and addiction issues. There is a group that has generational trauma. They need specific support that we lack resources to support.”
- “We continue to try to seek avenues and resources for them.”

**Partnerships to improve training:** Some have used engagement to create partnerships that advance authentic, Indigenous-led training on how to better meet the needs of the community.

- “They have committed to train our senior officers which will then cascade down [to the rest of the service].”
- “We have a training session with Indigenous women affected by residential schools. It is going incredibly well and there has been a great response from members.”
- “Using these connections that we have with Indigenous community we are revamping some policy for Indigenous victims of crime to make sure that we have what they think they need as a community.”

**Improved diversity and morale:** One observed that participating as a service in Indigenous exchange programs signaled the commitment of the service to Indigenous relations to its own members.

- “It led officers in [our service] to self-disclose that they are themselves Indigenous, and to want to become involved in Indigenous policing.”

**New channels for ongoing communication with the community**

- “I created an Indigenous liaison officer position.”

**Better Capacity to Manage Issues**

- “Through the winter there was a false rumour that encampments in our community were mostly [made up of members of a nearby Indigenous community.] The rumour was started and perpetuated by city staff. That narrative reflected a prejudice. With relationships, we were able to quantify it and disprove it.”

Another participant referred to an incident where an Indigenous person was wrongfully assaulted by a sworn officer. The incident was recorded by a person passing by. The Service took immediate disciplinary action. Having previously invested effort in developing strong relationships and trust with local Indigenous leaders, the Service was able to quickly communicate the measures taken to diffuse tensions that might otherwise have been caused by the incident.

**Identifying Gaps in Services.** Some participants noted that many good or improving partnerships with local or neighbouring Indigenous people, but there was an acknowledgement that other services would be most beneficial for some Indigenous community members.

## StrategyCorp's Perspective

Listening to the Chiefs, we extracted the following advice on building positive relationships with Indigenous communities.

**The need to commit to an on-going relationship:** Engagement between the police and the Indigenous community must be treated as an ongoing process.

- “I appreciate that that relationship is fragile, as is the issue, and that relationship is constantly getting tested and causing us to have to reflect, revisit and sometimes reset how we are approaching things.”

**Both sides have to be willing.** Sometimes both sides have to be open to changing their approach.

- [A big part of the improvement] “was that willingness to have candid conversations about how we make this relationship work.
- “Both sides need to check egos at the door to have genuine conversations.”

**Commitment starts at the top.** Frontline officers expect to see commitment to meaningful engagement from both the Board and the Chief. One respondent acknowledged their Service had to do more and took personal responsibility.

- “We put [the need to improve relationships with our Indigenous Community] in our strategic plan so that it’s something that that I can be held accountable for.”

**No pretensions.** Beware of barriers to authentic communication, be they in tone or behaviour.

- “The key to success is that there can be no pretension. They asked me to not come in uniform; so, I came in jeans and a t-shirt, to reduce the barriers; Sometimes we get hung up on symbolic interactionism.”
- “It is important that I not [use the uniform] to signal that I’m the police when I appear, with all the associated power dynamics that go with it. I go as myself. As a human individual.”

**In a two-way relationship there is both a time to lead and a time to follow.**

- “We have a great relationship with them, a very formal one where they’re participants.”
- “No, they don’t sit on our committees. I would say we’re part of theirs. Is that maybe a better way to put it?”

**Create a process capable of hearing different many voices:** No group is monolithic, and there are usually a variety of opinions on each side of the table. Engagement strategies need to accommodate this diversity of opinion and perspective.

- “We’re having a hard time bringing people together. We have a number of Indigenous organizations that are very active, very independent and almost in competition with each other..”

**“Show me, don’t just tell me”:** Talking is good, but not enough. To build true credibility it is necessary to demonstrating commitment with plans, actions and investments:

- “I have been able to demonstrate through strategic plan and more importantly though the org chart - that community relations is a priority for me.”
- “We don’t want [engagement] to be seen as tokenism. We want them to have input and what’s important to our Indigenous community.”

**The need for frankness:** Several made reference to the need to be frank in addressing problems.

- “It’s a relationship now. They are quite comfortable letting me know [when] there’s an issue.”

Listening may not always be comfortable, but it leads to learning, and builds trust.

- “We have worked with [Indigenous academics] who were not our friends. I can tell you it was a very long lunch with them, [and not easy to listen to what they had to say] but we’re now getting invited to all their events. So, it was worth it.”

## **StrategyCorp’s Engagement Principles**

Engagement with Indigenous communities on policing issues is an important microcosm of community engagement overall.

We think the Chiefs’ observations fit nicely into StrategyCorp’s Five Principles of Effective Engagement:

1. Continuity - View engagement as a continuous cycle.
2. Strategic – Pay close attention to when to lead and when to cede space.
3. Authentic – State your purpose and engage transparently.
4. Accessible – Reduce barriers to participation and create safe spaces.
5. Responsive – Focus on what people say, not what you want to hear.

These principles are a solid foundation for both police leaders and Indigenous leaders to follow as they continue to advance Reconciliation and improve the quality of policing for Indigenous persons.



## Chapter 06

# Human Resources

Are there human resources issues that concern you?



# What We Heard

**A top issue:** The challenge of managing human resource issues was one of the top issues of concern for our participants.

- “HR is one of the biggest issues and frustrations of my day.”
- “The availability of human resources generally is a problem and having enough to do the job.”
- “That’s gravely impacting every day ‘cause we can’t fill positions quick enough.”

**Trending in the wrong direction.** For some respondents, the HR challenges are getting worse.

- “Six months ago, I would’ve said we don’t have issues, but it changed dramatically.”
- “Now hiring an HR manager because it can’t be an off the side of the desk process anymore.”
- “I know for certain, provincially, and nationally, we have the same challenges.”



## RECRUITING

**Fewer applicants overall:** Recruitment of officers is an issue on the minds of many Chiefs today. Some Chiefs focused on their ability to recruit whereas others focused on the quality of the applicant today.

- “The community colleges and universities that have policing related programs are not seeing the enrollment anymore.”
- “We are not seeing the same levels of applicants.”
- “We don’t have a retention issue, it’s just on the sworn side finding the right people who are resilient, committed, and capable.”
- “Our problem of course is the candidates themselves, right now our well is pretty much dry; there are slim pickings.”
- “The lack of candidates has been difficult, we used to be able to attract people to the community.”

**Fewer quality applicants:** Some specifically mentioned challenges with recruiting quality applicants.

- “It’s very tough to hire quality candidates both as sworn officers and civilians.”
- “Generally, the quality of the candidate isn’t there anymore. This sprung from the George Floyd incident and several other incidents that have taken place. It’s very much led to a lack of people getting into the profession.”
- “I just think that there’s just a lack of candidates in general, lack of qualified candidates.”

**No longer a career of choice?** There is a perception that policing is not as attractive a career choice as it once was. Making sure potential recruits know policing is an honourable and safe profession is an issue that some Chiefs say they need to tackle.

- “I’m a big believer in the idea of rebranding policing because I think we have a generation of people who have now been raised under this idea that it’s not a noble profession and that the police can’t be trusted.”
- [We are] “getting 15 applications for a policing position, yet if you look at fire or paramedics, they’re getting hundreds. How? I could talk about police legitimacy for a long time. It’s at the lowest it has ever been, and I haven’t seen that for a couple of years.”
- “People would rather be a graphic designer than a cop.”

**Its not all bad:** Other Chiefs noted they are having recruitment successes.

- “We must be doing something because we are getting great quality applicants and lots of them. I’m the only one that can say that.”
- “We think we’re an attractive employer on many fronts.”
- “Even our civilian jobs; 100 applications for one job.”

- “We have used special constables as a kind of ‘farm team’ for recruitment, especially of more diverse officers. It has really improved our recruitment pipeline.”

**What’s working?** Some of the reasons Chiefs cited for success are incentive programs and workforce strategies.

- “The board is great to work with and they are thinking outside the box. We came up with an incentive program [that has helped us to recruit new members.]”
- “We have a strategic staffing plan, meant to stabilize the service for so many reasons; population is up, crime is up, and demonstrations are up. Sexual assault is up and it’s not a good place to be in when you need to prioritize sexual assaults.”
- “Some of our hiring strategy has been to try to focus on people who have a fairly established relationship with our community. Whether you’ve grown up here or married into the community; we place a high priority on that in our recruitment strategy.”





## EQUITY

**Are the police representative of the community?** Some Chiefs discussed the need to recruit diverse applicants and challenges that they are having with this.

- “Police officers should represent the diversity of your community. I want them to understand the challenges of the community.”
- “We don’t get a lot of interest from racialized persons.”
- “We are getting a lot of female applicants but not getting a lot of minority applicants, [...] it’s an area we are continuing to work on.”
- “The biggest challenge is probably hiring racialized people and women in policing.”

**Achieving gender diversity is still a problem:**

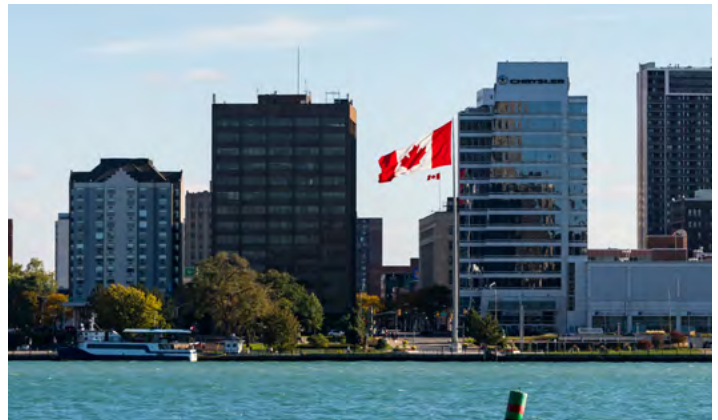
- “We have had challenges with gender diversity. When my predecessor was here, we had a goal of 40-50% uniform officers have to be gender diverse. But I don’t know if we’ve never gotten past 25%.”
- “If we want more women in policing and more parental commitments, then that can further the [staffing] gap for those periods of leave.”

**Acting on inclusion:** One Chief noted that acting on inclusion can present challenges within the organization.

- “We have seen tensions between older and younger officers over equity, diversity, and inclusion issues.”
- “If you’re not somebody who the predominant group feels fits the mold, you’re in for a tough ride.”

**What’s working?** A few mentioned successful strategies for recruiting diverse applicants.

- “Special constable is my feeder to build career pathways. And so that’s been great to get diverse officers in here to build the trust and relationship with the individual, their family and the community, that will be a hit.”



- “I’m not having an issue recruiting and retaining - people see what we are doing here. For example, when I hire young Muslim officers I’m blown away by how quickly the word spread to cultural communities about what we are doing here.”

## RETENTION OF MEMBERS

**Competition:** Some are feeling the impact of recruitment campaigns from larger services.

- “We’ve lost 5% of our service to other services and 2% to leaving the profession.”
- “There is a difference in pay for neighbouring services, there is quite a gap. We never used to lose officers but when it is happening, it’s for opportunity.”
- “We are all competing for the same applicants, my prediction is that recruitment will be a challenge.”
- “It’s never been easier to jump to another service so retention is also a big issue.”

Many said that retention hasn’t been an issue.

- “We’re competitive with everyone around us, on the civilian side, we’re actually flush to our authorized strength.”
- “Last year we settled a collective agreement [with significant increases] – higher than I’d ever seen in my lifetime. The purpose of that was to retain.”
- “My advice to the board was that you need to think about incentives, ours was more the board decided to increase salaries and benefits. The issue is filling seats for new growth.”

## MENTAL HEALTH OF THE MEMBERS

**PTSD and Presumptive legislation.** The mental health of the members, challenges with occupational stress injuries and presumptive legislation is an HR issue that is top of mind for many police chiefs. It is a very divisive subject and it sparked a lot of very direct comments from our participants.

- “Disability management is the number one HR issue we have here.”
- “The biggest is the impact of the presumptive legislation that came in in 2016. There was evidence that it was needed otherwise we wouldn’t see the uptake that we have seen. But it is the biggest labour relations issue that we all face.”
- “It’s a massive problem that everyone is afraid to tackle because of the sensitivities about mental health.”
- “We all know the right decision was made by the government to make a presumptive decision about post-traumatic stress. Unfortunately, they passed the legislation and did something without studying impact.”

**Building a culture of positive mental health:** We heard that police leaders need to lead on the subject of member mental health and wellness.

- “We have become tight knit and I think everyone wants to be at work. We have a culture of “if you need to go off you need to go off”. We have put a lot in place, we have built a lot of resiliencies in the organization and are very open about getting help. That message comes right from the top.”
- “We message that it’s a sign of strength to get help. We are trying to be proactive rather than people going off long term.”
- “[We are] just aiming to get people better and returning to work.”
- “The vast amounts of trauma we expose people to and the lack of support on the people side is troubling.”

- “Certainly on the mental health side, our wellness unit is a lot busier than we ever would’ve thought it would be, we believe they have stopped some very bad things from happening.”

**Implementation concerns about WSIB.** Generally, we heard a lot of concerns about WSIB.

- “WSIB was built to deal with broken legs and broken arms, not broken minds.”
- “WSIB – I’d be remiss if I didn’t talk about it. Let’s call it broken. Maybe it’s the presumptive legislation.”
- “WSIB has always been a thorn - have some officers that have been off for years - board is looking at some of those files.”

**Concerns covered a wide range and included the following:**

**A system that is too cumbersome...**

- “It’s just woefully [under]funded and it’s causing lots of challenges to police services. I think it’s eroding some of the relationships within police services.”
- “The system is too cumbersome and there is not enough teeth in the legislation.”

**High costs...**

- “The costs of disability management are breaking police services. It impacts the ability to do community safety.”
- “We have the same ballpark 10% absenteeism, related to occupational stress, challenges and so on. So that deficit is something we have our eyes on.”

**Gaps in services that mean too often, members do not get the support they need...**

- “WSIB system is not working as it should and frankly might not be helping individuals who need services.”
- “WSIB is not built to support members, and our members get lost in the system. They can’t get help for 9-12 months.”

- “There are people who are truly suffering and what we need is access to doctors that can properly diagnose these things, we need timelines tightened up. There are no return-to-work provisions, it’s a big problem.”

**Others are concerned about the potential for abuse in the system.**

- “We have a number of very serious PTSD situations and the odd person who is benefitting - it should have a higher level of psychiatrist [testing] before it becomes presumptive.”
- “I think post-traumatic stress disorder is valid. I really do. I’m not one of these who thinks that everybody is a faker. But I think there are some that do. So, you know, how do we how do we prevent both? How do we make the system less flawed in that I can go to the doctor and say I’m having trouble sleeping and I experienced any number of things and it’s an automatic?”
- “I think it’s a byproduct of the system and the way that the presumptive legislation has evolved over time that for every member that is in need of the help, there are far more who are abusing the system for a variety of reasons and that’s unfortunate.”

**Perverse incentives?** Some are concerned that system rules could be a disincentive to returning to work. At worst, others suggested the system could be used as a way to avoid a disciplinary process...

- “I have people who are off who are making more than they are if they were working.”
- “The unintended consequence of presumptive legislation is that it is too easily accessed in some cases by those who try to avoid discipline.”

**A barrier to those who really need it?** Some expressed concern that as controversy over potential abuse in the system grows, it becomes a deterrent for those who actually need the help to access it...

- “[a new problem that is emerging] ‘is that people who are actually sick don’t use it because they don’t want be lumped in [with those who may be or are perceived as abusing the system].’”

**Some are concerned that flaws in the system are stressing the relationships between management and officers.** They do not want doubt to undermine efforts to support their members who do suffer from PTSD.

- “I really feel badly when I hear of a WSIB claim, particularly if it’s PTSD, [and I wonder if it is legitimate.] The response I should be having is “Oh no, what’s my member going through. I know I’m not alone in feeling that way.”
- “It’s pitted employers against associations and at the end of the day, the people who seem to benefit the most are those who are representing services and associations, the lawyers in the room.”

**Many called for action from the government of Ontario to further improve the legislative framework and supporting processes.**

- “The province needs to understand claims management and they don’t.”
- “If the Ontario government doesn’t fix it, there’s going to be no police officers.”

## ADDRESSING STAFFING CHALLENGES

**Civilianization:** A few talked about the role of civilians to alleviate staffing challenges.

- “I strongly believe in this. There may be a version of future answers as well, that the future of policing is not only increased civilianization but adding civilian support to operational teams as they exist, like the sophistication of cybercrime or financial crimes. Anything technology related our officers will not be able to keep up with the demands of our world and so we just need to add supplements to every team related to expertise and technological support and workload change over time.”

**Special Constables:** A few others discussed the use of special constables to alleviate staffing challenges.

- “Under the new Act it is not clear on what our special constables downtown will be able to do in the future. That’s going to be a concern because if I lose that function, then my only other option

is regular police officers, and at a time where their cost is \$120 thousand per year, that is cost prohibitive.”

- “[We need] special constables for court security. We prosecute as many charges here as some of the larger regions.”
- “Special constables are 30% cheaper.”

## ONTARIO POLICE COLLEGE

Many Chiefs are struggling to pro-actively plan for and get the number of spots they need at OPC. Securing spots in a timely way at the college can be a bottleneck to deploying new officers.

- “We need more spots at OPC.”
- “My issue has been getting OPC seats and I have people in sitting and waiting.”
- “Yes, it’s a huge issue for us [spots in the police college]. We ask for a certain number of seats, but they don’t assign them until a month out. We have to have those people ready to go and just gamble that we get the spots.”
- “Good candidates are not a dime a dozen, so you need to lock them in. For example, we ask for 4 spots, and we get 1 or a standby and then have to beg for more.”
- “The college, it’s a new stressor for police leaders. We operate our budget on a January to December cycle. How many staff I can bring in, in a year is dependent on getting places at the college and its challenging.”
- “If I knew all of my allotted seats in the first two intakes of the year, then that’s what I would focus most of my recruitment for that calendar year.”
- “We have a list we could hire but we can’t get the seats at OPC.”

**More system capacity for training?** Some wondered if there could be another model for larger services.

- “If they [some of the larger services] weren’t at OPC then they’d probably have capacity to add more spots and run more courses.”

**Online is not the approach.** A few also mentioned concerns with the addition of the online learning component.

- “I’m sure you’ve heard about work online, and I think the total qualitative experience for recruits going through it is compromised.”
- “I’m not completely sold on the three-to-four-week online learning piece.”

## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

Workforce challenges are not unique to police services. They are a problem across the municipal sector. Our [2023 CAO Survey](#) highlighted these issues and the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#) are prioritizing a municipal workforce development strategy.

No question – the shortage is real.

For several critical reasons, people are not choosing a career in policing. Whether it's the general stresses of the job, perceptions that the career is less honourable than what it once was, or perceived incompatibility with modern values, most Chiefs say they are seeing a decline in the number and quality of applicants.

Nevertheless, despite these unique challenges, Chiefs of Police are innovating and working on finding solutions. Many Chiefs spoke of incentive programs, targeted recruitment campaigns for underrepresented groups, and using more civilians where possible.

Diversity is a particular challenge. Chiefs will also need to communicate and work closely with underrepresented groups that reflect their community so future generations can see themselves reflected in the police service of the future.

The WSIB was one of the most passionately discussed areas of this year's survey.

Make no mistake: the Chiefs we interviewed care about their Members and are deeply concerned about their mental health and overall welfare.

They are, however, concerned, that the rules on presumptive PTSD are not yet optimized, leaving the system open to abuse.

More education may be the solution, but if Chiefs view is correct, it points to further action needed by the Government of Ontario.



Chapter 07

Leadership  
Succession Planning

Do you have a leadership  
succession plan?

# What We Heard

**Gaps that need closing.** For leadership, succession planning is a way to manage the stress and challenges of business continuity. Yet, more respondents than not indicated that they do not have a leadership succession plan.

- “This is a big gap for us, it’s something we don’t really have.”
- “There is no formal succession plan.”
- “No, we don’t. I inherited massive problems. I asked the associations to identify leaders at each rank, they came back with an honest answer; they don’t believe anyone is ready.”
- “Formally I’m going to say no and don’t think many police officers say they do. It’s pretty hard to identify 5-10-15 years out, who is going to be in what position.”

**Some would like to see provincial leadership** to promote or mandate succession planning.

- “I really believe that’s an area where there’s work to do both internally, but I would love to see this looked at provincially.”

**Succession planning can happen organically.** Some described their service as having “informal” succession planning.

- “Not right now. We talked about it and we do a lot of training [but no formal plan].”
- “It’s an informal succession plan, it’s always left up to the Chief. My strategy team meets twice a year, and we have an open and honest discussion about who is starting to emerge and have promotional competitions.”

**Prioritizing internal growth.** Others noted that it is also a way to work with and honour the career aspirations of team members.

- “Our people are focused on this their entire careers. They are doing more on the outside to offset this, we should be looking on the inside and that’s when you need to have discussions with the board.”

**From perceptions of favouritism to merit.** Some are managing perception issues that arose from previous informal succession plans that did not meet the perception of fairness.

- “I inherited systemic issues so I’m still dealing with that. There are things we are trying to get away from, we are trying to change culture. We’re trying to get away from identifying people to making it more fair because of the optics and to try and change that culture.”
- “No, there is nothing. That was one of the things that surprised me when I came here. [In the past] ours was based on popularity and whatever the Chief wanted at the time.”

**Getting started.** Some have stated an intention to address succession planning but have not implemented it yet.

- “I’m always talking to the executive level and the senior team about the need to be continually looking for the attributes of leadership beyond the obvious, so beyond the “OK, we know so and so is retiring in a couple of years.” So, who’s the next? There’s a ripple effect and we constantly have to be aware of that. So, we talk about it, but formalizing it would be very good.”
- “We included that in our current strategic plan; it’s an area we need to develop. We don’t currently have but it’s an area we need to grow. We started with sworn team, it’s as much about team building as it is leadership.”

- “I would say that we are building that. Everyone on our leadership team has gone through a leadership program.”

**Building the momentum.** Some have formal succession planning.

- “So, we’re developing what we’re calling a leadership and development plan. It’s “from hire to retire.” it is structured so people grow and learn through the organization, and attached to that is some purposeful succession plan building.”
- “We are purposefully putting some people in temporary assignments and assigning them mentors.”
- “We do. My deputy is well positioned to fall into this one. It’s fairly deep in the next level out and then there is an equal amount in constable ranks that could continue to make that transition.”
- “This is a work in progress I would say for sure. We need to develop some more concrete plans. And then the next five years at that senior leader level, we have a lot of strength at the inspector level.”

**Other overlapping training.** Some described aspects of their training and leadership courses as part of succession planning.

- “We have a training program where we identify people at young promotional ranks. We send them on a variety of leadership courses or bring them in for job shadowing. These are opportunities that they wouldn’t have had otherwise and certainly nothing I was given. [It] starts with the emerging leader training course. Then there is an internal technical course about [procedures] of how to do the job, like routing of files, responsibilities and who gets what. And then a Lean Six Sigma training program for process and data analysis to make sure everybody’s fishing from the same well. It’s a really robust program and it has changed a lot of things for us.”

- “Ours is not structured, but in a smaller service, its [easier to manage.] We send people on the CCP mentorship program, or to the Rotman school.”

**Board support and direction.** Several highlighted the role of the board in succession planning, noting that the board needs to be “bought in” to the succession plan process.

- “One of the goals I give the board every year is focused on succession planning.”
- “And so, we are actively looking at, OK, how do we build out especially the operational side of the team. We have projections on who’s going to stay, who’s going to leave. But I can tell you we need to get the board probably more aligned with building out that multi-year plan.”

It was acknowledged that succession plans may fall victim to a board decision to “go outside” of the organization to hire.

- “Sometimes boards go outside for a reason - especially if they want to change culture.”

**A challenging role:** Some think it is a challenge to attract individuals to the role of Chief of Police, given the challenges and stresses associated with the role.

- “In the current environment, you have to be a bit daft to want to be a Chief. You can see it in the job postings, the leadership gap in the people looking to lead the police industry, professionalizing the role of Chief or deputy chief without the responsibility.”



## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

Robust succession management is more the exception than the rule for Ontario's police services. Police chiefs and senior officer associations have an opportunity to prioritize this planning and training to support the continued success of their organizations.

In recent years, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police initiated a formal Mentoring program to help support Chiefs across the country in developing future executive police leaders.

Provincial and national police chief associations have limited resources, but a coordinated succession planning approach may be a priority worth pursuing. It's worth planning for experienced public sector leadership.

This work should be coordinated with police governance bodies as well who have responsibility for appointing Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs, but no authority to promote before the Deputy Chief rank.



## Chapter 08

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# Relationship with Association

Do you have a good relationship with your association currently? Why or why not?

# What We Heard

## A MIXED BAG OF RELATIONSHIPS.

It's not possible to generalize about the state of police chief-police association relations in Ontario today.

**Positive relationships.** Some said that they have a great relationship with their Association.

- "I have an excellent relationship with the Association. "
- "The relationship right now is exceptional."
- "It's one that's extremely strong."
- "We currently have a good relationship, it's better than it's ever been."
- "We have a good relationship. It's very productive."

**Improving:** A few said that the relationship has not always been good, but it is improving.

- "We have two Associations. One used to be tumultuous."

"I would just say we're continuing to talk about it openly about the power of collaboration and the things that unite us versus all those inevitable tensions and structural things that come up. Those are inevitable."

- "We don't always agree on the punishment or anything like that. But we understood our roles and moved forward. There's been a change and I don't think it's just based on the individual that's now in place."

**Less positive or worsening:** Others have less positive relationships with their Association.

- "The relationship with the president is fractured. If I say up, he says down."

- "Had you asked me three years ago about my relationship with the Association, I would have told you it's actually pretty good, but it can change on a dime."
- "I would say it's not great. It's not horrific, but when I compare it to other major cities relationship with their Association, our Association is much more combative."

**Internal Politics:** Associations have their own internal politics which can and will influence their behaviours. The reality is that they have to do what they have to do, and that is represent their members.

- "They [the Association] have a civil war going on."
- "It's like they're kind of gravitating back to, let's just fight everything."
- "I think that Police Associations are fair weather friends."

**Personalities:** Police Association behaviour may also be influenced by personalities of leadership, for good or for bad.

- "I actually feel blessed, truly blessed. I'm on my third president in 5 years."
- "The combination of a great president and board, 99% of the time we agree on stuff, the right thing to do is the right thing to do."
- "You are only one election away from a bad president."
- "We had a really bad relationship with our previous association President. It was really contentious. It was designed to be about conflict and consternation all the time. He got voted out resoundingly and then the new president came in and things are okay."

**Provincial Association Influences:** Local Police Association behaviour may be influenced by advocacy strategies of the Police Association of Ontario.

- “There was a change in the provincial leadership for the Associations of the PAO and I could feel it. I could feel it almost overnight. There’s always sort of an association management tension. It changed and it became an attack on management.”
- “I really do believe that our local association has been influenced by the PAO quite significantly and this whole concept of a crisis in police leadership and I think that they bought into that hook, line and sinker.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP

**Show respect right from the start.** Many said their relationships we founded on a positive and respectful beginning.

- “He [the president] was actually the very first call I made when I became Chief.”
- “I said, ‘Look, I’m new. I’m going to make a lot of mistakes. You’re also new and you’re going to make a lot of mistakes. Let’s make sure we don’t start poking each other in the chest and let’s give each other a free pass on the first big ‘whoops’ that we make based on the learning curve’ and ever since we’ve gotten along very well.”
- “I made it a priority to reach out. They had an election and then I met with the new president.”
- “The Association president reached out to welcome me and said they were happy I was joining. We sat down early on, and we had a very candid conversation.”





**Put the success of the overall organization first.**

- “We’ve disagreed but we kind of made this agreement that the service needs the President and the Chief to get along.”
- “We just want to make sure that we’re united in terms of trying to make us better and then yes, those issues that pop up that are contentious we will manage.”

**Communicate early and often.** Many said that communication is the key to success in regards to their relationship with their Association.

- “Communication is key to everything.”
- “I meet with the Association president pretty frequently; on demand or not, formally, informally and when we need to.”
- “I am constantly communicating with the Association president.”
- “The Association can come and text me anytime. They have my phone and aren’t afraid to send a message. When they say they need to talk, we deal with it.”

**Communication means “listening” not just “broadcasting.”** An effective, trust-based relationship must be founded on dialogue, not monologue.

- “You listen. That’s always been my philosophy. There is going to be a lot of times where you’re going to agree to disagree on issues, but I think one of the big things is that when they come with an issue, you deal with it in a timely fashion.”
- “I don’t think you should be sitting down daily but when you do sit down you need to listen, they need to be valued and appreciated.”
- “I have a very good relationship with him, we talk often. We head off 95% of the things he’s an active participant in and I’ve quite honestly invited him into many conversations that we’re having to demonstrate some transparency here.”



**Tone matters.** While maintaining professionalism, avoid protocols and formalities that create barriers to effective and frank communication.

- “It’s the little things you can do. I have little tolerance for arrogance in uniform, be kind, be good police officers, I will support them if they are acting in good faith.”
- “I think its [a healthy tone], I think it informs grievances. We have been able to head off a number of issues.”
- “My office is accessible, it’s not a formal setting.”
- “We don’t have grievances, we have discussions.”

**No surprises.**

- “We’re doing this with you, not to you. And there’s no better way to do it than to include them in conversations or to run things by them before they happen. I’ve asked them to partner with me and deliver messages - so they are turning a corner.”

Make the choice to consult when you can on matters that affect the frontline. Many choices that are the purview of the Chief will benefit from consultation, even if it is not strictly speaking a requirement. The relationship will be the stronger for it.

- “We can only make things happen together, sometimes we have to do things that are unpopular, but I told them that if there was a change coming, I would tell them first; give them an opportunity to respond, consider it, no guarantee of acting on it, they have been very supportive as a result.”
- “For example, the senior team decided we need a new cruiser that “will be marked” but we put it out to the team and then we find out the frontline wants an unmarked car because we don’t have one and they want to be able to do traffic enforcement. So, every decision that impacts the frontline, we’re trying to give back to the frontline to make those decisions.”

**Poor Association relationships can be an opportunity.**

- “There was tremendous turmoil before, it made it easy to make a positive impact.

## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

There is always going to be some tension in employer-employee relationships.

But how far that tension goes, and whether it becomes “creative” or “destructive” tension really is within the power of the Chief to at least try to influence.

There are “best practice” models to follow that support constructive labour relation outcomes. Those models are centered around real engagement and transparency.

Ultimately, both sides have to “play their part” and react to circumstances and situations as they arise. For both sides, that imperative may be bigger personal relationships.

If conflict does escalate from behind the scenes to public controversy, it remains essential to keep the lines of communication open.

At the provincial level, there will be close attention paid to how the CSPA implementation is working, but now that the legislation is in force there may be opportunities for the OACP, OAPSB, and PAO to identify new initiatives for the province to tackle that will benefit from collaboration.



## Chapter 09

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# Budget Pressures

Tell us about the key budget pressures you are experiencing?



# What We Heard

Every year, the Police Services Board must prepare and present a budget. This is perhaps the greatest responsibility the Board faces in fulfilling its mandate to provide adequate and effective policing. However, it is not possible for the Board to complete this task without significant effort and input from the Chief of Police as well as the senior leadership team. Although it is technically a “Board” budget, the reality is that the Chief and their staff put the majority of the work into the development of the budget. It is then reviewed, scrutinized, and approved by the Board.

## FRAMING THE BUDGET AS A FUNCTION OF PRESSURES AND MOTIVATIONS

**Ongoing pressures and tensions:** The majority of participants spoke about the year-to-year challenges of making sure the Service gets the resources they need.

- “My concern is being able to find the resources to do the job. We do not have a lot of fat in the system. We could be more efficient, but we are a hand me down police service. We take others used products. That is a pressure for me.”
- “City Councillors are less likely to fund that which they don’t control. And because we’re a special purposes body at arm’s length from the City, they just can’t tell the police service what to do the same way they can to a department. When it comes to that feeling of control of a dollar, there might be less willingness to pay.”

Some feel they have “caught-up” but are concerned about the future.

- “This year I had a great outcome. Going forward, it will be difficult. I can’t keep asking for more in the same catch-up kind of way. Very appreciative of what we did get, but the tolerance will not continue to exist.”

- “I cannot say the Board was anything but supportive. The challenge is going to be once we annualize the jobs that we are hiring for, next year we are going to be back and the ask is still going to be high.”

Others feel the need for more resources.

- “We have been chronically underfunded, and we have never caught up.”
- “We did an internal survey that I shared with the Board. The number one issue for morale was workload and number two was staffing levels.”

**More of the same.** Some mentioned that the budgeting process has remained unchanged over the years:

- “I’ve been here [more than five years], and the budget pressures today are the same as they were [when I arrived]. When I started, I remember we went to a summit on economics of policing and none of that has changed. None of that has changed.”

**Modern approaches.** Others cited new innovations to budgeting including better data and better approaches to multi-year budgeting:

- “As my first order of business, I set up a really good multi-year budget forecasting system. Since then, we’ve been really good at setting up our budget, which has been in line with the demands of our city.”
- “I would much prefer a multi-year budget so we can have a smooth growth curve. In theory, a multi-year budget cycle should be aligned with your strategic plan cycle. But you need smooth growth curves otherwise it’s really hard for the community to plan.”



## FACTORS THAT CREATE TENSION IN THE BUDGETING PROCESS

**Salaries and benefits:** Many discussed the challenges they are facing with providing the necessary salaries and benefits needed to sustain their Police Services. Over the past decades, 1st Class Constable salaries have been “ranked” in Ontario through various arbitration processes. The reality today is that Boards and Chiefs have very little control over salary levels. The outcome of any potential arbitration on salaries is fairly predictable. The result is that Boards have benefits to negotiate, operational dollars and capital investments.

- “During the last few collective agreements, the Board and Association were more focused on salary than benefits, so we are very far behind. We need to go to arbitration for benefits - its huge.”
- “WSIB costs are a pressure. It’s millions a year and the bigger costs come from adding bodies. Each year we add 5 more bodies. It’s not great and we are not getting bigger - it’s like a sinking ship.”

**Staffing and recruitment pressures:** Related to salaries and benefits, some mentioned the challenges associated with staffing and retaining members to provide adequate and effective policing and how this can quickly drive up the costs of policing.

- “Staffing and sustainability was the biggest pressure on this budget and how much we got of the taxpayer dollar. We wound up being \$1.7M in deficit and it got very political. It is impacting our retention. When we do exit interviews, people who leave say it’s the workload and the lack of staff in the Front-line.”

**Technology and modernization pressures:** Some talked about the ever-evolving technology landscape and the high costs associated with keeping the Service up to date.

- “A key budget piece is all the modernization. This is creating challenges, particularly for a small or mid-size organization. Trying to keep up is challenging.”

- “Modernization is something that the rank and file have been waiting for in the last couple years and nothing has materialized. I’ve sat through exit interviews where officers retiring said we just kept dangling the carrot, but nothing seems to be done.”

**Equipment and capital budget pressures:** Somewhat related to technology and modernization pressures, the need for equipment and capital expenditures was highlighted as a significant pressure.

