

Head: Leadership Matters

Sub-Head: Canadian Police Executive Education and Development

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The challenges associated with Canadian police executive education and development form an integral part of our policing history. When one reads the excellent history of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police by Greg Marquis¹, it is clear that professional development was an early and persistent concern for our police leaders.

If we fast-forward to modern times, it is apparent that police leadership development continues to be a matter of importance for those tasked with the responsibility for the health and well-being of their organizations. However, there are interesting and compelling issues at play between these historical extremes. It is useful to explore some key considerations that relate to the evolution and current state-of-the-art in Canadian police executive education.

To undertake a complete genealogy of police executive development in Canada would be a complex task. It is possible, however, to pinpoint some key elements in this “family history” that will illustrate important characteristics of this topic.

The persistent and pressing concern for quality leadership was apparent in 1905 when the Chief Constables’ Association of Canada (the predecessor to the CACP) first assembled in Toronto. This theme was again touched upon in the 1970s through the work of the Task Force on Policing in Ontario² when it reported to Ontario’s Solicitor General. This report recognized the need for police leadership that was open “...to dialogue on objectives and methods” as well as being focused on community problem-solving. The document called for “very fundamental changes in leadership styles and supervisory methods” and initiatives were put in place to respond to that call in ways that enhanced and expanded the professionalism of policing in Ontario.

The reality of an increasingly complex world has had continuous and often conflicting impacts on police organizations in Canada. Police leaders have seen an exponential growth in various forms of civilian oversight and governance, both of which are entirely consistent with policing in a democratic society that places a high value on fundamental rights and freedoms and public accountability.

Equally, crime, and disorder have experienced a degree of globalization that is staggering and aided by ever-increasing technological sophistication. Even more recently, the emphasis on risk management, emergency preparedness, and the necessary effort to be compliant with set standards and regulations has been significant, across Canada.

Complex Leadership Development

Leadership has become a matter of complexity, requiring a diverse range of knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitudes that must be addressed through the highest quality of training, education, and development. It is essential for political leaders, civilian governing authorities, and police executives themselves to comprehend that police leadership development must be ongoing.

In the 1990s, the Strategic Planning Committee on Police Training and Education³ undertook a major project to examine the future dimensions of a police learning system in Ontario for the Solicitor General. This was a watershed initiative that included police leaders, academics, and representatives from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, and other key stakeholders. As a result of extensive consultation, international research, and analysis, the Committee formulated several recommendations for improving the state of police learning in Ontario. Included in these recommendations were specific learning requirements for senior managers.

The demands on police leaders have continued to grow, consistent with expanding police mandates and the increasing recognition of the central importance of strategic human resources management to organizational capacity. In most cases, the selection process for the new police executive becomes a very public and regular feature in the media. Police executives must possess excellent and flexible leadership qualities in order to guide their organizations and inspire the individuals who populate these organizations. Besides being visionaries, they must convincingly articulate the business of policing to a demanding public who expect the “value for money” report card.

It would appear that the current uptake on available options for police executive leadership education and development is lacklustre at best. There could be many explanations for this reality and, indeed, it is a highly worthwhile subject for further exploration. However, it may be feasible to suggest that this low level of uptake may be derivative of a lack of support, both financial and intellectual, from both government and police governing authorities. It is essential that there is an operating mindset that views police executive development as an investment rather than as an expense.

Police leaders are chosen for their competencies, experience, expertise, and career strengths in this profession. Yet, in order to maintain their leadership momentum, these individuals require continuous learning that comes from formal and informal sources. This was the thought in the early 90s when the fledgling Police Leadership Forum sought to produce a journal with articles and opinions aimed at stimulating discussion within police leadership. It never really got off the ground. Similarly, the once impressive *Canadian Police College Journal*, which by many accounts was a good model for balancing the views of academics and recognized police leaders of the day, also allowed to fade away.

In a recent report⁴ prepared for the Public Policy Forum, it is emphasized that the changing workplace is a dynamic and complex realm that requires leaders with new levels of acumen that includes a global perspective and “cross-enterprise leadership.”

The recent Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP⁵ has highlighted the importance of quality leadership at the apex of police organizations. Initiatives such as the National Policing Improvement Agency in Great Britain (the successor to Bramshill College) and the Senior Management Institute for Policing sponsored by the Police Executive Research Forum in Washington, D.C. are examples of excellence in the realm of police leadership education.

It is essential that police leaders in Ontario and across Canada express themselves clearly, candidly, and consistently on the need for quality executive development opportunities. It is critical that civilian governing authorities recognize their own role in advancing and supporting police learning for their Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs. Beyond general statements in a police service’s business plan regarding such matters, governments and police services boards can have a positive, transformational impact on the future of Canadian police leadership through a genuine and substantive commitment to the executive learning enterprise.

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¹ Marquis, Greg (1993). *Policing Canada’s century: a history of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police*. Toronto: The Osgood Society.

² Task Force on Policing in Ontario (1974). *The Task Force on Policing in Ontario: Report to the Solicitor General*. Toronto: The Task Force.

³ Ontario. Strategic Planning Committee on Police Training and Education (1992). *A police learning system for Ontario: final report and recommendations*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General.

⁴ Green, Ian and André Côté (2007). *Leading by example: 50 prominent Canadians talk to us about the federal public service and why leadership matters*. Ottawa: Public Policy Forum.

⁵ Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP (2007). *Rebuilding the trust: report of the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP*: submitted to Minister of Public Safety and President of Treasury Board. Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada.