



# ALBERTA POLICE BEAT

ALBERTA FEDERATION  
OF POLICE ASSOCIATIONS

The Official Voice of the Municipal Police Associations in Alberta

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# From the President

*Curtis Hoople*

Welcome to the Alberta Police Beat and it is our honour to share the latest information from your Alberta Federation of Police Associations (AFPA) Board. At the past AGM (May, 2019) our AFPA Board welcomed new faces which includes myself (EPA) as your President, Mike Baker (CPA) - Vice President, and Damien Cordrey (EPA) - Director. The new additions joined an already strong team with Marc Gaumont (LPA) - Secretary, Chris Young (CPA) - Director, Rayan Najjar (Blood Tribe Police) - Director and Darryl Hubich (MHPA) - Director and Howard Burns (CPA Retired) - Executive Officer.

I'm going to provide you some recent AFPA news but I wanted to take a quick moment to introduce myself. I'm a Sergeant and 16 year member with the Edmonton Police Service who is currently on a full-time secondment to the Edmonton Police Association (EPA) as Vice President. I have an insatiable passion for Policing and never hesitate to voice my appreciation for the profession, my colleagues and what it has provided for me and my family. I am very humbled to be your AFPA President and I look forward to discovering innovative and productive ways of forging relationships with all members of Alberta Policing. This is why it's so important to continue with this magazine and ensure you are informed on what is occurring in your Alberta Police Beat!

It has been a busy few months since the May - AGM and policing across the Province is facing an interesting time with a new UCP Government, delicate Policing budgets, pending Police Act amendments and proposed two-tiered policing models. All these trending issues have a direct correlation that requires continuous moni-

toring and discussion from all Police Associations across the Province. This is why AFPA is so imperative and critical in providing a voice of 4500+ Police Officers while coordinating efforts and knowledge to encourage positive change while expanding relationships with all Provincial partners.

How does this positive change and Provincial relationships look like? The best example of this is the Lethbridge Police Service - Community Police Officer (CPO) model that was recently approved by the Provincial Government - Solicitor General. These CPO's were given normal Peace Officer authorities but in addition they were also granted Criminal Code authorities which included: Theft Under, Mischief Under, Obstruction and ability to arrest for Criminal Warrants (with PTA release authorities). This has changed the game and it was necessary to rally the AFPA troops to create an open dialogue while showing support for our fellow Lethbridge Police Association (LPA) Members.

How does your AFPA approach critical issues like CPO's with Criminal Code Authorities? Your AFPA Identified the importance of letting the LPA know that their fellow Brothers and Sisters were in full support of challenging this model and ensuring all aspects of this unprecedented designation was debated in all forums. This debate started with AFPA sending a letter in June, 2019 to the Minister of Justice - Doug Schweitzer office in conjunction with LPA Presidents letter that was sent in late May, 2019. AFPA wanted to draw attention to their concerns with CPO's having Criminal Code authorities while only being equipped with baton and OC spray. AFPA wanted to remind the Province they represent 4500+ Police Officers across Alberta

and we have grave concerns for Officer and Public Safety. This letter was followed up with coordinating a July conference call meeting that included all AFPA Board Members and our partners with the Canadian Police Association Board, Association Legal teams and LPA President. This live discussion created productive debate around our global concerns with the two-tiered policing model and built strategies on how to impel a seat at the Provincial Government. Shortly after this conference call, your AFPA Board found a seat at the table and were invited to have an open discussion with Minister Schweitzer on July 22, 2019, at the McDougall Centre in Calgary, AB. AFPA and the LPA provided detailed information on the key issues with the CPO model and recommendations on models that could work while inducing attention to SFPP implications, potential Collective Bargaining Act amendments and Police Act reform. AFPA has bridged the gap with our Provincial partners and has developed a new relationship with our elected Government. This forward momentum could foster future growth that will benefit all Police Members across Alberta.

It is important for all of us to take time to reflect, ponder and debate the issues of modern policing. Your AFPA strives to inform, invest and commit to providing the best possible service to the members that dedicate their lives to the Communities they serve. Until next time my friends, I want you to play safe and remember there is always someone watching over you and ready to protect while you serve. ■

Take care from your AFPA President,  
Curtis Hoople



At the Alberta Legislature: Mike Baker, Howard Burns, Jay McMillan, and Curtis Hoople

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# From the Vice President

Mike Baker

## “Why So Many New Chiefs?”

Welcome to the Fall Edition of the Alberta Police Beat Magazine. I hope all of you were able to get away for some summer rest and relaxation with your friends and families. With the increasing demands that policing continues to put on our members, it is integral that we continue to promote the value of work/life balance, so that our members put their mental and physical health first and foremost.

At the time of writing this article, there has been a movement afoot across Alberta. In 2019, we have seen a significant change in police leadership across our Province. With fresh Chiefs in Calgary, Edmonton, Lacombe and soon to be Lethbridge, these situations all stem from similar circumstances where organizational leadership failed to relate and connect with their people. Harassment, nepotism, and bullying are amongst many other allegations hurled at the leadership of our organizations. It's clear that the face of police labour has changed and anyone that hasn't already or is in the process of adapting, is going to face intense challenges.

I was elected to the Calgary Police Association Board in 2007 and I cannot fathom the difference in how we do business, in just over a decade. The speed at which police labour has evolved, has left many underprepared and lacking understanding of the complex labour issues faced by policing today. I can safely say that the organization that I work for, failed to identify, address, and adapt to these issues and it has led to a tough few years.

Recently I attended the graduation of one of our recruit classes. What

I love most of these events, is the culmination of all the effort and exuberance of our members and the realization of their achievements. Unfortunately, it is grossly apparent and difficult to ignore the animosity that is harboured from some senior officers in our organization and even from members of our Police Commission. It is this very behaviour that has led to the problems that we face today!

The shocking reality is that labour and management, by virtue of their roles, are adversarial in nature. Each role monitors the behaviours and practices of the other, ensuring balance or correction when things get out of sync. The system would fail without the input from both sides. The Ying and the Yang. One cannot effectively exist without the other. Once we all recognize this concept and grasp the reality that we will be locked in this ritual for perpetuity, the only really challenge is how we choose to accomplish our goals.

Now you are going to have to bear with me, as I know that some of what I am about to reveal, is painfully obvious, yet we are still talking about these issues. Police Executives, Associations, Commissions/PSB's and governments should all reflect on our experiences and recognize the insights available.

So without further adieu, allow me to provide:

### Five Rules For Effective Police Labour Relationships:

1) **Management Has Rights:** Police Services have the right to make decisions on how they choose to run the day to day business of the Police

Service. Although an Association may not support a business practice and lobby against it, unless it is in contravention of a collective bargaining agreement, it's within their purview. Most commonly referred to as “Bull Shit,” these policies and practices are constantly evolving. That being said, it's always best to consult with the people actually doing the work.

- 2) **Ask The People Whom Do The Work:** Policing is changing at an exponential rate. We must adapt with these changes. Consultation is a requirement of collaboration. No one cares how things used to be done or how someone else came up with a better, more efficient way. If you want a change to be accepted, consult and involve the end user. Unless you're doing it or using it, you don't know. *Accept it!*
- 3) **People Make Mistakes:** Given the demands and complexities of this job, we all will make mistakes. Correct your mistakes and learn from them. No matter the optics, wait until the whole picture is revealed. We hold our people accountable, let's hold ourselves accountable. Let's work together to fix mistakes in a timely manner, to minimize the impact they have on our members, citizens and Service.
- 4) **Its Not Personal!** I can confidently say, that we don't sit around plotting how we can one up each other. With that said, recognize that when the Association is advancing an issue, it's because it is important to our members. When presented with a legitimate issue, the Association has an obligation to provide a duty of fair

representation to its members. There are many avenues for the Association to pursue issues (internal processes, grievances, human rights, labour board, civil law, political lobbying, etc.) and we will exhaust all efforts to right a wrong. **Its our job, it's not personal!**

5) **Can't We Just Get Along?:** When given the choice, we will always choose a united front. Its better for our members morale, the public's confidence and the Service's reputation. With that said, that

means we are hard on one another behind closed doors and praise each other in public. We can never confuse kindness for weakness. In order for this to work, there has to be mutual respect and trust. These relationships are very delicate and require constant nurturing.

Even though these rules were proposed tongue in cheek, I truly hope that all of us can take a step back and truly reflect. Recognize that each and every one of us, despite our roles, are here to help people. If we always come

back to that common interest, there is no reason we cannot resolve these issues. When we are all done and reflecting on our careers, remember the relationships and recognize that we were all doing jobs, to serve our people and communities. Until the next edition of the Alberta Police Beat, take care. ■

*Stay safe out there and feel free to contact me with any further inquiries, via email at [mbaker@backtheblue.ca](mailto:mbaker@backtheblue.ca).*



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# From the Secretary/ Treasurer

*Marc Gaumont*

**G**reetings from the windy south! If you have been looking in the Lethbridge News or following the Twitter of some of our AFPA board members in July, you would have noticed that CPO's (Community Peace Officers) are in the news. I would like to take some time to give some background on the CPO issue that we have in Lethbridge.

In January 2018, our local Police Association entered into Contract talks with the employer and included in the list of proposals was one pertaining to a 6th Class Constable. The City was interested in cost-effective options that could possibly free up existing resources for redeployment to areas in the organization that are more essential to front line policing and the provision of public safety. In the face of a financial down time the consideration was about an ability to "do more with less".

As you are aware, Lethbridge and Canada for that matter is in an Opioid Crisis and the recent Stats-Can Crime Index placed Lethbridge as Number #1 for 2018. In the hope of getting more "boots on the street," the Chief of Police was very interested in a 6th Class (or failing that, a CPO) option. In the fall of 2018, contract talks regarding the 6th Class appeared to be making some head way. As you can imagine, there were discussions surrounding the type of work, use of force options, staffing levels and adequate compensation. We are fully aware of multi layered policing models and also aware that this is already in Alberta with the Sheriff's patrolling

the highways and court houses and the Transit Police in Calgary and Edmonton. So in an attempt to create a model for Lethbridge we discussed our 6th class police officer with contractual limitations on duties, responsibilities and authorized numbers employed. However, in the fall of 2018, after one of the biggest discussions regarding 6th Class at the Negotiation Table, our bargaining team was advised that the Chief pulled the proposal from the table and would be going with CPO's.

In January of 2019, the Lethbridge Police Service began training our Cadets with pseudo-offers of employment for both Police Officers and CPO's to be completed to those successful candidates. The offers were for them to participate in a training program for which they would receive a modest "stipend" and upon passing the program may be considered for a position as either a police officer or a CPO. Their designation would be determined on the assessment of their completed training. Think Hunger Games.

From an Association standpoint we started to raise some serious concerns regarding the CPO program. Without knowing at the time which range of authorities the Lethbridge Chief was seeking for the CPO's those concerns were not fully realized until those were later discovered. We had concerns for their safety as on the last Sunday of every September in Edmonton we remember Foothills MD Peace Officer Rod Lazenby who was killed in the line of duty as he lacked the tools required

to perform police work safely. We had concerns for the lack of oversight - Police Officers falling under the umbrella of A.S.I.R.T, and CPO's being subject to oversight by the employer alone. We had concerns over adequate and responsible representation - Police Officers falling within the Collective Bargaining Act and owning a collective agreement that speaks to salary, benefits and many important work-related provisions like indemnification. We had concerns about the different branches of legislation that govern the duties, responsibilities, conduct and procedures of Police vs Peace Officers. And when we finally learned that the Lethbridge application for CPO's included a request to authorize them for enforcement of all hybrid offences within the Criminal Code, we had clear and obvious concerns about occupational "creep" and the replacement of all police with a cheaper, less equipped option.

The Alberta Federation had a meeting with the Solicitor General in July of 2019 and raised our concerns regarding the Lethbridge CPO model, their duties, and the criminal code authorities available to them (Theft Under, Mischief Under, and Obstruct/Resist). We also raised concerns regarding Officer safety, oversight process, lack of Association Representation and the cost.

Is it cheaper? As we learn more about the CPO program, we are learning that the CPO's will likely be deployed in teams of 2 due to the Officer Safety issue and lack of tools available to

make them safe in a City ranked #1 in the Crime Index. At 2x CPO salary, I can tell you that the salary being paid by the City of Lethbridge to attend to a “lesser” or “routine” call is considerably higher than any first class salary in the Country. I don’t see the savings or the effectiveness.

