

Delta Police Department



Chief Constable Jim Cessford – Panel Discussion at the Forum on the “Creation of Regional Police Service for Metro Vancouver” February 06, 2008

Times are such that police leaders need to be innovative, draw on experience, and work cohesively to render quality service and protection of citizens at the local and regional level.

Organized Integration builds on the foundation of community policing, while at the same time incorporates contemporary policing strategies. This includes the bringing together of specialized policing personnel to expand the investigative net, targeting and addressing cross jurisdictional issues such as gang activity, organized crime, homicides and so on.

I'm sure we all believe that quality policing rests on four pillars of success; public confidence, public trust professionalism and public safety. If we allow any of these pillars to erode than we compromise our ability to provide quality policing.

I am a strong proponent of community based policing and to suggest that regionalization or a metro police force is the only solution is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. This is an approach we cannot afford to take.

Community policing is based on the philosophy that police officers and citizens work together, in creative ways, to help solve contemporary community problems relating to crime, the fear of crime, public disorder and social decay. We do know that community policing does work.

Let's look at five objectives of community based policing:

- Reduce the social distance between citizens and the police (Encourage familiarity and trust)
- Revitalize the community by attending to signs of social decay and disorder (“Broken windows theory”)
- Problem solve (Scanning, analysis, response, assessment). Rudy Guiliani, former Mayor of New York, said that “We need to sweat the little stuff by not allowing minor issues to spiral into major disasters.” We need to eliminate problems not merely suppress them.
- Garner community engagement and assessment (citizen input and participation)
- Establish legitimacy (the credibility of the police)

In Delta for example, a recent IPSOS-REID survey indicated 93% satisfaction with the Delta Police. The #1 reason for people living in Delta was that Delta is a safe community. There is still much work to be done with respect to community based policing and we need to focus on the objectives that I just mentioned. Delta is just one example of police and community working together to make a safer community.

Briefly, regionalization is based on ideals of effectiveness and efficiency and requires a division of regions, especially for administrative purposes. Regionalization has occurred in many areas i.e. Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and several areas in the U.S.A. and U.K. London has a Metropolitan Police Force and it is important to note that I have just read in the January 20th, 2008 edition of the Vancouver Province, the British Interior Minister was quoted as saying she would not walk the streets of London late at night because the city was not safe.

Some recent studies have revealed that claims surrounding regionalization and/or regional police services are not demonstrably any more effective or efficient than non-regional services.

The policing costs, crime rates and clearance rates did not decrease as expected. Other problems arose relative to:

- Organizational intelligence (many senior staff were let go and were not replaced). They lost their organizational memory.
- Human resources (there was an uncertainty among staff - People did not know if their jobs were in jeopardy).
- Sense of community (the gap between the police and the community actually increased)

In the early 1990's, Wally Oppal, in his paper entitled, "Closing the Gap" stated "I suggest that our smaller cities and communities do not have large enough police departments or budgets to adequately provide for specialized services."

He went on to say: "Serious crime must be addressed through larger integrated investigation sections that have personnel with the expertise and equipment required to solve major complex cases."

At the International Congress of Street Gangs held in Montreal last October, it was agreed that "the reality is that no one agency or sector has the mandate or the resources to address the street gang problem on its own. Success depends on cooperation and collaboration through various problem solving partnerships." (Dr. Melanie Bania, University of Ottawa). Street gangs are obviously a problem around the world.

It is important for me to clarify that, we, the police, have been catching the "bad guys", but for various reasons I will not address today, they are quickly back out on the street. Many of them are on bail and may have conditions which include curfews.

The integration of policing services in B.C. has seen a certain degree of success. We have several integrated units in place and these units have served us well. Much has been learned however, there have been some inherent problems which include;

- Competition for resources
- Lack of coordination or cohesiveness
- Lack of clear vision
- Inequity in funding
- Prioritization of projects

Now is the time to seize the opportunity to build on this model.

So, how do we incorporate innovative and effective policing strategies that address the shortcomings of regionalization, but build on the strength of community based policing?

I suggest to you a Provincial Specialized Policing Organization is the best option at this point.

In 2006, I prepared a paper entitled, "From Integration to Organization" which was presented to all the Mayors of municipalities in the Metro Vancouver area in the Spring of 2007. This model would involve the amalgamation of several integrated units into one specialized policing organization and would involve a collaborative and cooperative approach through problem solving partnerships.

This paper called for the creation of a Provincial Specialized Policing Organization that would:

- Investigate the major, more complex crimes that require special training and skills, such as organized crime, street gangs and homicides.
- Have a governance board that would oversee the budget, policies and resourcing of the organization.
- Would have a Chief Officer and a management team structure.
- Would provide a service to all municipalities in B.C.
- Resources would come from the various municipalities based on a planned, coordinated approach to specialized investigative needs within the Province.

This, in my view, is the only option as it would;

- Still provide a local; community based policing service that would retain our sense of community and community's sense of ownership
- Allow each community to have their own Police Department, their own Chief and their own identity.
- Facilitate the Federal Government, the Province and the communities to share in the costs of the Specialized Policing Organization.
- Police officers would receive their training at the local level. This coupled with experience and development, would allow them to become eligible to apply to work in the Specialized Policing Organization.

This option has been discussed with the Province and many Lower Mainland Police chiefs, including the RCMP and we have agreed that we will begin the process to develop this model.

In conclusion, the current model of policing in B.C. is serving our communities well, but there is certainly room for improvement. In my view, the larger, Regional model is not the answer. "Bigger does not mean better".

We must work to improve our community based policing initiatives and combine local area policing with a Specialized Policing Organization. This would enable the various communities to have a role in the more complex and major investigations, while at the same time maintaining the connection with their own police force in dealing with local problems.

The diversity of our police agencies in B.C. is our strength. Diversification brings innovation and creativity and incorporates various policing models that attend to the unique needs of the individual communities we serve.

A Specialized Policing Organization would allow for organized integration, having the four pillars of quality policing as its foundation through governance and accountability. This would result in a high level of service efficiency, while at the same time allowing individual police agencies to address the unique needs of their own community.

Given the concern regarding the proliferation of street gangs and organized crime activity, this is the perfect opportunity for us to pull together.

This is not the time for a "quick fix" solution such as regionalization, but to consider a new and contemporary idea such as a Provincial Specialized Policing Organization that with sustainable funding and resourcing, could actually tackle the major problems and the cross jurisdictional criminal activity that plagues us all.

A copy of this presentation, along with the paper entitled "From Integration to Organization" will be available on our web site, www.deltapolice.ca