- “Equipment is a prime example where we struggle with vendors that are switching to a subscription model. This is happening in tasers, software as a service, Microsoft 365, etc. It jumps to operating, from capital but it puts a different stress. This can distort perceptions of budget increases.”

**Legislative pressures:** Some are concerned about the pressures that will come from the new Act, while others see it as a helpful tool to justify budget adjustments to meet new legislative requirements.

- “The new legislative changes will bring some new pressures just for adequacy standards and we’ll be factoring that in, and we’ll probably be leaning on OACP and AMO. Everybody needs to be aware that these changes are going to impose new expectations on training and equipment adequacy.”

**Geographic challenges:** Some in smaller communities cited pressures around low population growth and a smaller tax base.

- “Two things come into play are:
  - o Ability to pay - our city only has so much ability to pay, it’s just a reality - we’re not like a York or a Halton where you get [increased revenues] and development charges that feed into your budget.
  - o Growth - Because we’re not growing, our ability to pay is restricted and it’s because it’s not a growing community - it’s not a dying community but it’s not a growing community.”

- “One thing that impacts our budget is our location. It is expensive to get enough people and geography hurts us. Because of the high cost, many of the local services are gone and went to the OPP.”
- “One of the biggest challenges we have is the tax burden. It’s very small and it hasn’t really increased a whole lot. If it hits the saturation point where you can only pay for things through the municipal tax and housing, it’s going to be really difficult.”

**Triaging calls.** New operational decisions as a community grows can be an exercise in expectation management.

- “We have growing communities and expectations. Before, there was an expectation that we would go to every call for service, but now we’ve stopped doing it. We’re transitioning from being smaller communities to larger ones, but still have the mindset that you need to go to every call for service. It is just not sustainable.”

## SOLUTIONS TO BEND THE COST CURVE

Many participants had thoughts and ideas on how to best find efficiencies and reduce spending pressures.

**Use of Special Constables and Civilians:** Some are exploring the use of alternatives to the high cost of sworn police officers. This can include greater use of Auxiliary officers, and Special Constables. The challenge with this approach is that Special Constable costs have increased significantly over the year resulting in the salary gap between a police officer and a special constable being smaller.

- “The question I asked, which I know a lot of police officers and police leaders around the province ask is, ‘if you don’t need a gun, taser, or pepper spray and if you don’t need the full powers of a police officer, do you need a police officer?’”
- “We made an initial assessment and created new positions which deployed six positions to the frontline. They were used in areas like media relations, Crime Stoppers, and online reporting. No one ever expected these people to arrest people.”

- “I remember in 1950 when the police officer would come to a house and sit and have a coffee and take a report. We try and use civilians, non-deployable people, and then adjust our service delivery levels for reporting crime.”

**Use of technology:** Although it can require a significant investment, technology and modernization can lower costs by allowing Police Services to adjust their delivery models.

- “The online reporting center that I’ve got takes 30% of the work away from the Front-line. Change the service delivery so you’re not sending a police officer to a house to look into a garden and say ‘yeah, that’s where a garden gnome was stolen from’ and reported online.”
- “We are in the process of starting up online reporting, which we’ve never done here. Until recently, we used to go to every gas station drive-off. Now, we stopped doing that. You should have seen how it hit the fan here - but that’s an operational decision that the Chief makes.”
- “We’re trying to get to the point where our IT and dispatch costs for the City, for ourselves and for the fire department, are zero. We’ll keep working towards that as a long-term goal.”



## WORKING TOGETHER TO GET THE BUDGET PASSED

**The importance of an engaged Board:** All participants had strong feelings on how to work with the Board and City Council to build the budget and get the budget approved. Some mentioned that having a Board that is knowledgeable and willing to provide input is key to successfully passing the budget.

- “If your Board is engaged, aware, informed, and supportive, then the budget processes usually go fairly well.”

**Relationships matter:** Some discussed the importance of building strong relationships and trust as key factors in budget creation.

- “Because I have earned the trust of the Board, earned trust of elected officials – the budget does satisfy and allow me to deliver adequate and effective services.”
- “For the Board, it’s about how you build that trust with them, bring them in, and inform them of operational matters.”
- “At budget season, I bring Councillors in one by one, and I take them through the budget line by line. It builds trust. All the questions were answered in September and October. By the time we get to late November, the questions they ask are limited, if any. It is a good feeling.”

**Great Data:** Some highlighted the importance of having effective data as a key factor in forecasting and making the case for the resources they need.

- “I used an economic study of my community. This amazing document spoke about the population growth up to and including 2050. I then took my cop to pop and my crime severity index and I correlated it to what my growth was required over the next 10 years. With that, I was able to get a 10-year commitment from my Board, including a human capital plan.”
- “We’re on a growth plan for our total staffing and that’s been because of the Board support to see where we are in terms of population growth and the demands of our community.”

**The right expertise:** Some discussed the need to bring additional professional resources to help make the process go more smoothly and to have an impartial partner that can collaboratively work with the Service and the Board.

- “I brought a CFO in. Before, it was a police officer doing it and that officer had no training at all. The CFO brought in some practices and presented to the Board.”
- “We’ve added a manager of government relations which has really helped. There are new expectations now on what we communicate, how we communicate, how we explain ourselves.”
- “Our Board just approved a multi-year budget and the way we did that, we brought in [a consultant] after just doing a service delivery review. They gave us recommendations to bring us to the average of the comparator universe.”

However, sometimes not everything is in the Chief’s control. Many discussed how timing and the priorities of the Board or City Council can shape what can be achieved through the budget process.

- “We asked for more people in my first year. As you know, in your first year, things always go well. We call it the honeymoon period. We got everything we asked for.”
- “I would say we had the phenomenon of a new Chief with a new budget, but also a whole new municipal council in the turn of 2023. At the time, we actually had a split vote. Then last year in the fall we improved that to more voting in favour and less voting against.”
- “Overall, we have a unanimous board support on what we need from an operating and capital perspective. We’re in a place now that previous administrations have not been where they’ve had dissension and conflict at the board level.”
- “[The Board and I] are moving together very collaboratively and facing those winds at Regional Council but doing it on a very united front. It’s refreshing. It’s not something I take for granted. I look at some colleagues in some other places that are facing really strong challenges.”



## THE ROLE OF GRANTS AND FUNDING FROM THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Although the main source of funding is the budget that is approved by the Board and City Council, many discussed the importance and limitations of grant funding.

- “Grants have a shelf life. We will lose some and it will cost millions. Some services are rightfully so unhappy about the inequities of grant applications.”
- “We received a very large increase in grant funding. To get that, we’ve been demonstrating value for money. My challenge is answering all the questions. But I think it’s a great opportunity for me to show their value for their policing dollars.”
- “We’ve used grants as a buffering method to hire and expand our service. If we hire using grant funding for the next three years, it’s paid for. But, over those three years, we started to move the expense into our budget so that we don’t lose officers in three years. But, at that point, we will stop getting money from the government.”

**Supporting advocacy.** Some discussed the roles of Federal and Provincial governments in funding and what they could do to improve access to funding.

- “Last year, I jumped in! I had both federal and provincial ministers visit the city; I took the opportunity to voice our pressures. I think we were successful in doing this. We ended up with capital approvals and every grant was successful.”
- “There should be a discussion about whether community safety and well-being should be universal in access. Maybe it should be structured around a provincial funding model and not a grant mode. A provincial model that balances smaller communities, especially those that cover very big areas but don’t have a big taxation base.”

**Revenue generating opportunities.** Some also highlight the importance of seeking alternative activities to provide financial offsets for their services.

- “We’ve done well with other alternative forms of revenue, providing dispatch services and providing IT support for a number of other services. That really offset the increase in cost very well for us and it’s really helped make it more sustainable.”
- “We do third party records checks in order to offset operating costs. I don’t want to rely on that source of funding because it could dry up. All it does is offset the cost.”
- “Court security funding and the cost to the taxpayer is really key. Several small services and smaller municipalities are in the same boat as us. We’re responsible for all the court security funding and costs associated with courts.”

## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

To be successful, the Board and Service need to trust one another and keep communicating. Often, it is the Chief's role to objectively present information and create conditions for the Board and the City Council to accept. It's a difficult but necessary balancing act.

Building the information pathways between Chief-Board-CAO-Council can help reduce skepticism between the different decision makers in the system.

Chiefs may benefit from reviewing their budget process to ensure it meets current needs and is aligned with the process of other municipal departments where applicable.

We have also seen Chiefs take pressure off their councils by making the case for needed funding directly to the community.

Police Service budgeting has three areas that will impact decision making and processes:

1. **New public sector standards for transparency** - Council and CAO expectations may be increasing about the detail and length of projection for Police Service Budgets
2. **New financial tools and technology** can make it easier to plan and project costs, but you need the trained staff to implement.
3. **'As a Service' costs** that shift from one-time capital costs to ongoing 'as-a-service' operational costs require knowledge building to secure support from Boards and to keep vendors honest.

There is a spectrum of information that goes to Boards and Councils. Generally speaking, if you provide more information you tend to have more cooperation and support. While Council can't direct specific budget spends, having that information provides comfort that police spending – a large budget item – is well managed.



## Chapter 10

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# Relationship with Board

How do you feel about  
the current relationship  
with your Board?



# What We Heard

## BOARD RELATIONS:

We heard about relationships of all kinds. From very positive to not so much.

**Outstanding:** Several participants reported that they enjoyed very positive relationships.

- “We have an outstanding Board. I've been very fortunate over the last 5 years. The Mayor is traditionally supportive. The Council appointee is excellent and takes integrity-based positions. Yeah, we have a great Board.”
- “Absolutely fantastic! My Board is extremely supportive.”
- “The current relationship is great, very supportive. This has helped with the relationship. We have updated the meetings and now all of our reports reflect how changes impact financial and operational plans.
- “I have a fantastic relationship with the Board. The relationship has been beyond what I had hoped for.”
- “Very good! I think I have a very good relationship with each of them.”
- “You often hear that some Boards have the odd rogue member. I don't have that. I'm very fortunate and I have a very supportive Board Chair. The Board Chair and I meet monthly and we stay in weekly contact.”

**Good:** Others were less effusive, but still positive.

- “My relationship with the Board is good.”
- “I have a good board and they generally know their lane. There is definitely a healthy tension at times, and that's OK. Our job is to get it done.”

**Meh?** Some were pretty lukewarm.

- “The relationship is good. It's frank but they challenge me in a dignified way which I like and enjoy.”
- “For the most part, the Boards have been generally supportive of police services. I haven't had to do any of 'those' things.”

**Improving:** One focused on the arc of improvement...

“Compared to Boards of the past, it wasn't a pleasant experience because you had to beg for everything you got. But now, it's a different atmosphere altogether. A lot of decisions were made before without a lot of consultation. But now, this Board is a breath of fresh air. They have given me a lot of rope to play with.”

**Not so good...**

- “I get inside information from other staff that the political people on my Board feel the Police Act has no teeth, so they can treat me however they want and there is no consequence.”

**One respondent acknowledged the Board's heart is in the right place.**

- “As individuals, my Board has very good people. On the political stuff, I have faith that the Board's interests are the best for the service and the community.”

**At least one Chief was thankful to have their Board and not a different one.**

- “Judging on how some other Board meetings go in Ontario, I think ours is generally pretty good.”



## STRATEGIES FOR POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

**Communication and Trust.** Communication was the number one factor, mentioned again and again. That, combined with trust, was the most frequently mentioned aspects of strong Board-Chief relationships.

- “I take the same approach to my Board as I do to my Associations. It’s about being open, honest, transparent and accessible.”
- “I approach them much like the Association. It’s our service and we collectively need to make it the best for all of us.”

**Proactive, transparent:** As in many relationships, these attributes build trust.

- “I’m proactive with the Board. I give them good insights. We have an excellent relationship because of the good insights.”
- “They can have as much time as they want. I also try to bring a member from our organization. This helps others on the team to have facetime with the Board.”

**No surprises:**

- “We always try to provide everything in advance and make sure there are no surprises.”

**Respecting the active role of the Board:** “No rubber stamps” was something we heard more than once. Some respondents spoke to an important aspect of Board oversight: asking good questions.

- “Their role, as far as governance goes is to ask the tough questions. That is what makes us better.”
- “If they do their due diligence and ask those deep questions, we do well. They need to ask things like ‘do we really need a cop to do this?’ or ‘can we do this this way’ or ‘are you looking at this or are you looking at that?’ If they’ve done their homework, Council should have confidence.”
- “There is definitely a healthy tension there at times, and that’s OK.”
- “One Board member, at minimum, asks 15 to 20 questions [per meeting]. This is what I would expect and I encourage it.”

**A well-informed Board is key.** Several mentioned the importance of getting the Board up the learning curve of the complexities of policing

- “I use my board meetings as opportunities to educate my Board. I’ve worked with other police organizations and there is an expectation that the members know all there is to know about policing. I constantly remind people that this person could be a local business owner and know nothing about policing. Yes, they are expected to make decisions. But, if we don’t educate them on the business of our policing, then how can you expect them to make the decisions.”
- “I’m really looking for Board Members to understand. They need to know the business of policing.”
- “We do the best we can to keep the Board informed. We haven’t had really any challenges if they are kept in the loop. This creates trust and accountability.”

**An engaged board:**

- “I think sometimes they feel like I’m pestering them because I want their participation. But, governance from the Board is important for my job and for the Community.”
- “My Board is very engaged, supportive and inquisitive. They are very involved in strategic planning.
- “I will spend 5 minutes or 5 hours with them.”



**Sometimes it’s the things that don’t happen** that signal a good relationship.

- “No one has stepped out and said something disparaging against either me or my staff.”
- “We need not be anybody’s entertainment. We need to make sure we’re managing discourse in a professional, respectful manner.”

**One outlined the Board role this way:**

Another referenced the role of the Board as being in a front row seat.

“It’s sort of hand holding and sort of giving the Board some insights into what we are doing on a day-to-day basis. This way, they feel that they are getting a front row seat to what is happening in their community from their police service. This underscores the importance of community relationships.”

**MAYORS ON POLICE SERVICE BOARDS? DEPENDS...**

**Heads of Council** role on police service boards is a hotly debated topic amongst municipal and police governance aficionados. The dual role as leader of council and police board member can create the impression of a conflict of interest. But many respondents to our survey saw the value of a Mayor on the Board, or at least attuned to the police service’s needs.

- “I think it can be good thing to have the Mayor on the Board. Mayors have a lot of influence with strong mayor powers.”
- “If you have a Mayor that gets it and they do a lot of behind the scenes work, the Mayor can be a great ally for you when it comes to working with Council.
- “The Budget is the only time Council votes on anything related to policing. I think it’s a really good thing to have Mayors on the Board.”



## BOARD RELATIONSHIPS GONE BAD: TYPICAL PROBLEMS

**Not a ceremonial post.** Sometimes Boards can put their responsibilities onto the Chief.

- “Our Board leaves a lot of the strategic planning to us.”
- “We do [have a strategic plan] and, to be completely honest, it’s not a very good one. It is the Board’s plan but the service has to do all the work. The only thing the Board does is complete the surveys like everybody else and then they approve it or send it back for a rework. It will all be done by the Service.”

**Inadequate preparation:** Several described the challenges of Board Members who did not prepare by reading their materials.

- “There have been times where Board members didn’t do their due diligence. They didn’t read their Board binders; they didn’t look in-depth at the Budget and they just had a number in their head. They would say your number is 2% and I’d say 2% doesn’t cover the salaries.”
- “I’m not sure if my Board chair was actually literate [on the issues]. I’m just not sure because his Board materials were never, ever opened.”

## Failure to really understand the role of the Board:

Several expressed concern about board members who really do not grasp their role.

- “I think Chairs understand their roles. Some more than others.”
- “They want to know their role, but they’ve never had any training. I didn’t realize how much they did not know.”
- “Good Board Members have to understand good governance – that is the key. They need to understand their role and their lane.”
- “The Board is of the mindset that the police should be like any other city department and that they should be able to just tell us how to do things. They have no respect for the role and they have no respect for the Act. It’s all about the control dynamic.”
- “I’ve had one Board member who was on my back. He sort of took the notion that he was in charge of day-to-day operations. This was a bit of a challenge to manage.”

And when conflict arises, it is often only a matter of time before a Chief takes the blame.

- “How many Chiefs do you see go out on a good note? So, I don’t think there is a lot of hope for senior police leaders.”

**Spillover from Council Grudges:** One described a Board Chair who had poor relationships with the other members of Municipal Council.

- “This made getting things [done] a challenge, especially at budget time. Some of the other Councilors would just oppose the police budget because they didn’t like the Board chair.”

**Rapid Board Turnover and Transition** can put added pressure on the Chief. Unlike a municipal council, there isn’t a regular post-election refresh of a police service board. Committee roles for elected officials and provincial appointments can change board dynamics intermittently and without much notice.

- “I was once on a Board for a local group and somebody said every time you get a new Board member, you’ve got a new Board. [Following that logic], I’ve probably had ten different Boards. It feels like every year, a new Board member comes on.”

One experienced a complete turnover of Board membership, including an inexperienced Board Chair.

- “We were left with a completely brand-new Board. I don’t think it’s an accident that everything blew up within a month. [...] Their lack of experience just rears its head everywhere and on everything. They are making decisions without seeking advice. They are relying on the wrong people to get advice from.”

**Different or Conflicting Priorities among Board Members.** Elected board members can take a different approach than community or provincially appointed members on certain issues. That may be a good thing. Or not.

- “When it comes to money, the Budget certainly gets more attention from the elected members than the non-elected members of the Board.”
- “They put the most outspoken critic on the Board. If you work with that individual on your Board, educate them! He was one of our most vocal supporters by the end.”

**Is the new Act strong enough?** The CSPA may not go far enough in training members and holding them accountable according to some Chiefs.

- “I don’t think that there’s enough teeth in the legislation to hold Board members accountable. It’s all the Chiefs talk about, and no one is trying to be negative – we are all trying to be optimistic. But everybody is asking ‘what is different? what is going to change?’”
- “Under the new Act they have to undergo Board training. I think that’s a good thing. I find I have to lead the Board a lot because they just don’t know.”



## Chapter 11

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# Relationship with Municipal Council

Do you have a good relationship  
with your municipal council  
(politicians)?

# What We Heard

## ANOTHER MIXED BAG OF RELATIONSHIPS...

A lot of positive relationships. Many report a positive relationship with their Mayor and Council.

Very Good.

- “I can't imagine any Chief has more support from their Council than I do.”
- “I have a great relationship with our City Council.”
- “I would describe the relationship with Council as strong. They are in the right spot.”

Good.

- “I think the relationship with Mayor and Council is quite good. We met with all and have been able to have professional conversations.”

“I have a good relationship with Council. They are starting to get more big city issues. It's all about educating the whole community that your communities are changing and things you are starting to see are happening everywhere.”

- “Short answer is, I do have a good relationship.”

Appropriate.

- “Amicable.”
- “Very professional.”

Good now – but who knows about tomorrow?

- “We are one election away from having a bad relationship.”

## POINTS OF FRICTION IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

**Understanding the role:** First and foremost, Council needs to understand its role relative to the Board and the Chief.

“The Board needs to separate Board matters and Council matters. I work for the Board, not for the Council. Although, having said that, I meet with the Mayor monthly for updates and have a strong connection to Council through the Mayor.”

**It's about the money:** As we reported in the section on police financials, Chiefs know they need to “tell the story” of the annual budget, and defend the cost of policing.

- “If we are going to put forward a budget request, I should be willing to stand front and center and defend it.”
- “The biggest complaint we receive is the cost of policing. Cost is the most common complaint.”
- “[Councillors] always ask, ‘how come the policing cost so much?’ but, at the same time they like the service that they are getting.”
- “I came into this organization and I watched a command team put together a budget and I saw the angst it created. A budget is really simple. A budget is a storyboard. A budget is about how you can align your storyboard to your strategic [and] the challenges of your community. There is nothing more to it than that.”

**Political crossfire:** Councils are inherently political. As a large budget item, police budgets can become the subject of politics unrelated to the specifics of policing. Chiefs have to learn how to navigate situations, without being dragged into the fray.

**“Our Council is split, and the Board is being dragged around by a group who all vote together.”**

- “Some [Council members] won't vote for the police budget regardless.”

**Continued echoes of ‘Defund’ or ‘re-task’ Police:** In today’s political climate, some noted that more politicians are comfortable opposing the police.

- “They are looking for defund areas and they are people who don’t believe there is legitimacy in policing.”
- “Some don’t actually want any policing in the community. Regardless, I still invest in them even if I'm not going to change their vote.”
- “We have a few loud ones that are anti-police but for the most part, it has improved significantly.”
- “There are a few Councillors that have it out for you, without any real evidence.”

**A lack of civility and respect for the role of Chief of Police:** Some raised issues relating to a decline in civility.

**“Citizens come up to the Chief and say, ‘we’re embarrassed how our City Councillor and our Mayor talk to you.’”**

- “Citizens will say, we've never seen a police Chief get treated like this, ever.”





## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN COUNCIL RELATIONSHIPS

**Relationships and strong communication** are essential to maintaining trust.

- “Everything is about a relationship. A leader with no following is just out for a walk.”
- [when I arrived] “I watched the [then] Chief and I quietly sat back and wondered why he didn't have a relationship with the Council. He just never did. He never was that guy. He didn't want that relationship from day one. When I got my chance, I started a relationship with every ward representative and every Councillor.”
- “The Council members all have my phone number and I do know them all and have a good relationship with them all.”

**Standoffish or disengaged Members:** One described the challenge of building relationships with members of Council who did not seem interested.

- “We have pretty good Council but, I don't know them very well. They just don't really want that relationship. Usually if I'm getting called, it's because of something bad and I get it in writing. Otherwise, I would say it's amicable for sure. I don't know any of them so, any bias they have towards the Service would be from some past interaction they had. We at least are able to communicate and if they call me, I will be there to answer their questions. I'm also happy to see them at events and things like that.”

**Educating Council on policing issues.** Sometimes Councillors need to learn more about policing.

- “There used to be a lot of tension between the Council, staff, and the service. What I do is meet with my most vocal critics. It's more about educating them. It's hard because you don't get a lot of time with them and they just don't know policing.”
- “Council is frustrated with the social issues, and they don't understand why we can't just arrest people for using drugs. I find it trying to get them to understand the complexities of a judicial system that wasn't built for this. That is a challenge.”
- “We have some really senior Council members. They are very calm and very rational. Then we have three or four who are fairly new, and they think that they are the smartest people in the room, and they have the best business acumen. They are always asking if there are ways to ‘maybe do this a little cheaper’.”

**Being Responsive:** Sometimes it is just about picking up the phone and talking.

- “If I get a call, it's for something bad. But they call me, and I always answer their questions.”

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a stone facade and large glass windows. The word "Otto" is visible on the upper left side of the building. A large blue circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

Otto

## Chapter 12

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# Relationship with CAO

Do you have a good relationship  
with your Municipal Chief  
Administrative Officer?

# What We Heard



Municipalities are governed by Mayor and Council, but the civic administration is generally led by a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or City Manager.

**Kindred spirits.** Many participants told us about the importance of their relationship with the Municipal CAO.

- “If we don’t talk weekly, something is up. It’s a really important relationship.”
- “This relationship is where Chiefs need to be spending our time.”
- “We meet every few weeks. Through our force of will, we improve relationships between the City staff and the police. Through the relationship, we are breaking down barriers together.”
- “That is one job that can make a difference. We’ve created a great partnership. For some, CAOs become challenging because I’m the only director they can’t direct.”
- “One of the things that is unique in our community is that I sit at the management team table. With me, our CAO said, ‘I’ve never sat at a leadership table where the police are here as often as you are.’”

**When the lines of communication are open.**

- “We have a good relationship. They phone me and I phone them.”
- “I have a great relationship with the CAO in particular. We have a fantastic relationship.”
- “A+ relationship. He is quite aware of what we are going through.”

**If not, relationships can break down.**

- “There is a great deal of mistrust generated over a decade of poor relations.”
- “Similar to the City, we don’t always agree on things. They will determine something as a police problem and we say ‘well, it’s not really a police problem. I know you want us to solve it, but ....’”
- “It’s just a lack of understanding that we all have a role to play. We can achieve it together but, we need to recognize that there is value in everyone’s input.”

Change in municipal leadership can make a big difference, be it for better or worse.

- “We have a new CAO and they are a breath of fresh air. I've had quite a few meetings with them, and they know their stuff. They are a doer and a problem solver.”
- “I had a really good relationship with the previous CAO and then a new one came in.”

The CAO can relate to the public pressures of a Chief of Police.

- “The pressures our collective staff feel are often caused by social media. His staff get beaten up all the time about how quickly the roads are plowed and how there are too many potholes. We get beaten up over people looking out their window and seeing a panhandler. From our shared experience, we come from a place of mutual respect mutual understanding.”

**Few leaders in smaller communities.** In smaller communities, with limited resources, the relationship may be even more important.

- “A smaller service demands that of a small city. You need even more connection than in a larger city. We work really well together.”
- “I like where my CAO wants to go but, I think he's coming in with that big city mentality.”

**Between a rock and a hard place.** CAOs can be put in uncomfortable situations if the independence of Police Chiefs isn't respected.

“It's almost like [the Mayor and Council] want that American-style of approach where the Chief answers directly to the Mayor or CAO. They want an American-style policing relationship where the Mayor can tell the police what to do.”

## GETTING THINGS DONE.

While police organizations may be unique, they play an important role in the delivery of services and there are benefits of working closely with the municipality.

- “Some Chiefs just get emails from City Hall saying exactly how much your budget can grow and try and set limits. They haven't experienced that the police service is not just another city department. The first budget was a [high] increase and our CAO supported it. I give him credit for that.”
- “I need to be seen as part of the municipal fabric. I think it's old school for a policing sector to go off doing its own thing. We really try to build that relationship.”

“We've become close and operationally we make stuff happen.”

- “I think we interact on two levels. One, obviously, is about budget resources and facilities. He understands the need for modernized facilities and infrastructure. The other way we interact is the overlapping roles. This includes bylaw, police, and our encampment strategy. The encampment strategy really brought the City and the police together.”
- “One example is that we are moving ahead with joint human resource information systems. This is like a modernization of all of our HR infrastructure. It's a joint venture that is not without its challenges to a major organization, but we're doing it together. It's an example of how we're working well on cost sharing, resource sharing, IT, collaboration – all those things.”

CAOs can be perceived as roadblocks.

- “I proposed that we build a headquarters for us and the CAO keeps dragging their heels. They just aren't well respected.”
- “Our CAO is an activist and an obstructionist.”



## STRATEGYCORN'S PERSPECTIVE – BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

### Optimizing Relationships with the Police Services Board, Mayor and Council, the Chief Administrative Office and the Municipal Administration

**The Importance of trust and collaborative relationships:** Ultimately, the Chiefs emphasized the importance of trust and collaboration to make police governance work.

None of the pillars can operate effectively without the engagement of the others.

Police chiefs identified four ways in which they build this trust and optimize the relationships

**1. Ensuring that each of the governance partners understands and acts in accordance with the statutory roles:**

Make sure each of the governance partners understands their formal role and what they are supposed to do to make the system work.

Based on what we heard, this cannot be taken for granted at present.

While Police Service Boards are often noted as having gaps in this regards, Police Chiefs made it clear that awareness of and respect for roles was important for each of the governance partners including municipal administrators.

Many appointees to Police Service Boards are often well-educated and have high standing in the community. However, this does NOT make them experts in police governance or in police operations.

We heard loud and clear that there is still significant concern about the challenges that may arise when Police Service Boards, or members of municipal council, do not come to grips with the realities of the role they play in leading and overseeing the Service.

Gaps in understanding or lapses in behaviour can result in either too much interference, or too much deference. Both are a problem.

- Too much interference undermines the independence of the police.
- Too much deference over time, has the potential to be equally corrosive, by creating the impression that the Board is “toothless” and the Chief “unchecked.”

Even in cases when the Chief does have it all under control and the relationship is healthy, it is still necessary for Boards and Councils to fulfill their roles by providing appropriate public oversight.

We heard that governance training and continuing education on the business of policing are both essential and must be on-going. Many referenced the new Act as hopefully contributing to this.

**2. Defining and collaborating on shared goals and challenges:**

It is a requirement for Police Service Boards to create a strategic plan for the service.

The strategic plan is important to internal audiences. It can be the basis for a shared understanding of goals between the Board, the Chief, the Service.

The strategic plan is also important to explain the service to external audiences. These include the Mayor and Council, CAO and civic administration, and the many neighbourhoods and communities that make up the public.

Naturally, to be effective, that plan has to comply with the legislation, reflect the needs of the community, but also be grounded in the operational realities of the service. There is nothing worse than a plan that cannot be implemented, because it fails to address or reflect those realities.

It seems that that many strategic plans fail to hit that mark. “We never used it after it was completed” is something we heard many times. Others referred to a disconnect between the Board Plan, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, and the Municipal Strategic Plan.

The failure to deliver a strategic plan that holds the confidence of the Board and Service is at least a missed opportunity. At worst, it can lead to real difficulties at budget time, or when the going gets tough for some other reason.

Many participants referred to the focus of strategic planning in the new Act, and the need to ensure that it is done in a way that adds value to the governance of the police service.

**3. Data and Reporting:** By statute, police services must provide significant reporting on a variety of crime and policing statistics.

Many of the Chiefs we spoke to commented on how the requirements to report, and the accountability that it brings, are part of the “DNA in police culture.” Some noted that it was in their perspective somewhat unfair that their partners in other social services do not have similar levels of accountability.

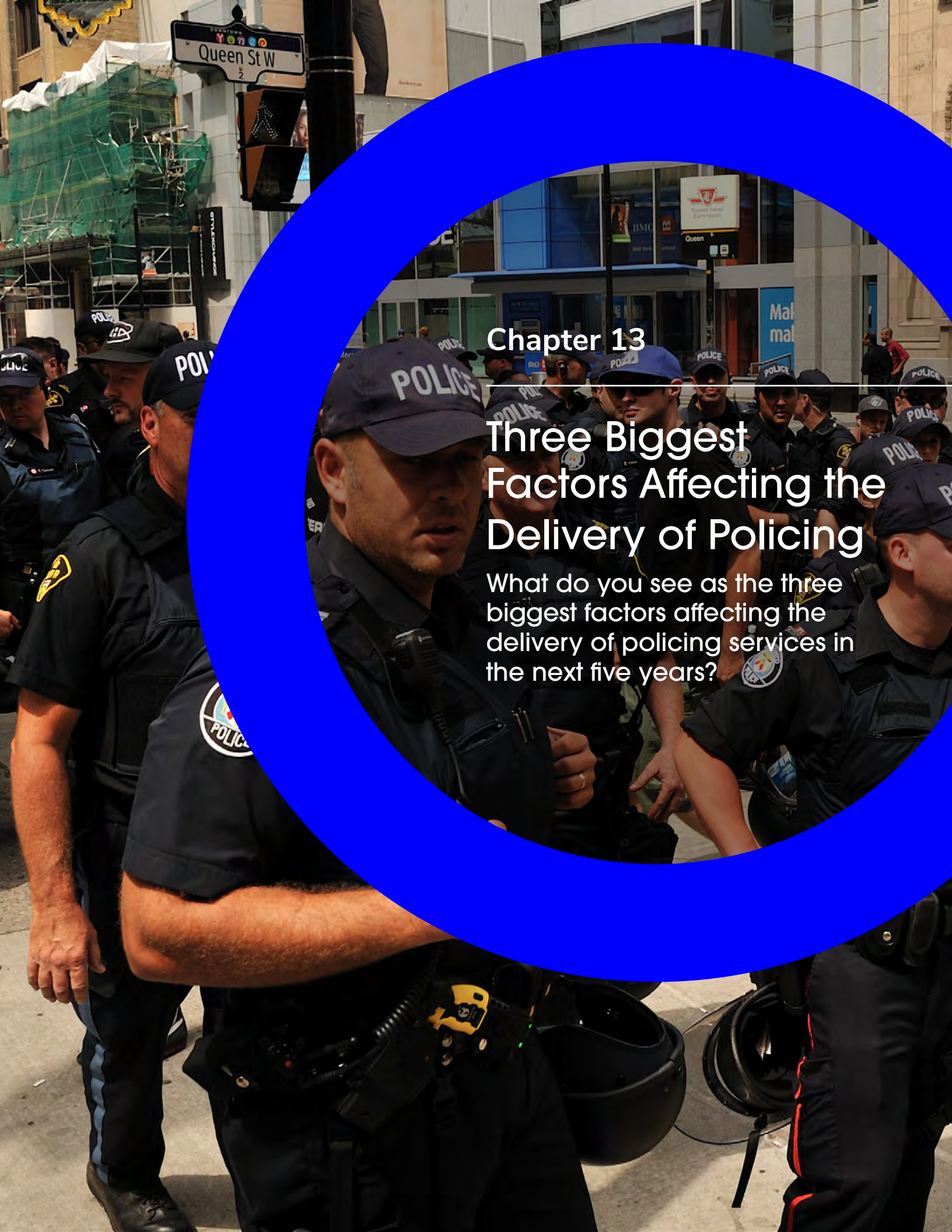
We heard that it is a best practice to ensure that this ongoing disclosure requirement is treated not merely as an obligation, but as an opportunity to “tell the story” of the service and how it relates to the community.

This approach builds trust with all partners, and has benefits at budget time, as it creates a stronger link between inputs into police activity, and “return on investment” for police investment.

**4. Communication:** Most of the Chiefs mentioned the importance of maintaining open lines for frank communication.

This includes everything from the approach to formal meetings, to ongoing reporting. We heard many emphasize the “no surprises” approach to dealing with governance partners, be it board members, Mayors, Members of Council and CAOs.

**Looking ahead, the new CSPA** may provide clearer guidance for Chiefs and Boards on how to address these relationship challenges, even as new obstacles and challenges arise. Participants seem mostly confident, however, that if system partners understand their role, fulfill their function, and abide by the process, communicate, deal in data, and put a focus on collaboration, they are confident that the system will continue to sustain public confidence in the legitimacy of policing.



## Chapter 13

# Three Biggest Factors Affecting the Delivery of Policing

What do you see as the three biggest factors affecting the delivery of policing services in the next five years?



# What We Heard

When we asked Chiefs to narrow down their challenges to the three biggest factors staffing, resourcing in general, staying in touch with the community, and modernization rose to the top of the pile.

## STAFFING THE POLICE SERVICE

**Having enough Service Members to provide effective and adequate policing:** Overwhelmingly, survey participants named staffing and retention challenges as the biggest factor that will have an impact over the next 5 years.

- “Staffing.”
- “Human resource capacity.”
- The HR side of the house.”

Many mentioned the need for increased recruitment and how they expect that finding new Service Members will be a critical factor.

- “The ability to hire and retain staff, there's a big one.”
- “If I can't fill the seats that I need in order to do my attrition alone, I can't get ahead of it.”
- “I think recruitment is going to be one of our number one issues affecting the delivery of police services.”

Some talked about the challenges of recruiting, in particular the need to find resilient individuals who can do the stressful job of policing.

- “How do we continue to find the right people who are equipped, who are resilient, who are well placed to handle all the challenges?”
- “Resiliency of police personnel, both sworn and civilians. [It] will continue to be a factor that affects the delivery of services.”

Some discussed the impact of the media and public perception on recruiting. Due to increased scrutiny and questioning of the role of policing in society, Chiefs noted how difficult it has now become to encourage individuals to pursue a career in a Police Service.

- “[The] media hasn't done us any help as far as making it a career choice for those people coming through the school systems and even the university professors aren't necessarily helping attract individuals to policing now.”

Another key component that was discussed was the need for proper training to ensure new Service Members are prepared for the job.

- “I can hire them, I can bring them on board, I can give them meaningful employment, but I cannot get enough people trained.”

**The costs of officers on leave.** Some spoke about the challenges of the Workplace Insurance and Safety Board's (WSIB) approach to managing new presumptive legislation requirements for occupational stress injuries.

- “If WSIB [issues] are not addressed, there is going to be nobody in a uniform to answer the call and departments right now are suffering.”

## GETTING THE RESOURCES THE SERVICE NEEDS

**Budgets:** When it comes to getting the resources that the Service needs to operate, participants are always thinking about the Budget.

- “Budgets.”
- “Budgets. I only see them continuing to grow.”
- “Sustainable budgets. Finding local solutions is going to be an issue.”

When discussing the budget, many commented on the importance of storytelling and the need for a strong narrative to explain why additional resources are needed.

- “I think it starts with clarity of purpose.”
- “We need to tell the story. That starts with evidence-based budgeting.”

**Societal challenges.** The police will benefit from solving other societal issues like the current mental health and addictions crisis.

- “If our mental health issues and our drug stuff isn't addressed, it's limiting what we can do.”
- “We're being asked to do more and more as other areas struggle like the mental health.”

## STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMUNITY

**Convincing the community.** Some elaborated on the need to expand narrative to the public and convince the broader community of the need for more resources.

- “... the building the brand, doing a much better job interacting with our community, truly making our community understand what we do.”
- “It has to be OK to like the cops again.”
- “Managing public expectations of police.”
- “Delivering police services in the way that the community expects them to be delivered.”
- “Public perception and our reputation. We police on consent, ...that consent can be withdrawn.”
- “Racial issues are going to get more and more significant.”
- “Just ensuring that our Members stay grounded and connected to their community.”

Overall, nothing can get done unless the Budget is approved. Many spoke of the importance of working together with the Board and other partners to make sure collaboration and open dialogue is maintained.

- “The collaboration piece.”

## MODERNIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### Keeping up with the latest technology and equipment:

The majority of participants discussed the challenges and costs needed to stay up-to-date in today's technological landscape.

- “Technology. “AI and different things are driving policing in ways that we've never seen.”

- “Information and technology, there's so much rapid growth on software, hardware, the flow and the volume of information like just the way that business is done, the way that people are consuming information.”

Some discussed the need for new policies and operational procedures that enable the use of technology.

- “Under that bucket I would say data governance, protection of information, privacy skills and capacities.”

**Managing data.** Some participants also discussed the relation between technology criminal investigations.

These elements are expected to increase significantly over the coming years.

- “If we send 10 reports to Crown Council, I guarantee you eight or nine of them have some sort of cell phone or CCTV or some sort of electronic evidence that we have to harvest that just takes that much more time.”

**Criminals are modernizing.** The increasing sophistication of criminals and the need for modernization to keep up with cybercrime, digital fraud, and other forms of electronic mischief was an alarming issue.

- “We are all behind the criminal element.”
- “Cybercrime/ globalization/ sophistication/senior fraud – so much data – it's getting increasingly complex.”
- “Police services are trying to become more sophisticated in terms of investigation practices – on cybercrime or fraud – we need to be more sophisticated and advanced.”

## OTHER CONCERNS

Finally, participants mentioned several other pressures external to the Service that create challenges for staffing. These pressures range from societal challenges to the need for greater capacity.

### Increasing violence

- “One of the calls for service has gone up the most in our community is assist EMS and it's because the EMS are feeling threatened.”

## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

Criminals are getting more sophisticated, so police services need to increase their capacity too.

Workplace wellness standards are increasing. Governments must manage this transition effectively.

Implementing the necessary changes necessitates effective government decision making, strong leadership, and modern organizational cultures.

Our survey suggests there are solutions being implemented that can be copied by more police services and supported by clear-eyed decision making across all levels of government.

1. Resources for front-line officers, for modern equipment and technology are key.
2. Collaboration to tackle crime that transcends both municipal and national borders. Recent efforts to address auto thefts are a good example of this.
3. Constantly evaluating and refining approaches for engaging the community.



## Chapter 14

# Three things that keep you up at night

In your role as Chief,  
what are the three things  
that keep you up at night?

# What We Heard

We often end our surveys by asking the participants what keeps them at night. In keeping with that tradition we included this question in our survey of Chiefs of Police.

## CONCERN FOR SERVICE MEMBERS AND CREATING A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

### Keeping Service Members safe in an inherently

**dangerous job:** Policing is a dangerous calling. The majority of participants, from communities of all different sizes, worry about how to ensure the Safety of their Service Members, as well as the safety of the community they serve.

- “The only thing I truly worry about is the safety and well-being of my members. It’s the only email, text message, or call I dread.”
- “I worry about the team. I just want to make sure that they are okay.”
- “The major concern is officer injuries. It affects policing and starts to permeate in all police services. When you see an uptick in violence against service or see officers off on medical leave for surgery, it starts to wear on me.”
- “Officer safety and wellness. We have been very lucky here. You never want it, but when you get called in the middle of the night, the first thing you wonder is ‘how bad is it?’”

**The risks faced by inexperienced members:** Some specifically called out concerns about the risks of putting relatively inexperienced officers in harm’s way.

- “The inexperience on our frontline is by far the thing that keeps me up. The frontline is increasingly junior, and the distribution of seniority is confined to a few areas. Increasingly the frontline is focused on seizing guns. It’s by far the most dangerous work. You never know what you are walking into when you stop a car.”

- “It’s the inexperience of the frontline, the pressures we have with training, and just keeping up to speed with the changing nature of crime. It is also the increasing requirement that police officers be so many other things than cops, and those lines continue to be blurred. I’m not sure that cops are up for that.”
- “I’m getting the people on probation coming to me and saying, ‘I didn’t know I was going have to go after dead bodies and work shift work.’ What the hell did you think was going to happen!”

### Making sure Service Members get the mental and physical support they need:

Some noted safety as a function of mental health and had concerns about keeping Service Members healthy and their role as Chief in making sure this happens. Most Chiefs understand that a healthy and productive workforce results in great work done in and with the community.

- “Do my officers enjoy coming to work? How do you do watch out for officer wellness?”
- “I’m just trying to find the best way to keep people healthy in every way. We’re on it. I think we’re talking better than we ever have about all those issues.”
- “Member safety and well-being broadly. I worry about the cumulative trauma, the stress, all those challenges.”
- “Do I support my members enough? This organization is a service industry. Having healthy and happy members influences the community and the level of service we provide. There are those times where I feel I’m on the wrong side of the ledger and I’m not supporting my members enough. Sometimes I question why are they doing this or why aren’t they doing that? But, that’s a me issue.”

- “The biggest concern and biggest opportunity may be the presumptive legislation side. The vast amounts of trauma we expose people to and the lack of support on the people side is troubling. They made the change for all the right reasons, but because we didn't educate everybody, we literally never funded it. Instead, they fund it with increased overtime.”

**Recruitment to fill the gaps in staffing levels:** Some spoke about Service Members from a human resource perspective and had concerns about recruitment and bringing enough Service Members into the Service.

- "The HR numbers keep me up – I see the strain on the frontline and investigative units.”
- “Biggest concern is filling staffing gaps - now and in the future. How do we draw people here? We pay comparable wages and can offer a more affordable life and not just a uniform. But no one wants to work weekends, nights, 24/7. So how do you fulfill 24/7 needs while balancing the wellbeing of members and the need to provide a safe environment?”
- “I worry about long term disability and recruitment to replace. We have the same concerns as the service had 40 years ago. We have 20 people on paper, but only 12 are working.”

**Managing and maintaining confidence in the disciplinary process and maintaining perceptions of fairness:** Some participants expressed frustration at the community for holding the Service to very high standards in matters of discipline, accountability, and transparency.

- “I find our public system of discipline is troubling. I have no problem with transparency and accountability. I have a problem with discrediting somebody’s usefulness because of a gossip magazine. Public spectacle style of discipline erodes and otherwise useful asset. It’s worthless.”
- “There has to be a mechanism in place that allows officers who commit misconduct to redeem themselves.”

WHAT KEEPS POLICE CHIEFS UP AT NIGHT?
Safety and wellness of Members...
Meeting staffing needs... Adequate budgets to meet demands...
Keeping pace with technology... Maintaining public & political support for the Service...
Police role in mental health, addictions & homelessness Racial tensions & local aspects of global conflicts... Effectiveness of court and bail systems...

**The Burden of Changing and improving police culture:**

Some participants had very strong thoughts on how traditional policing culture continues to have friction with increased calls for diversity, equity and inclusion.

- “For me personally, the culture piece is huge. I'm used to being able to identify an issue, implement something, and analyze it. It feels like a beast. I don't think I will be around long enough to see it resolve itself.”
- “Unnecessary and avoidable HR matters always drive me nuts. It’s about issues involving internal professionalism. I have no issue holding somebody accountable, whether they are sworn or civilian. We support a community that deserves our services. If everyone is compassionate and kind, we should be perfect, right?”
- “I went to a conference last week and sat through 8-9 hours of panels. But what I noticed was that of all of the panelists, there was not a single diverse panelist. It was all about gender or sexual harassment. But there was not a single mention of harassment or discrimination towards racialized members or diverse members.”

## CONCERN FOR THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE AND HOW TO BEST TO PROVIDE POLICING SERVICES

**Fighting crime and being tough on criminals:** For some, the concern extended to performing the job itself and the increase of sophistication of crime as well as an increase in overall violence.

- “I’ve gone through two officers that were ambushed and murdered on a very benign call for service. From time to time, our officers feel unsafe, which makes me feel unsafe.”
- “Member safety is so fundamental. When we look at it, it can be that immediate sort of violence encountered where we’re seeing more weapons and more acts of violence. It is just more broadly seen in society and more volatile.”
- “When I became Chief, back in the day, I slept well. Because of the gangs and shootings, I don’t sleep as well. I’m always worried about my officers. We have a very young patrol and they are learning quickly through dealing with major crimes and dealing with druggies from down south with guns. Imagine when you see about 20 rounds fired and end up in a child’s door. Our officers have to deal with those things as just another night.”
- “What do you do if somebody with an autonomous car puts a bomb inside and decides to drive in the middle of a marathon? What are you going to do? Shoot out the tires?”

**Meeting community expectations in the delivery of effective policing:** The majority of participants spoke about the importance of adapting to meet community needs.

- “I have the weight on my shoulders of having the safety of my community on my shoulders. I feel responsibility for their safety.”
- “Community expectations - because it is rapidly changing. I serve at the will of the community, and I try to keep ahead.”

- “Unmet community needs. I can tell you that we have backlogs as we always have on huge areas of victimization. I don’t think your average citizen and even political representatives understand the depth of victimization that happens every day. A lot of what we’re trying to do is bring these issues to the forefront.”
- “The sheer growth and diversification of our region. It’s not going to stop. We can only advance the organization to a point where we’re actually meeting needs. What keeps me up is wondering if we are doing what we need to be doing? I hope so.”

**Failure of adjacent services in the community:** Some participants lamented the lack of supports available from services that work adjacently to the Police Service including healthcare, social services, and community builders.

- “Calls for service is going up. The crime index is going up. We have constrained budget resources. Where do you draw resources from?”
- “We’ve had two shootings in the past that were completely preventable. It wasn’t because of the actions of the officers. It was because of all the upstream services that failed to address issues.”
- “Mental health isn’t our specialty but sometimes we are the only ones available.”
- “Hospital security - there are demands from other sectors that keep falling to policing. Where do we draw the line that we say no to the hospitals and focus on maintaining security in the community.”

**The challenge of maintaining communication:** Some participants expressed concern about the need to maintain effective working relationships with Associations, Boards, Councils, CAOs, and the public.

- “It’s the internal engagement piece. It is something that is so crucial. You can be as popular, as successful, or as connected externally, but if you don’t have the faith and the strength of your members, you don’t have anything.”

- “How to run the business better and tell the story to the public. That’s what I think about.”
- “The recurring commitment to connecting with people is a major challenge for any organization and any leaders. When people ask me ‘what’s the hardest part of this job?’ It’s actually just communication. It’s reaching people through the noise when you actually have their attention.”
- “The budget and community angst. It’s a cycle that people don’t always see. Those are the things where you need to make sure you have the right partnerships and friendships.”

**The effect of gaps or challenges with the criminal justice system on the ability to deliver effective policing:**

Some spoke of the challenges they face when navigating the justice system and the uncertainty of how policing will change as new laws continue to be introduced and changed.

- “The absurdity of our criminal justice system. You need a search warrant to get IP addresses. I hope my family doesn’t become a victim because there is nothing there for victims.”
- “I wonder if what we are doing today is sustainable for the future. We are influenced by the government of the day. What does the future of my organization look like if there is not a supportive government? Is it sustainable if we don’t have political support?”
- “Laws are changing so quickly. Everything from case laws, changing search and seizure, you now have the cannabis act. You have a number of different things that are entering in here and very few people have the experience to deal with this.”
- “I don’t want to be the person creating bad case law. We have very inexperienced people who aren’t getting a ton of time to practice testifying at lower things but become involved in big jackpots. They are being put on the stand or providing statements to SIU and others. It’s no longer about how much time you have on the job. I have officers who have been here 10 years and never been in the box.”

**Managing their own stress:** It is said that it can be “lonely at the top.” Some spoke of their own challenges.

- “Who has got my back? I had this conversation with the CAO who was dealing with a few challenging staff members. I called and said, ‘Are you okay? Someone has to look after you and ask how you are doing.’ Later, I thought, ‘who is checking on me if my family isn’t here?’”
- “The general stress of the job. I’m going to be profoundly honest and tell you that if I knew what I was getting into, I’m not sure I would do it again. I put my hand up out of a sense of duty because they asked me to.”
- “I have officers that have been subjected to harassment or discrimination in the police service. And when they try to access the traditional mechanisms, they are disillusioned. They feel that the institutions in the systems are not set up to support the racialized members. It keeps me up at night because I feel guilty for recruiting them and bringing them in.”

**And finally ... there is always one who has it all under control.**

- “I sleep fairly well most nights, thanks!”



## STRATEGYCORP'S PERSPECTIVE

It is interesting to compare the different comments from the last question (what are the three biggest factors affecting the delivery of services?) and this question about what keeps Chiefs up at night.

This question elicited more answers that get to the core of what being a police leader is about: keeping your community safe, supporting the front-line officers who put their lives at risk every day, and leaving the organization in a better place than you found it.

Perhaps this is good time to remind all who are reading this report that we can help build safer communities if we do two things with our Police Chiefs: listen to them and hold them accountable.



## Chapter 15

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### Future of policing

As a leader leading your teams in this challenging time, are you hopeful about the future of policing?

# What We Heard

## BELIEF IN THE INSTITUTION OF POLICING

Despite all of the issues that respondents tackle everyday, there was a palpable optimism about the future.

It's a job for optimists

- "I am optimistic. If I wasn't, I shouldn't be here."
- "I'm an optimist by nature. I believe in the institution of policing."
- "My thing is - I am an eternal optimist - I am trying to be a realistic optimist, but I know that truly if we work hard together and put our hearts in it as a team and we're there for the right reasons, we'll get through anything and I still believe. We're blessed we have people that care, and as long as we support our people, we'll be good."

It's about the job itself

- "I love my job. I think I have the best job in the world, and I am hopeful for the future of policing."
- "Its great job and that's why I got my kids into it "

Its about service

- "Yup. 100%, Its the greatest job ever, I'm blessed to have the opportunity to serve."
- "I'm discouraged when I hear people say I would never want to be a police officer. Its an honour and a calling. its not just a job its a calling. I'm hopeful that there are enough that feel that way..."

It's the people and teamwork

- I'm very hopeful about the future of policing, we have incredibly talented people to lead us into the future.
- "I learn and draw from others. And teamwork is everything to us and to me. And so, I'm hopeful, I have to be."

- "I think we have a lot of really bright people in policing today - people join every day that are extremely educated and have different ways to look at these problems. need to have ways to make sure those voices get heard. Optimistic for that."

It needs the fundamentals

- "We are strong in Ontario policing. As long as we deliver services in a compassionate approach, funded and staffed properly.

Embrace Change

- "Umm. When I meet young people. I have hope. And to some degree I think there needs to be a shift."
- "I feel hopeful about the younger generation coming in, because I just think they'll think differently."
- "I love this job. I have no interest in retiring. I just think there is so much opportunity. We need to embrace change."
- "I love my job. I think I have the best job in the world. I think it will change...I'm not sure what it will be. I have a foot in both camps; change and traditionalists... hope others feel that way."
- "I think if we tell the story, the future is very bright."

Negative influences

Some noted that Canadian police get lumped in with United States policing when there are important differences with Canadian police services.

- "I am very concerned about the negative perception of policing coming from south of the border, that isn't looking good and ... it's because [the US] police profession isn't as professional as the Canadian version of policing."



**Creating a good culture.** Respondents understood their role in driving a positive culture. Strengthening morale today and ensuring policing is a respected profession to maintain a strong workforce tomorrow.

- “I think that's incumbent upon police leaders to inspire their own culture within their organization ... that irrespective of what's happening out in the community and the negative rhetoric, they know that this is a great place to work and if we can make them feel that way, they will want their kids to work in the same environment that they had.”
- “If you're having a brilliant day, make sure somebody else can smile and if you are having a really sh\*\*ty day, hopefully somebody recognizes and gives you a hand up, and that's what keeps you up at night is that we can look after the men and women that look after us.”

As one noted, a challenge with police morale is that victories have shorter memories than failures.

- “You can have ten good things happen and then you'll have one thing that will just hammer the service and just bring it down so much.”

## THE ROLE OF CHIEF OF POLICE IS GETTING TOUGHER

**It's a tough job.** The expanding obligations, public scrutiny and complexity of both crime and managing a public security organization makes the job of Chief of Police a challenging one.

- “It's never been harder to be a Chief of Police in the province of Ontario.”

**Changeover, and less time in role.** Many respondents circled back to the issue of leadership and experience.

- “I think one of the big challenges is longevity for people in leadership roles.”
- “It's not a job where you're going to see somebody want to do this for a long time.”
- “I look back and I see the police leaders of the past that did this job for a long time, where police chiefs' longevity was like 1/3 of my career or 1/2 of my career.”
- “There's going to be a whole lot quicker succession than in the past as far as leadership within the police service ... It's going to be a challenge for those moving into leadership roles. I'm not sure that we're up to all of them right now, but certainly we have some good people ... that will make it work.”

An important recognition also mentioned the work of past police leaders.

- “Everything we're doing now is building off legacies of decisions and investments in the past.”

**The need for renewal:** One apprehension many respondents mentioned was the need for renewed leadership. As we heard in other chapters, police chiefs are getting younger.

- “We're seeing people become Chiefs of Police with just over 20 years [experience] and that creates an incredible gap in critical experience.”

**Continuous learning:** And others noted it's a job that requires continuous learning and a strong support network.

- “I'm still learning every day and I'm still learning on the police side.”
- “You're only as good as the Board is willing to invest in you or the person you took over from. I had, honestly, very little guidance in terms of the day-to-day functions. I have stumbled upon things that I should be reporting on that I didn't even know about.”

## PREPARING FOR SOCIAL AND GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES THAT ARE OUT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES' CONTROL

**Social issues that are not policing issues:** A constant theme of our respondents was that though police are on call 24-7, they are not best positioned to address many of the social problems plaguing our post pandemic communities.

- “We can't police our way out of the [mental health, addictions and homelessness] problems that we face.”

**Geo-political issues with roots outside of Canada:** This survey was conducted against the backdrop of tensions over Taiwan, turmoil in Haiti, allegations of foreign sponsored political assassination in British Columbia, war in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. With protests, campus encampments and hate crimes on the rise, global events are testing the capacity of local police in Ontario.

- “I'm very concerned about the geopolitical landscape of the world.”
- “I now need to know what is happening in the Gaza Strip because it's going to dictate the protests I have to police or the mosque or the synagogue that will be targeted.”
- “But the local, provincial, national, and international issues that we're facing globally are just so immense, right, related to crime victimization that we just have to be keep getting better at innovating and finding ways to work together.”

## A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Some respondents noted the cooperation across police leadership as a helpful component of driving change within policing organizations and with advocacy to other levels of government.

- I'm optimistic that there will be pockets of this positive change in how we deliver policing, who leads the policing, but this is a small window and if we screw it up, the window closes now for another 20-30 years.”
- “I think this provincial government is the first in my history as a police officer that has Chiefs of Police standing shoulder to shoulder saying this is important and this is what we should be doing.”
- “I am hopeful I know I am one of those people that that really does think that you know it's hills and valleys. It's a pendulum swinging.”
- “This is a tough one to answer because I don't have a crystal ball and I know everything is cyclical. Policing has gone through hard times in the past. In the early 90s, wasn't all that great, to be honest, and I was around for that. I'm cautiously optimistic because I know it's cyclical and I know it will get better.”

## STRATEGYCORN'S PERSPECTIVE

For a stressful, on call, sometimes 24-7 job that can be put under the microscope at a moment's notice, respondents to this survey were mostly positive about the future of policing. Even when worries or challenges were presented, there was a confidence that they would be overcome.

As one respondent said, "[e]very time we think we've succeeded, you find new barriers or new silos and we'll just continue to break through them."

Our respondents understood the need to keep innovating and continuing to build strong cultures in their organizations.

The need for effective policing services will always be here. Unfortunately, as one respondent dryly noted, "[c]rime will always be there, so we'll always have a job."

# Our Municipal Services Practice

Our Municipal Services Practice is the Canadian leader in helping local governments achieve their operational and policy goals, while building institutional capacity. StrategyCorp's reputation in the municipal world is based on finding solutions that get results and are implemented.

- We understand municipalities – if it is municipal, we can help!
- Our growing team of more than 80 people in Toronto, Ottawa, and Calgary includes some of the best-known faces in public administration, including former City Managers and CAOs, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Chiefs of Police, City Planners and former political advisors to Premiers, Ministers, Mayors and Councillors. Detailed profiles of the StrategyCorp team are available on our website.
- Our team combines substantive experience in public policy and administration, planning, law, management consulting and finance. We have a high degree of political acuity and understand the importance of communications and stakeholder engagement in developing strategies and plans that are evidence-based and, critically, implementable.
- Our team has served every municipality in Ontario south of the French River from the smallest to the largest, along with municipalities in other provinces and in the United States.

## StrategyCorp's breadth of services for municipalities

- Strategic Planning
- Operational and Organizational Reviews
- Service Delivery Reviews
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Long-Term Financial Planning Support
- Council-Staff Relations Training
- Strategic Communications and Issues Management
- Political Risk Management and Crisis Communication
- Policy Development
- Municipal Governance Reviews
- Ward Boundary and Council Composition Reviews

## For Further Information



### CONTACT:

Municipal Services Practice

[bteefy@strategycorp.com](mailto:bteefy@strategycorp.com)

For more information about **StrategyCorp**

and our other areas of practice, see

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