I can tell you that Lethbridge has a resource problem and that CPO’s are not the answer. The Cop to Population average in Canada in 2017 was 188 per 100,000. In 2019, the City of Lethbridge

has an authorized strength of 172 and we are a City of 100,000. I wonder what we could do as an organization to combat our #1 spot with 16 more fully trained, fully equipped Police Officers. CPO’s and programs like it can have a place in the law enforcement environment. They can contribute. But any program designed to augment a police service is probably more justifiable and certainly more effective when that police service is adequately staffed and resourced to do their core function

within the community. Without that our community, like yours, cannot ever expect to see the kind of progress our elected and appointed leaders like to promise.

The CPO issue, opioid crisis and now #1 Crime Index rating are all hot topics as we head into the fall. Lethbridge and our Police Service will most definitely see some changes as we enter into a search for a new Police Chief and with that perhaps a new vision. ■

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# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR ADVERTISERS

# From the Director/Editor

*Darryl Hubich*

**H**ello to everyone across Alberta, thanks for taking a few minutes to read this edition of the A.P.B. I hope that your summer has given you all a chance to recharge your batteries with some well earned time away with family and friends!

Over the years, I have found that there are a lot of members that aren't aware or up to date with what their local association or AFPA is up to. This isn't out of ignorance, but out of an absence of need. In policing, if you don't need your association, that means you have not had any contractual questions or Police Act/Police Service Regulation issues arise, which is usually a good thing. Sometimes however, as Associations, we may fall short when it comes to sharing information so I'd like to update you on some recent AFPA efforts.

First I'd like to thank the Calgary Police Association who hosted the 2019 AFPA Annual General Meeting this past May. There were several positive discussions had at the AGM and local collective bargaining updates were provided by all Associations in attendance. These updates are crucial to moving us all forward. Often times, one agency has already solved a problem in policy or a CBA that other Associations are currently dealing with. These roundtable discussions also provide accurate wage and workplace parameters for those engaged in CBA negotiations.

This year's AGM did have a bit of a "wait and see" feel as it had only been a couple of weeks since the UCP was elected to govern the province. Whenever there is a change in government, there is a change in priorities; some to our benefit and some to our detriment. The board was aware, that before long, an issue would present itself and we

would find ourselves speaking to government as Association representatives.

As always at our AGM, an election was held and a new AFPA Board of Directors was elected. Curtis Hoople (EPA) accepted the nomination for President, Michael Baker was elected as Vice President (CPA), Damien Cordrey (EPA) was elected as a Director. These new members join Executive Director Howard Burns, and current members Chris Young, Rayan Najjar, Marc Gaumont, and myself. I would like to welcome all of the new members. I know you are all very committed to AFPA and are eager to share some new projects, ideas, and priorities!

As mentioned, the policing and political landscapes in Alberta have changed dramatically in 2019. On the policing side of things, Camrose Police and the three largest municipal agencies in the province, Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, will have new Chiefs before the year is out. With new leadership comes new ideas and renewed optimism for collaboration between the local Associations and their new leaders. As a provincial body, AFPA hopes that the changes will also begin a renewed cooperation between ourselves and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police (AACP) to ensure that the public and our members are always treated fairly when difficult situations arise.

Politically, the newly formed United Conservative Party of Alberta is governing the province which offers promise to all Albertans of better days ahead. The now defunct Progressive Conservative Party was known as a law and order party and hopefully, in time, we will learn that UCP is as well. During the election and the weeks that followed, the UCP did not discuss a plat-

form regarding law enforcement, the SFPP, or the re-writing of the archaic Police Act. As issues arise, we will be at the table to ensure the well-being of police members are looked after.

As we first learned at the AGM, the Lethbridge Police Association had identified several concerns in relation to their current training model and their Chief's proposed use of Community Peace Officers. The proposal would see unarmed Peace Officers doing "regular" CPO duties but also enforcing some minor criminal offences. Not only could this initiate a two tiered policing model, but several more questions arose in discussions, such as; which labor association would accept the CPOs, would the CPOs be indemnified, and would the CPOs be held accountable under the Police Act which currently only covers police officers (See Marc Gaumont's article for more information).

To the surprise of many, the request by the Lethbridge Police Service to expand the authorities of CPOs was approved by the Solicitor General, allowing them to investigate minor criminal code offences.

Once the enhanced authorities were made official, Curtis and Mike quickly reacted in their new roles and organized a meeting with the Solicitor General. On July 22, members of the AFPA executive, along with Lethbridge President Jay McMillan, met with the Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer. The end result was AFPA and the LPA voiced their concerns regarding CPOs, which led to discussions around other trending issues in the province. The meeting was positive as the Solicitor General listened to our concerns and offered to discuss trending issues on a more regular basis. There was also talk of how that office can more effectively

collaborate and communicate with AFPA and the AACP to ensure that decisions are made effectively with perspectives from all involved.

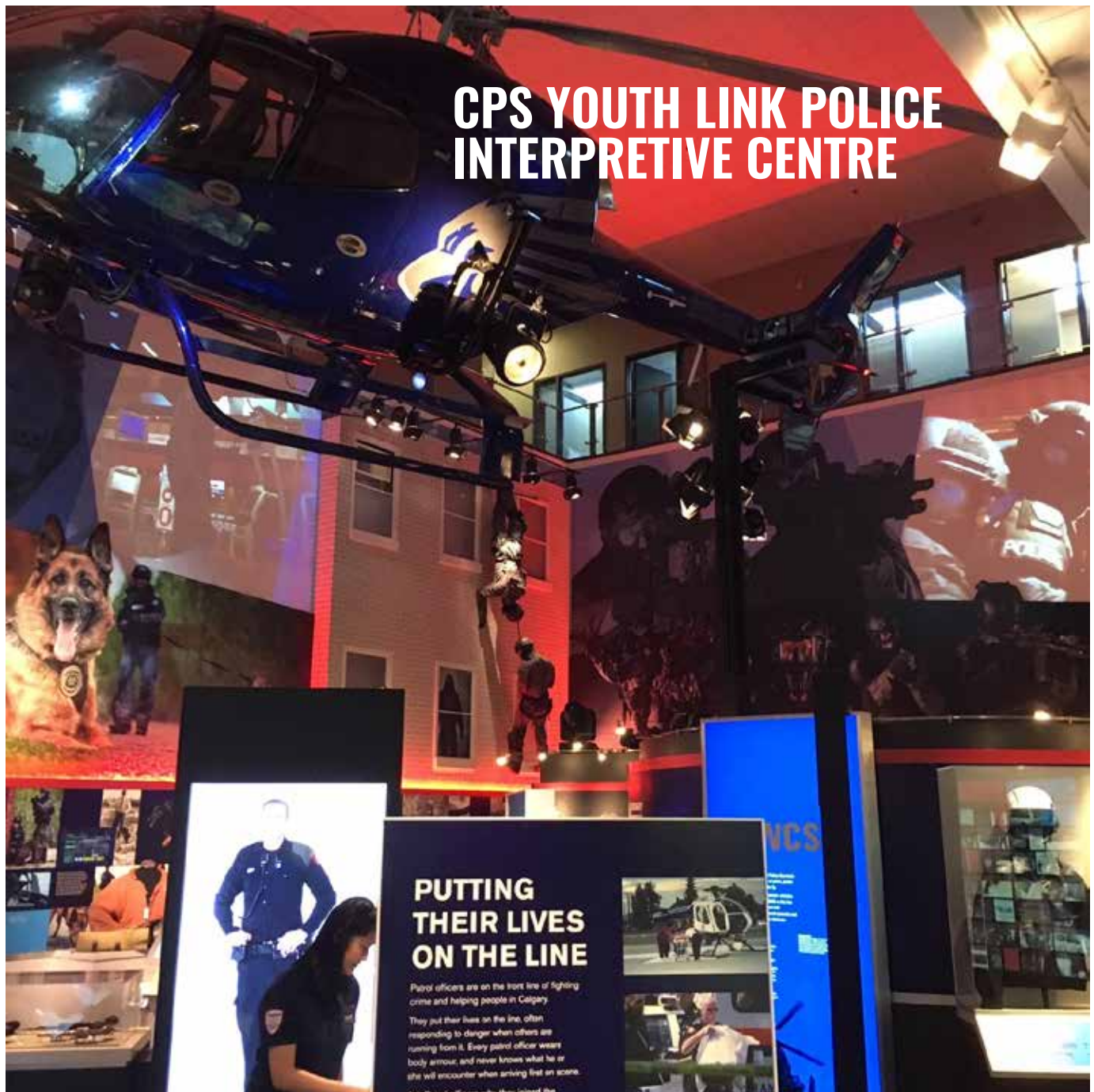
Needless to say, it has been a busy first couple of months for the board members. In addition to the Solicitor General meeting, we are trying to finalize a “Director Training” program for newly elected members of local associations and we continue to monitor all LERB decisions and local policy changes (ie. marihuana use/members’ facial art and hair) throughout the

province. Also on the 2019/2020 agenda is Police Act Reform, “Carding,” and being part of the discussions around the new SFPP governance model, with Howard being our SME.

If you ever find yourself having any questions about what your Association or AFPA is up to, please don’t hesitate to ask your local representatives, because knowledge is power and the more people that understand what is going on, the more productive we can all be. Most of the AFPA Board of Directors will be in Edmonton on Septem-

ber 28 and 29th for the Annual Alberta Police and Peace Officers’ Memorial. If you can attend this worthwhile event, it is an overwhelming reminder of the dangers of our job and the incredible public support that we have throughout Alberta and it would be a great opportunity to bend the ear of any of us that are there. So come with ideas! ■

Stay Safe!  
Go Riders!



# From the Director

Chris Young

## Controlling Your Ego and the Consequences of Letting Your Ego Control You.

**W**e've all heard the phrases before. *"Check your ego at the door,"* or *"That guy doesn't have an ego whatsoever,"* or *"Man, that guy has a huge ego."*

The term ego has received some unfair representation and reputation. I believe the true meaning or understanding of the word has been distorted. There has been a negative implication attached to the term ego. First off — everyone has an ego. Ego means *"I,"* or *"self"*. It is a person's sense of their own self esteem, self worth, self respect, self confidence and self image. Ego is a part of what you are and a healthy ego is a necessity in terms of being successful in life. So, the idea that an ego can just be left, or "checked," or locked up somewhere is just not realistic. You actually need it to bring out your best qualities and be a positive contributor to your team, unit and the Service.

Where people get into some issues is when they lack the skills in controlling their own ego and the way they react to situations. Ego is a part of one's self esteem. A poor self esteem or a lack of confidence can start creating self doubt. Self doubt or negative self talk in one's mind can cause a person to start feeling fear. Fear is a strong emotion. Fear in my opinion is the most negative and powerful emotion that a human being can feel. Fear can cause a person to stop thinking rationally and begin a thinking process influenced by negative emotions. Seldom does emotional thinking generate the best results. A person feeling fear of being

embarrassed or humiliated will become defensive and will focus more on avoiding shame and less on finding an appropriate solution to the issue at hand. When people are not focused on the issues and the positive solutions that are out there it can create a real mess that not only can affect the individual but the can also affect the entire organization.

Controlling one's ego is very important, especially in the law enforcement trade. There are several consequences to being controlled by your ego and some can be even more detrimental in our profession.

### Officer Safety

Safety of yourself and others can be compromised by a lack of ego control. Some veterans that have been doing this job for over 10, 15 or 20 years can let themselves start to believe that they don't have to "follow the rules" or bother to "practice sound tactics trained" because "they have been there and done that." The same can be said for over confident people who have some extra experience under their belt like former military service, martial arts training or firearms experience. The feeling of being indestructible can cloud one's mind and lead to taking short cuts rather than setting up properly, forming a sound safe plan and making sure everyone is on the same page like you were trained to do. Questions that one should be asking themselves like: Should I be dealing with this alone and without backup? What's the plan? And what's

important now? — can be missed by someone thinking they are above it all. It's impossible to know everything. An old Sargent I had when I worked in 2 District used to say, "A good cop never stops learning." It's true. In fact when I was an officer coach I would often learn something from the people I was coaching. I have experienced the same as a firearms instructor. I have often learned from the people I have been teaching while I was teaching them. It is crucial to be open and conscious to new learning opportunities. They honestly present themselves every day. This includes being open to feedback during debriefs. If run respectfully a debrief can be the best way a team or unit can become better overall. Sacrificing safety to avoid bruising egos is a gamble that no one should be willing to take. A little bit of bruising won't kill anyone. If one is truly open to learning from mistakes, being open to what everyone's experience or opinion is and to always fall back to what has been trained - egos shouldn't get in the way of making sound tactically safe decisions.

### Teamwork

No one can do it all alone. There is no Lone Ranger approach in law enforcement. When it comes to problem solving — which is pretty much what police officers do daily — multiple brains are often better than just one. Not only can a lack of ego control affect safety it can also affect team dynamics. If you are someone who is always negative, never open, never respectful and giv-

ing off the impression that you believe you are the second coming in policing — chances are that people would rather not work with you. We depend on each other for multiple reasons on this job. The primary reason is safety, but we also need each other for problem solving and support. A healthy team is open and considerate of all team members. Everyone is entitled to respect, but re-spect is earned too. Work hard and everyone should be sharing the load. People are gonna have bad days or experiences. A good teammate can recognize that and assist a team member who needs a little help. It's also important to recognize when you do need a helping hand and it isn't a solution to refuse assistance. How we react to con-flict is also key. It's not about winning and losing. It's about respect. If you have a point — make it, but don't ram it down a person's throat. People don't listen to emo-tional rants. If you lose control of your emotions during a discussion — you've most likely completely lost the other person. Your points — although good and important — won't be listen to. Emotional maturity is a huge thing to comprehend and obtain. It's taken me most of my life to realize this and I sometimes struggle with my emotions from time to time. I am no where near perfect. No one is perfect. Mistakes will be made. With a good grasp of emotional maturity one can truly resolve conflict in a positive way. Angles seem more open and resolutions become easier to achieve.

Com-munication is huge on a team. People need to talk and they need to be heard. Truly listening to someone and understanding their perspective can assist greatly. Strong teams create strong team members. Controlling your ego and how you react emotion-ally will make you a better team member.

### Health

Lack of ego control can have effects on all aspects of health. If you do nothing but ar-gue and never listen to other people at work you will be a huge influence on making your workplace extremely unhealthy for everyone. Communication between your teammates and yourself will drop off the face of the earth. You won't have the respect of your peers because you don't re-spect them. Conflict will build becoming an every day occurrence. You'll experience conflict with not just your co-workers and the or-ganization, but with members of the public as well. And as the public complaints against you grow and the workplace conflicts, so will the stress and anxiety that you feel. Your physical health can be affected. Stress is linked to several physical health issues. Your mental health will also be affected. I know members who have held on to situations of conflict for 10, 15 plus years! Part of emotional maturity is letting things go. Letting things consume you is not the way to live. In the long run you are the only person who suffers and is robbed of personal peace. Yes, initially a situ-

ation or con-flict will hurt you. You might feel anger and resentment, but it does you no good to be controlled by that feeling and carrying it with you for years on end is a self created prison sentence. A true master of emotional maturity can actually find the positives in all situations. I'm working on this myself as much as I can. All the situations you go through — both good and bad — have an influence on who you are as a person. By being able to control one's ego and practicing emotional maturity you can see the positives in the most negative of situations. It allows you to grow as an officer and as a person. In my opinion it can assist you with resilience, understanding and personal peace.

Ego is a part of you. There is no getting rid of ego, but you can control it and keep it from taking you over and preventing you from truly accomplishing your very best. In the end a healthy ego under control will not only assist you at work, but will help you with your life as well. Your relationships will be deeper and you'll be happier. It's not an easy thing to do. It's something you have to continually work on and it takes a lot of looking at one's self and one's thoughts and actions. How's your ego control? It's something I ask myself way more often these days. I strive to become a better me for my family, my co-workers and myself. ■

Take care.

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# From the Director

*Damien Cordrey*

I'd like to start by introducing myself, my name is Damien Cordrey, and I am a 20 year member of the Edmonton Police Service, 3 year member of the Edmonton Police Association and newly elected director to the Alberta Federation of Police Associations board. I thought that for my first article I would jump in with both feet and bare my soul to the province. The topic of mental health is currently at the fore front of every police agency and association across the country, and we are surrounded by a variety of support systems. But with all this encouragement to ask for help why is it still so hard for our members to do just that?

The stigma that I am weak, that it will end my career and I will forever be the broken toy is so engrained in us that it forces us to keep this secret at any cost. Some may say we are past that point, that we as a police group have overcome that old way of thinking, and I hope that this is true, but for those that are battling with mental health, currently or in the past, we still struggle with that stigma in our own minds.

I say "we" because I too struggled with my mental health over 13 years ago and I still battle with the stigma that I will be perceived as weak and a broken toy. For the last 13 years I have tried my best to hide from my past, never talking about my struggles with mental health. I avoided people that worked with me during that period of my career in hopes if they didn't see me they would forget about what happened. I relished all the new recruits being hired every year because they were new cops that didn't know my past, and to them I was a normal cop like everyone else. When I would talk about my career with fellow officers,

I would skip over that year that I was off on disability and just talk about the cool jobs I had in my police career.

I figured it's time to stop hiding, and start helping. I want others to learn from my experiences, to know that they are not alone in their struggle and for others to self-reflect and be honest about how you view those struggling with mental health.

It's ok to be honest with yourself about your views on mental health. I know that when I first started this job 20 years ago, I held the view that those struggling with mental health were the proverbial "broken toy". I heard how others talked about members struggling with mental health and I too engaged in that negative talk. So when it was my turn and my life fell apart, I did everything I could not to ask for help, because I would now be the one that everyone talked about and my career would be over.

To take you back to the beginning of my career I really started it off right. I came out of the gate swinging and made a name for myself in patrol very early on by cultivating sources, and writing search warrants for guns and drugs. I loved everything to do with gangs, guns and drugs and focused my career in that direction. I was selected to work in our divisional project team conducting surveillance and executing search warrants. All the things I loved to do. I moved into a beat position shortly after that and during that time I graduated from the undercover operators' course, getting my foot in the door to start operating and buying drugs. It was around this time that my officer involved shooting took place. A very dynamic car chase that ended with the two suspects attempting to

run myself and other officers over with their car at which time I shot both of them. This led to threats against my life from gang members involved and the decision was made to hide me for a short term in an undercover capacity. It was the job I had waited for. I loved it and I did everything I could to be the best operator I could be. I knew it was a temporary job but I was going to do my best to make it full time. After three months my secondment was up and it was time for me to go back to my beat posting but I knew I would come back to undercover work.

It was right around this time that my personal life began a rapid collapse and I was watching it spiral out of control with no way to stop it. Then the posting I wanted appeared for a full time spot in the undercover team. I thought that it would solve all my problems in life and get me back on track if I could just get that job. Little did I know that the job I wanted so terribly was going to be the last piece to push me over the edge.

At this point my life was in utter chaos, and all I wanted to do was sleep or get drunk. I would drink at home by myself and challenge myself to finish a 26 ounce bottle every time I opened one. I ignored my friends as they pleaded with me to get out and be active. Instead I stayed at home in bed, or drinking and when I was awake I focused on how badly my life was out of control. I wanted to die, and it consumed my thoughts. I would research on line where the best place was to put the gun on my head to ensure the greatest success of death without making a mistake. It was an endless cycle of drinking, sleeping and planning my suicide. The only thing I had to look

forward to was the job I loved in the undercover team. Maybe it would be enough to make me happy again and start the turnaround I needed.

At the time I started my full time spot in the undercover team, a new supervisor took over and that supervisor made it their life's work to make every day in that team a nightmare for me. The supervisor criticized everything I did and made it clear to the team that I was not wanted. It was emotionally crushing for me. At a time when I was already at my lowest it created a new low for me. But I kept my secret hidden and did my best to appear "normal" at work.

After several months of this torment both at work and at home, the service realized they forgot to give me the required psychological assessment before entering into an undercover role. I was scared of this assessment because I didn't want to be exposed and lose the one job I had always wanted, even though I absolutely hated it, I still didn't want to lose it. A job like this was once in a career and there would be no second chances. I went to the assessment and I knew I needed help badly. I was getting desperate so I thought I would give the psychologist just enough to see if they could help me, without costing me my position in the undercover team. I laid out my all troubles that were happening in my life and but kept my suicidal thoughts and heavy drinking a secret as I knew that would be too much and get me kicked out of the team. That appointment seemed to last forever as I laid out the turmoil in my life, and at the end of it I received a passing grade and was sent on my way. On one hand I was happy because I still had my job, but on the other hand I couldn't believe that I was still on my own. It's so conflicting to want help so bad but still needing to hide from the help at all costs.

I began making bad decisions and stupid mistakes both at work and at home, because I just couldn't find the desire to care anymore. In my person-

al life I bought a sport bike and drove it like I had a death wish because I did. Finally the supervisor was transferred out of our team and a new supervisor came in. I didn't get much better for me in the undercover team, but to be fair that new supervisor walked in at a time where I literally couldn't make good decisions any longer. One night our team was having drinks after work and of course I was getting drunk. In the middle of the group conversation I was staring off away from the group and randomly said, "Sometimes I think it would be better if I just put a gun in my mouth and pulled the trigger." I was so drunk I don't even remember saying it. I was told later that the group just stopped and looked at me in silence and then I just laughed it off. My supervisor called me the next day and told me what I had said. I scrambled to cover it off because I knew it would get me kicked out of the team. I made it seem like I was kidding, although the supervisor told me several times that it didn't seem like I was kidding. From that point I knew my days were numbered in the team and it was crushing me even lower. There were nights where I was ready to go get my pistol from work and days where I had to talk myself into leaving it at work so I wouldn't have access to it at home. I would joke with my teammates that if I got kicked out of the team that I would just go on stress leave. I wanted to set up the scenario to make myself look like a bitter angry employee rather than a broken toy. I needed to escape that stigma any way I could.

It finally happened where I got pulled into the office by my Inspector and command team for leaving my gun in an unlocked locker. I was being removed from the team and this was it for me. This was my rock bottom and I knew that I had nothing left to lose by asking for help. What I remember vividly though was the absolute feeling of relief when I asked for help. When I gave up the secrets I had been carrying for so long, it felt so good to talk hon-

estly about what I was going through. At that moment I didn't care what anyone thought of me.

I was sent off for treatment and offered an abundance of support. I wish I could say it was an instant turnaround but it was a long fight to recover from the depression and addiction I kept hidden for so long and allowed to take such a strong hold of me. I worked hard to find some balance and be in a place where I felt like I could come back to work. When I came back to work it was a work in progress, but I busted my butt to show that I was not a broken toy. To be clear there are a lot of steps to get back to work from an event like this, so you can rest assured that when I came back, the service felt 100% secure that I was ready to come back. I still felt like I had to fight that stigma, whether it was just in my head, or whether it was legitimate, I felt it. This life event did change my career path, as I found the doors to the gangs, guns and drugs career were now closed to me. But when life gives you lemons....yes it's a lame cliché but I found a new purpose and new goals and to be frank they are more rewarding than I could have imagined. I knew my goal was to be an advocate for our membership. I love the people we work with on this job and I want them to be able to come to work and just be able to love this job, enjoying the moments with their squad mates without having to worry about the all the extra stressors of being a police officer. I can't take all those stressors away completely but if I can shoulder as much of that burden for them as I can, then they will be free to focus on the job and their families.

And so here I am as a member of the Edmonton Police Association. I say with total sincerity that this is the best job I have ever been entrusted with. In three years I was voted in as a director, then as executive secretary and now a director on the AFPA board. My long term goal is to obtain the position of Vice President or President of the Edmonton Police Association and until

that time I will continue to give my absolute full commitment to our members both in Edmonton and across the province.

So I can tell you all that I am not a broken toy and I am not weak, and neither are any of you. Asking for help is the greatest sign of strength and courage and self-awareness. We all have

our moments in life that can overwhelm us. Don't be afraid to be honest with yourself and with your family, friends or coworkers. I hope that by sharing my story that it will help others to feel worthy of help, to find the courage to ask for help and know that you will recover in life and in your career. And to act as a reminder to all of us

that just because we have had a struggle in our lives, that struggle does not define us or cripple us. What doesn't break us makes us stronger. We are not broken toys. ■

Damien Cordrey  
AFPA Director

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# From the Executive Director

Howard Burns

## THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING SPECIAL FORCES PENSION PLAN

**Disclaimer:** *Howard Burns is the Chair of the Special Forces Pension Plan Sponsor Board; however, this article is written in his capacity as the Executive Director of the Alberta Federation of Police Associations. It does not necessarily represent the views of the Special Forces Pension Plan Corporation.*

Welcome to the fall edition of the Alberta Police Beat. I hope you all had a fantastic summer and were able to take some time away from work to spend with your family and friends.

