

A Proposal to Establish the Alberta College of Policing

Photo Courtesy: Kyle Melting Tallow, Chief of Police for the Blood Tribe Police Service

Prepared By:

Dr. Graham Abela
Chief of Police
Taber Police Service

Dr. Kelly Sundberg
Associate Professor
Mount Royal University

Dr. Christina Witt
Detective
Calgary Police Service

Submitted To:

Hon. Kaycee Madu, LLB (Hons), QC
Minister of Justice & Solicitor General
Government of Alberta

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Executive Summary

The professionalization of the police and police professionalism are two important and linked concepts, but clearly distinct in their definitions. Whereas police professionalism refers to the way individual police officers carry out their duties, the professionalization of policing refers to the way police as a whole practice policing. Notwithstanding most police perform their duties professionally; the occupation of policing has yet to evolve into a formal profession (Blandford, 2017). To this point, a profession constitutes a “knowledge based” occupation (Torstendahl, 1990), with those belonging to the profession serving as transferors of the “formal knowledge” specific to the functions of their profession (Freidson, 1986, p. 13). Sustained, comprehensive, and transferable “professionalism” can only be achieved once a diverse and expert foundation of knowledge specific to the profession has been learned, applied, and advanced (De George, 1990; Larson, 1977; Richardson, 1988).

While a profession is an occupation, an occupation is not necessarily a profession.

In today’s increasingly complex and polarized world, public grievance spans a multitude of issues. From lacking transparency in police practices, concerns of police investigating their own, and heightened attention on use-of-force, it is clear the time has come for the paradigm of policing to change. Policing today is much different than it was only a few decades ago. Police must be more aware of the importance diversity plays within our society, understanding legitimacy and credibility emerge from transparency and accountability, and sustained partnerships with diverse communities are central to any measure of success. To this end, modern policing requires more well-educated, comprehensively trained, and socially diverse officers — specifically policing today needs:

- *a sustained and inclusive recruitment strategy;*
- *a foundational knowledge of the scholarship of policing;*
- *evidence-based academy training;*
- *mandatory ongoing (in-service) police education; and,*
- *expert, objective, and community-focused oversight.*

The only way to effectively and meaningfully advance policing is to advance the paradigm of policing. As with other occupations that have evolved into professions (e.g., law, medicine, teaching, engineering, etc.), a self-regulating professional organization needs to be established that:

- *defines the professional scope of practice for the profession;*
- *establishes the foundational educational credential to practice;*
- *registers and licences those who are authorized to practice;*
- *develops, supports, and advances a professional body of knowledge;*
- *protects the public against professional misconduct or malpractice; and,*
- *ensure the ongoing legitimacy and credibility of the profession.*

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While discourse surrounding police professionalization has been ongoing for decades (Sloane, 1954; Stone and Travis, 2011; Neyroud 2011a; Robertson, 2012; Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2012; Blandford, 2017), it was not until 2012 when the United Kingdom established its College of Policing that police professionalization fully materialized (UK College of Policing, 2020).

Building on the UK experience, the Government of Alberta stands to become the first jurisdiction in North America to advance the paradigm of policing. By establishing the Alberta College of Policing, Alberta will become the model other Canadian provinces follow when seeking to advance and improve their respective policing models. Lastly, and most importantly, by establishing the Alberta College of Policing, the Government of Alberta will be demonstrating its sincere commitment to providing Albertans the most accountable, effective, and efficient public safety and security possible.

Alberta stands to become the first jurisdiction in North America to advance the paradigm of policing

Biographies of Authors/Presenters

Dr. Graham Abela

Chief of Police

Taber Police Service

Chief Abela has served over 26 years as a police officer in Alberta. Throughout his career, Graham has aligned his academic studies and police training to advance evidence-based policing. As a seasoned police executive, Graham has taken great interest and made significant effort to promote life-long-learning among all those he leads. In every regard, Graham exemplifies both community-based and intelligence-led policing. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Lethbridge, Master of Arts in Justice and Public Safety Leadership and Training from Royal Roads University, and Doctor of Education in Leadership from the University of Calgary.

Dr. Kelly Sundberg

Associate Professor

Mount Royal University

Dr. Sundberg is a Criminologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies at Mount Royal University, Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape at the University of Calgary, Adjunct Professor in the School of Law at the University of Adelaide, and Fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute. Prior to his academic career, Kelly served over 15 years with the Government of Canada in various law enforcement, advisory, and senior policy positions. In both his academic and law enforcement careers, Kelly has sought to improve Canada's criminal justice system by promoting evidence-based approaches to public safety, security, and community wellness. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Victoria, Master of Arts in Justice and Public Safety Leadership and Training from Royal Roads University, and Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology from Monash University.

Dr. Christina Witt

Detective | Lecturer

Calgary Police Service | Mount Royal University

Dr. Witt is a Homicide Detective with the Major Crimes Section of the Calgary Police Service and Lecturer in the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies at Mount Royal University. With over 21 years of policing experience, Christina has served in both operational and investigative policing roles. In both her academic and policing careers, Christina actively promotes education as a central component for achieving effective crime prevention and investigative outcomes. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Physical Geography from the University of Calgary, Master of Science in Forensic and Legal Psychology from the University Leicester, and Doctor of Philosophy in Police Studies from Charles Sturt University.

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The Current Policing Paradigm

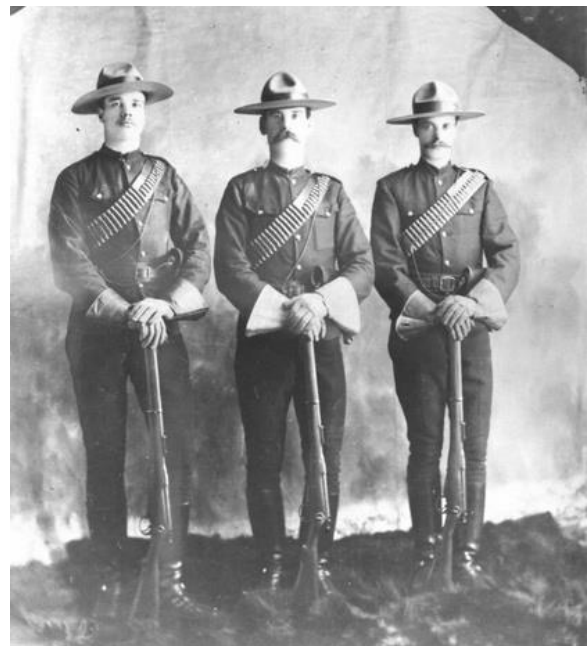
Due to recent events in North America and social movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' (Black Lives Matter, n.d.) sweeping across the United States and Canada, police scrutiny and public demand for police reform is profound. The consistent message is one of public mistrust and scepticism around the systems and patterns of police conduct, issues of systemic racism, police funding, the institution of policing, and police governance.

No longer is the public willing to allow authority figures — *particularly police officers or police leaders* — to exercise their will without being questioned. This contemporary reality of the social media era, where information and images are instantaneously exchanged globally, not only is impacting policing, but also other institutions of established civil society. In cities across the United States, Canada, and around the world, mass protests have seemingly become commonplace, with public concerns relating to police use of force, transparency, and accountability being some of the major social justice themes being voiced.

It should come as no surprise to police that public anxiety and frustration have been mounting for years. While the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has noticeably gained global attention in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, the movement itself first emerged in 2013 (Sandhu, 2018).

Specific to Canada, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls (MMIWG), racist residential school programmes (including the '60s-scoop'),

targeting of LGBTQ2 people and communities, 'starlight tours', along with the finding of Federal Court that the RCMP knowingly allowed sexist, discriminatory, and harassing behaviour to prevail within the force (Woo, Freeze, 2019). Furthermore, findings of Ontario Superior Court that the Toronto Police Service breached the *Charter* rights of G20 protesters in 2010 (Palacious, 2016), all stand as important examples where the culture, attitudes, and practices of Canadians have fallen short of community expectations (Fine, 2020).



In today's ever complex and turbulent world, where global conflicts result in refugee crises, trade disputes cause economic instability, corruption erodes public trust in established institutions and systems, it is no surprise the foundations of traditional policing have been called into question.

At all times, police must observe and uphold the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* while simultaneously exercising their discretionary powers in a way that best promotes public safety, security, and rule of law — striving to have the police viewed as a credible and legitimate institution.

Since 1829, when Sir Robert Peel established the London Metropolitan Police, democratic policing has been grounded on nine core principles: accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness, respect, and selflessness. Specific to the selection and training of today's police, policing services arguably should reflect on Peel's notion that police should: *"...maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic*

tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence" (Ortmeier, Meese, 2010).

Police leaders must consider the difference between 'power' and 'authority' – *authority* being granted to the police by the public and *power* imposed on the public by the police (Coates, 2015). To this end, recruitment, training and education, policy and procedures, and especially practices, must all be based on the supposition that the police exist as a function of society, not that society exists as a function of police (Marquis, 1991).

The greater the potential for harm, the higher the risk and the more intrusive on liberty, then the greater degree of democratic scrutiny that should be applied to the professional standard (Neyroud, 2016).

Advancing the Police Paradigm

Over the past several decades, policing in Canada has become increasingly complex, dynamic, and technical — especially since the enactment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and resulting jurisprudence. The foundational skills and knowledge needed to effectively and competently practice policing is strikingly more advanced today than it was only a few decades ago.

Police today must be critical thinkers who understand the diverse and complex nature of the communities they police. