

THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLICE EXCELLENCE

Executive Summary

Canada's policing institutions face increasing operational complexity, heightened public scrutiny, and growing expectations for transparency and accountability. Despite these demands, the foundational education preparing individuals for policing remains fragmented across jurisdictions, with no nationally coordinated academic standard to ensure consistent preparation. Modern policing, like other professional disciplines such as law, nursing, and accounting, requires a structured and coherent educational foundation grounded in ethics, evidence-based practice, and community engagement.

Recent national data underscores the urgency of reform. Only 30% of Indigenous peoples report a high level of confidence in police, compared to 42% of non-Indigenous Canadians (Justice Canada, 2024). Confidence also varies significantly across communities, with some racialized groups reporting substantially lower trust (Statistics Canada, 2023). Black and Indigenous Canadians consistently report the lowest levels of confidence in policing institutions (Canadian Journal of Political Science, 2024), while public trust in the RCMP has declined in recent years, reflecting concerns about responsiveness and modernization (Government of Canada, 2024).

At the same time, policing represents a significant and growing public investment. Total police operating expenditures in Canada reached approximately \$19.7 billion in 2022–2023, with per capita costs exceeding \$500 per Canadian (Statistics Canada, 2024). Despite this investment, Canada's policing model remains fragmented, with inconsistent training and standards across jurisdictions. Research from Public Safety Canada emphasizes that improving police education and training is one of the most effective ways to increase efficiency and ensure better use of existing resources.

The Coalition for Canadian Police Excellence (<https://c-cpr.com/>), a national, non-partisan charitable organization bringing together policing professionals, academics, community leaders, and individuals with lived experience. Our shared goal is to strengthen policing through education, professionalism, and public trust. A key initiative of the Coalition is the creation of a National Centre for Police Excellence (NCPE).

This white paper proposes the establishment of the NCPE as an independent national body responsible for developing and maintaining a standardized, research-informed police education curriculum delivered through accredited post-secondary institutions across Canada. This Centre would be a federally supported institution, responsible for researching and recommending post-secondary school curricula through collaborative work with policing stakeholders, academic institutions, and communities across Canada.

The NCPE would:

- Establish a consistent, national foundation for policing education
- Embed ethics, cultural competency, reconciliation, and community engagement into training
- Support career-long professional development and leadership pathways
- Serve as a national hub for educational research and best practices

By coordinating curriculum development, embedding reconciliation and cultural safety principles, and integrating evidence-based policing knowledge, the NCPE would strengthen professional standards while ensuring that all students receive consistent, high-quality academic preparation, regardless of jurisdiction. This approach is not about replacing existing systems it is about aligning and strengthening them. A

coordinated, education-based model would help address disparities in public trust, while better preparing officers to meet the realities of modern policing.

From an economic perspective, improvements in education and decision-making can reduce avoidable incidents, legal costs, and reactive service demands, translating into annual savings within Canada's nearly \$20 billion policing system. Evidence from the United Kingdom's College of Policing and U.S. policing reforms shows that investments in standardized education and evidence-based practices are associated with reductions in use-of-force incidents, complaints, and associated legal costs (College of Policing, UK; National Institute of Justice, U.S.).

For communities, this means more responsive and trusted policing. For governments, it offers a practical path to modernization, accountability, and cost efficiency. For police services, it strengthens recruitment, retention, and leadership development.

The creation of the NCPE represents a strategic opportunity for the Government of Canada to modernize policing education, enhance public trust, and align national policing standards with contemporary community expectations. Through academic partnerships, transparent governance, and a commitment to continuous evaluation, the NCPE would help strengthen policing as a modern profession grounded in professionalism, ethics, and democratic accountability.

This national approach builds upon existing strengths while addressing structural gaps, ensuring the narrative flows coherently from context to solution (Council for Early Learning and Care, 2025). High-quality policing, like other modern professions, requires a structured, nationally consistent educational foundation, reflective practice, and structured approaches to competency development. Embedding mentorship, staged learning, and community engagement strengthens public trust and reinforces the profession's ethical obligations much like the professions of law, nursing, and accounting.

The NCPE represents a timely opportunity to bring together communities, policing professionals, and governments around a shared goal: advancing policing as a modern, trusted profession grounded in education and evidence.

The Proposal

Canada requires a consistent, high-quality entry-level education program for individuals seeking to enter policing; one that is accessible and grounded in community trust. National survey data show a decline in public confidence in police from 74% in 2018–19 to 58% in 2022–23 (Public Safety Canada Public Trust Indicators, 2023). To help address this crisis of confidence, a modernized approach to foundational police education that prioritizes ethics, inclusion, community engagement, and transparency is needed.

This decline in trust in police is further reflected in disparities across communities, particularly among Indigenous, Black, and racialized populations, reinforcing the need for a consistent, equity focused national police education program.

The National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) is a national research body that partners with accredited universities and colleges to develop post-secondary school police-specific curricula, based on the competencies required of an operational police officer. Its mandate includes embedding Indigenous education, cultural safety, and trauma-informed practice, aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (notably Calls to Action 57, professional education and training for public servants, and 94, the Oath of Citizenship). By grounding entry-level education in these principles, the NCPE will contribute directly to rebuilding public confidence and strengthening community relationships.

The NCPE's design aligns with Public Safety Canada's priorities on innovation, reconciliation, and community-centered policing (Public Safety Canada Departmental Plan, 2024). A national approach minimizes duplication and ensures consistent quality and equitable access particularly for learners from diverse and remote communities.

Canada's police education remains fragmented, inconsistent, and financially inefficient (Canadian Police Knowledge Network, 2020). Advancing NCPE's work to modernize curriculum and reduce duplication is essential to strengthening officer preparedness, service capacity, and public trust. Provinces currently develop their own training curricula and cultural education frameworks with no national mechanism to ensure alignment or quality assurance (Canadian Police Education Review, 2024).

These structural challenges underscore the need for a national body that can bring coherence, equity, and excellence to policing education across the country.

Across provinces, significant disparities in recruitment preparation, cultural safety training, instructional quality, and access to scenario-based learning have weakened public confidence and hindered recruitment efforts (Public Safety Learning Variability Scan, 2024). Without a shared national educational approach, Canada risks continuing to invest in duplicative, siloed systems that fail to deliver equitable or evidence-based outcomes.

The NCPE will resolve this by developing a national entry-level curriculum, embedding ethics, Indigenous knowledge, and trauma-informed approaches, and aligning education with Public Safety Canada's modernization and reconciliation objectives (Public Safety Canada Departmental Plan, 2024).

The NCPE is fundamentally different from existing police instructional models. It is not a school or training centre and will not operate on a fee-for-service basis. The NCPE will focus on education as distinct from training. This distinction is informed by the understanding that education is broader and deeper than training. Training concentrates on the “how to”, that is, the transfer of skills – the practice of policing. Education provides the knowledge that expands the world view of the learner, develops analytical behaviour, and exposes the student to the history and consequences of policing and its practices. Education can help learners prepare for training by providing them with a better understanding of the important historical and social context.

But, education, generally, takes more time than training; it is widely accepted that police services are already experiencing significant pressure allotting sufficient time to training (Duheme, 2024). Consequently, it is unlikely that they will have the resources to invest in the type of education Canadian police officers need and that Canadians want them to have. Furthermore, most police jurisdictions use and support well established local police training institutions. The provinces, territories, and Indigenous governments have made significant investments, including stipulating and codifying training in legislation as a requirement of police officers before they can serve in their communities. Education is where the gap exists, and the NCPE’s focus on education can help bridge that gap.

Neither is the Centre a school. It is not intended to be a place of instruction. This proposal is sensitive to the fact that universities and colleges have made significant investments in police related programs. It is appreciated that some might wonder if the National Centre is duplicating or replacing their programs. This is not the case. The Centre will act as a research and advisory body on police post-secondary school curricula - for the benefit of learning institutions. The NCPE will scrupulously respect universities’ academic freedom and independence; it will support, not compete with them. This distinction is also important because, the provinces and territories can be reassured that the National Centre is not replacing, duplicating, or competing with their established learning institutions, in which they have invested much. In this way Centre also respects the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities have over the administration of education and policing (governance and training).

What the NCPE is

The National Centre of Police Excellence is a federally supported institution responsible for researching and recommending post-secondary school curricula that would academically prepare graduates to become police officers, and serving police officers to advance into leadership positions. Its graduates would be academically competent to work in any jurisdiction in Canada. The Centre would also maintain a library of courses and learning best practices for police across the country. The Centre's focus is on education.

The Centre would consist of peer recognized subject matter specialists in the type of post-secondary school education that police officers need in order to serve Canada’s diverse communities and that Canadians want them to have. Particularly, it would have significant and broad community representation because, it can be argued, community representatives are police subject matter specialists too. It is community members who, after all, know very well the nature and type of policing that will best serve their community, especially members from Indigenous, racialized, and gender diverse communities. Many studies have reported on the discriminatory nature of policing (both over and under policing) that these communities experience (Public Safety Canada Departmental Plan, 2024). This is known by those communities to be

often the result of ignorance on the part of police of their community's experience in Canada (social, cultural, and economic). Consequently, in addition to the conventionally recognized policing specialists, the Centre's composition will consist of significant and broad community representation especially from Indigenous, racialized, gender diverse communities, and people with substance use and mental health issues.

The Centre will serve as an independent, education-first, national body that collaborates with accredited universities and policing stakeholders to deliver standardized foundational police education. Its governance and mandate ensure that police education remains a public good.

Reinforcing Best Practices

The NCPE builds upon the best practices established by international models. The Centre's public-serving, non-commercial structure enables it to apply evidence-based approaches such as:

- Competency-based education (Police Sector Council National Competency Framework, 2020)
- Centralized research and evaluation repositories (Canadian Police College Applied Research Notes, 2022)
- Ethics integration throughout the curriculum (Public Service Values and Ethics Profile, 2023)
- Standardized certification and cross-jurisdictional mobility for graduates, comparable to models used in Australia, Finland, and New Zealand (International Police Training Harmonization Study, 2021)

This model promotes inclusivity, fiscal sustainability, and educational integrity across Canada's policing education system, from major cities to remote communities.

The NCPE offers a coherent, transparent, and nationally coordinated foundation for modernizing Canadian policing. It consolidates expertise, amplifies community voices, and ensures that every graduate acquires the knowledge, attitudes, and ethical principles necessary to serve diverse communities with professionalism and respect.

Preserving Independence and Public Trust

Retaining independence from policing agencies ensures the NCPE

- Maintains academic neutrality
- Avoids institutional bias
- Preserves public trust in the credibility of police education
- Ensures direct alignment with community expectations, reconciliation, and ethical standards

Competency-Based Education

The NCPE will adopt and enhance the Police Sector Council's National Constable Competency Framework (2020), ensuring graduates develop mastery in ethics, communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and crisis response.

Centralized Research Infrastructure

The NCPE will create a national knowledge repository of curriculum, supporting evidence-based learning, and course evaluation.

Ethics Integration

NCPE will strengthen ethics in a practical, real-world way by weaving it through the entire education program so it's reinforced throughout its curriculum; not treated as a single standalone lesson. Ethics would be understood as a decision-making requirement, addressing the real issues and pressures officers face. Education will also be anchored in human rights and procedural justice, with clear expectations for respectful, fair, and non-discriminatory conduct. Keeping the curriculum informed by community perspectives will help ensure education stays grounded in public expectations and legitimacy.

Standardized Curriculum

A national approach will mirror global best practices in countries with unified police education systems (e.g., UK, Finland, Norway, New Zealand). This supports:

- Inter-provincial officer mobility
- Consistent evaluation
- Transparent academic competency standards

These best practices will be embedded within an independent, non-commercial, academically governed program, ensuring inclusivity and educational integrity across Canada's policing landscape.

National Impact and Alignment with Reconciliation Goals

Through collaboration with Indigenous educators, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, BIPOC community leaders, the gender diverse, people with lived experience with substance use and mental health issues, and academic institutions, the NCPE will establish a national standardized curriculum rooted in ethics, transparency, and inclusion. This includes:

- Indigenous history, treaties, and rights education
- BIPOC and others' experience with policing
- Trauma and victim-informed, and culturally safe understandings
- Community-engaged curriculum review processes

This approach directly advances the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 57 and 94 (TRC Final Report, 2015) and aligns with the BC First Nations Justice Council's 2025 Cultural Safety Framework (BC FNJC, 2025), which highlight the need for early, consistent, and meaningful cultural education within policing.

Key Areas of Impact

1. Reconciliation and Indigenous Inclusion

The NCPE will embed reconciliation principles across all curriculum elements, advancing:

- TRC Calls to Action 57 and 94
- The BC First Nations Justice Council 2025 Cultural Safety Framework
- Indigenous-led perspectives on treaty rights, history, cultural safety, and anti-racism

By involving Indigenous partners in curriculum development, every graduate will be grounded in Indigenous communities' understanding of the principles of respect, empathy, and relationship-building.

2. Trauma-Informed Practice

Collaborating with experts in trauma-informed policing, especially those representing people with lived experience of trauma ensures all students acquire:

- An understanding of the effects of trauma including intergenerational trauma
- De-escalation and crisis-response knowledge
- Incorporation of intersectional considerations
- An understanding of coercive control and how it impacts survivors of trauma

This aligns with precedents set by the Canadian Framework for Trauma-Informed Response in Policing (2024).

3. Equity for BIPOC Communities

Consistent national content will help address systemic inequities, and uneven intercultural training, which were highlighted in:

- RCMP Equity and Inclusion Scan (2023)
- Ottawa Police Service Equity Review (2024)

4. Community Trust and Transparency

By prioritizing:

- Public reporting
- Independent evaluation
- Community-informed curriculum review

The NCPE will strengthen transparency and rebuild trust between policing institutions and the communities they serve.

A Sense of Urgency

The establishment of the NCPE is not merely a policy improvement, it is an urgent national imperative. By aligning education with modern community expectations, the NCPE would bring coherence, fairness, cost efficiency, and renewed legitimacy to policing education across Canada. Modern policing requires officers who can respond ethically, professionally, and compassionately in complex, high-stakes environments. Yet research across Canada shows that foundational education inconsistent across jurisdictions. The absence of a unified national curriculum results in recruits entering service with uneven readiness, inconsistent ethical grounding, and differing understandings of trauma-informed and culturally safe practice.

Over time, the NCPE will establish a consistent national educational baseline and transparent course evaluation, and quality assurance mechanisms. This will help reduce variation in entry-level readiness across jurisdictions.

A National Imperative

The establishment of the NCPE is not simply a policy enhancement, it is a nation-building initiative. A unified, ethical, equity-driven approach to police education will:

- Enhance national consistency
- Reduce long-term costs
- Strengthen public confidence
- Ensure all graduates meet high, transparent professional standards
- Build a modern policing foundation rooted in ethics, evidence, and reconciliation
- Improve officer and community safety

The NCPE represents the opportunity to transform Canadian policing at its source: the education and preparation of every new recruit.

Vision

A national, culturally informed police education, built on ethics, evidence, and inclusion can help ensure that every graduate across Canada meets the highest professional, community, and democratic standards. This vision reflects Canada's values and acknowledges the unique histories, cultures, and expectations of the communities policing is meant to serve. The NCPE envisions a modern national curriculum where:

- Every learner, regardless of geographic location, receives consistent, academically rigorous foundational education.
- Ethical decision-making, human rights, and public accountability form the bedrock of policing practice.
- Indigenous knowledge, cultural safety, and reconciliation principles are woven into every component of learning, not treated as optional or supplementary.

- Trauma-informed, victim-centered, and community-engaged approaches across all contexts.
- Experiential and evidence-informed pedagogies prepare graduates to navigate complexity with professionalism and compassion.
- Diverse communities see themselves reflected in curriculum development and evaluation.
- Transparency and continuous improvement are supported through public reporting, research integration, and ongoing program evaluation.

The NCPE's vision is to ensure that new members entering policing are empathetic, culturally competent, ethically grounded, and prepared to uphold democratic values — thereby strengthening public trust and enhancing community safety across Canada.

Legal Standing and Sustainable Funding

Independence requires national recognition and stable funding.

- Legislative recognition of authority
- Government core funding

Conclusion

The NCPE represents a transformative, globally aligned, nationally coordinated step toward modern, ethical, and effective police education in Canada. By establishing strong academic partnerships, unifying competency standards, embedding reconciliation and community trust into every layer of learning, and implementing transparent national evaluation mechanisms, the NCPE will modernize Canada's policing foundation and reinforce public confidence. It represents a timely opportunity to align public investment with measurable outcomes, improve trust in police across diverse communities, and position policing as a modern profession, grounded in education, ethics, and evidence-based practice.

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