For this edition, I thought I would touch on the Alberta police pension plan (Special Forces Pension Plan or SFPP). It might surprise some of you to know that the plan has changed quite significantly. One of my colleagues' best described the changes by saying, *"everything has changed, but the plan remains the same"*.

The alterations to the SFPP stem from legislation introduced by the former Alberta NDP Government last fall. The **Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act** was passed on December 5, 2018, coming into effect on March 1, 2019. This legislation detached three public sector pension plans from statute (government control), including the SFPP, effectively handing over governance (control) of the plans to the contributors (employees & employers). Before I delve into what these changes mean, it might be instructive to review the history of the plan leading up to where we are today.

The Special Forces Pension Plan was established in 1979 after break-

ing away from the Local Authorities Pension Plan. Like most public sector pension plans of the day, member contributions went to the provincial government and were part of the larger Government of Alberta Pension Fund. It was essentially a system where the contributions went to the provincial government and they issued the pension cheques.

In 1991, the Government of Alberta recognized that their larger pension fund was not adequately funded (contribution rates were too low and had been for some time) and they took steps to rectify that. They divided the fund and made each pension plan responsible for their own financial assets; however, the government retained control of the plans as the official trustee and administrator. The Special Forces Pension Plan Board (SFPB) was created to oversee the police pension plan, but the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance retained authority and had final approval on any plan changes. This proved to be a frustrating business model as the government was often unresponsive to recommendations made by the SFPB.

When the government separated the pension plans, it became evident that the SFPP had a significant unfunded liability. Negotiations took place between the government, the employers and the police associations. A deal was struck to address the unfunded liability over a 44 year period. It was agreed that the employers and employees would pay an additional 0.75%

each in contributions towards the pre-1992 unfunded liability. The provincial government agreed to pay 1.25% in contributions. It was further agreed that these contributions would continue until such time as the plan became fully funded or the year 2036, when any residual liability would be assumed by the provincial government. It is anticipated that the payments will continue for the life of the agreement and there will be some provincial liability remaining in 2036.

The mismanagement of the SFPP prior to 1992 put financial pressure on the plan moving forward. As a result, the plan's 60% cost of living allowance (COLA) was suspended for service earned after 1991 and an Indexing Fund was established in order to fund future COLA and eventually re-instate COLA payments. The Indexing Fund grew over time and 60% COLA payments were eventually added for years of service up to 2000. COLA payments changed to an ad-hoc system after 2000, with the SFPB setting the COLA rate and authorizing payments based on affordability to the pension plan. The ad-hoc rate for years of service after 2000 was set at 30% of the Alberta Consumer Price Index (it remains there today), prior years were still paid out at 60% of the index.

Like most pension plans, the SFPP was hit hard by the global financial crisis which took hold in late 2007 and continued throughout 2008. Plan investments plummeted in value and the plan's unfunded liability jumped dramatically. On a going concern ba-

sis, the plan was only 74.3% funded on December 31st, 2008, compared to 93% funded two years earlier (Dec 31st, 2006). The drop in plan value resulted in a significant contribution increase to 13.45% of salary for employees and 14.55% for employers. Those rates remain unchanged in 2019.

The plunge in pension values also attracted the attention of the Alberta Conservative Government (remember that the government retained control of public sector pension plans post 1992). On April 16th, 2014, the government tabled **Bill 9 – Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act**. This bill proposed sweeping changes to Alberta public sector pension plans and was met with much concern and disdain from employee and employer groups.

Fortunately, SFPP benefits were left intact under the proposed legislation. I believe this was in large part due to consultations the Alberta Federation of Police Associations (AFPA) had with the government prior to the introduction of Bill 9 (AFPA was trying to persuade the government to absorb the SFPP pre-1992 unfunded liability prior to 2036). As someone who was directly involved in the government consultations before and after the introduction of Bill 9, I can tell you that even though there were no legislated changes to the SFPP benefits, there was a concerted behind the scenes effort by government to coerce a voluntary change in pension eligibility (create a 30 year plan). Those involved in the consultations were certainly led to believe that changes would be legislated if they were not made voluntarily.

Alberta politics were quite interesting in 2014. There was substantial public, union and employer opposition to Bill 9, but even prior to the introduction of the bill, Premier Alison Redford and her government were under fire for lavish spending habits. As public criticism mounted, Premier Redford stepped down from her post on March 23, 2014, turning the reigns over to Deputy Premier, Dave Hancock, on an interim basis.

Jim Prentice eventually took over as leader of the Alberta Conservative Party and became Alberta's 16th Premier. Under his leadership, Bill 9 was discontinued and died without becoming law when Alberta's legislature was prorogued on September 18th, 2014.

Premier Prentice called a general election in May 2015 and his party was handily defeated by Rachel Notley's Alberta NDP Party, who formed a majority government. Premier Prentice resigned after the election defeat (he won his Calgary seat).

From May 2015 until June 2018, the SFPP carried on with the status quo. Investment returns improved steadily and the plan was 89.2% funded on a going concern basis on December 31, 2016. The December 31st, 2017 SFPP Annual Report indicated; **“The Plan closed out 2017 with 102% of the total pension obligation supported by net assets”**.

In June 2018, the Alberta NDP Government decided to put its own stamp on the Alberta public sector pension plans by removing them from statute (government control). I was directly involved in this process through my role as the AFPA Executive Director. I can tell you that the initial proposal by the NDP involved creating a pension super board to govern over the SFPP and two much larger pension plans. SFPP stakeholders (associations and employers) met and were not sold on the super board idea. Being a much smaller pension plan, there were concerns that SFPP needs would not be met and plan administrative costs would balloon.

AFPA representatives; President John Orr, VP Michael Elliott, Calgary Police Association VP, Mike Baker and myself met with government officials at the Alberta Legislature on July 4th, 2018. Our collective concerns were discussed and the government listened and then asked for a pension governance proposal that would work for the SFPP (it didn't hurt that the larger pension plans were also against a pension super board). AFPA worked with the SFPP stakeholders and plan

staff to create an acceptable proposal for government consideration.

In the fall of 2018, the Alberta NDP Government introduced the **Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act** (JGA). The act contained most of what was requested by the SFPP in their proposal to the government (certain exemptions, etc.) and handed over plan governance to the employers and employees, giving them an equal say on how the plan is run. The JGA was passed on December 5th, 2018 and came into effect on March 1st, 2019.

The JGA legislation relinquished government control over the SFPP and provided the framework for joint governance between the employers and employees. As a result, the **SFPP Corporation** was created to manage the pension plan and the corporation became the plan trustee and administrator on March 1st, 2019. The JGA also created a new **Corporate Pension Board** (most members of the previous SFPP Board moved over to the new Corporate Board) and a new **Sponsor Board**.

In general terms, the SFPP Corporation is governed by the SFPP Corporate Board. The Corporate Board has a fiduciary duty to the plan and is responsible for the ongoing administration of the SFPP and the ongoing investment of its assets. Members of the Corporate Board are appointed by the sponsor organizations (associations & employers) for terms of up to three years and can serve a maximum of 10 years on the Corporate Board. Corporate Board remuneration is determined by the SFPP Sponsor Board.

The SFPP Sponsor Board has a wide range of responsibilities in relation to how the plan functions. Sponsor Board members are responsible to their sponsor organizations. Key Sponsor Board responsibilities include (not a complete list):

- Establishing and maintaining the Plan Text (rules governing the plan, including plan benefits)
- Establishing the plan funding objectives and determining the level of

acceptable investment risk

- Determining plan contribution rates
- Monitoring the plan's operations and performance
- Establishing a recruitment process for the Corporate Board
- Determining the remuneration paid to the Corporate Board Directors
- Considering the interests of retired members

Members of the Sponsor Board are appointed by the sponsor organizations and receive no remuneration from the plan for their duties (expenses are paid).

Full details of the responsibilities of

both SFPP Boards can be found in the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act. As a result of the new governance arrangement, the SFPP now falls under the Alberta Employment Pension Plans Act (EPPA).

Exiting from government control and assuming plan governance is a big step forward for the SFPP. It allows those paying for the plan to determine the plan's future. Under the previous governance model, the plan was sometimes unable to react quickly to pressing issues because government approval was required. Changes to plan provisions usually involved legis-

lative amendments and requests often took years or went unfulfilled.

As I indicated at the start of this article, ***"everything has changed, but the plan remains the same"***. Despite wholesale changes to plan governance, it's likely that most contributing SFPP members and retirees haven't noticed any difference. That speaks volumes to the work that has been done behind the scenes by all plan stakeholders. So far, the transition to joint self governance has been smooth and the SFPP has a bright future. ■



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# From the Director

Ryan Najjar

Ok – Hello, from your friends from the South, I hope everyone enjoyed their summer. We just wrapped up our annual Kainai Pow-Wow Celebration and Rodeo a few weeks back. This event draws in an additional few thousand visitors and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partner agencies that assisted: Calgary Police Service, Lethbridge Police Service, Taber Police Service and the Alberta Sheriffs.

‘The police are the public and the public are the police’ - Sir Robert Peel. Everyone that has studied any form of policing, from those attending College/University to those going through basic police training, have heard that quote and have studied the Peelian Principles (1829).

**#1: The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.** This one is pretty basic. A need exists and the burden falls on the shoulders of law enforcement to keep order in an ever changing world. New technologies and constant changing social norms force police to adapt but the goal remains constant.

**#2: The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.** Being held accountable for your actions while in the execution of your duty is more important today than ever before. The emergence of social media at your fingertips, your actions are on display moments after an event takes place. Unfortunately, an officer conducting themselves in a negative light paints all law enforcement as such. Additionally the media chooses to focus on these incidents and these few officers.

**#3: Police must secure the willing co-operation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.** A test that law makers use is the ‘shock test’. Will this statute or legislation shock the public if implemented and will it gain public approval? People will always resist change and further make things difficult for law enforcement officers if they believe the laws they are enforcing are unreasonable. These instances usually manifest in Case Law.

**#4: The degree of co-operation of the public that can be secured diminished proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.** Police across Canada have put a lot of effort in training their officers in the art of persuasion. It’s always more favourable to gain co-operation through dialog then through physical force. Every time an officer uses force, public support diminishes. This is exacerbated by the media’s focus on the one physical confrontation rather than the one-hundred incidents that were de-escalated through verbal communication.

**#5: Police seek and preserve public favour not by catering to the public opinion but constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.** Special interest groups have been and will always be relevant when it comes to policing. There is a fine line when it comes to these groups and this principal. A lot of times, stirred up by media attention, management and government officials cater to these groups and forget that law enforcement has to remain impartial in order to achieve the first principal.

**#6: Police use physical force to the**

**extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.** Law enforcement officers have tremendous powers when it comes to using force. When this is abused, public confidence and support diminishes. Police oversight is necessary but has to be even-handed. Officers are sometimes not afforded the same rights as other citizens. Some officers have been terminated or receive loss in wage prior to having their day in court.

**#7: Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and 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.** There is it, the foundation to community policing. The principal that law enforcement officers are members of the community and should take interest in it thriving. Recently our values were changed to reflect the historic tradition of the Blackfoot people. Ainnakowa – Respect, Iiyika’kimat – Try Hard and Kimmapiiyipitsinni – Compassion. Values adopted from other organizations and communities did not make sense for a people of rich history and only made sense that the values came within the Blackfoot culture.

**#8: Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the power of the judiciary.** Law enforcement officers constantly hear

'reasonable grounds to believe' as a measure whether a charge should be laid. More and more we see Crowns withdrawing charges due to 'low likelihood of conviction' and law enforcement officers should not be discouraged because of this. The threshold of the courts is 'beyond a reasonable doubt' and as officers we must focus on conducting a thorough investigation and present the best case we can to the courts. Guilt or innocence is de-

termined by the courts, not police.

**#9: The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it.** With rising police wages, the public wants to see police earn their wages. We hear it all the time and police agencies implement quotas or assignments to show the public that those wages are justified. Since 2008 the crime rate in Canada has dropped 17%, according to Stats

Canada 2018 report. According to this principal, law enforcement in Canada is passing the efficiency test.

I decided to write about these principals because as it was in 1829, these are still relevant today. It is a good reminder that 'service', in all our titles, is more than just a word and that we should strive to provide the best we can.

As always, stay safe. ■



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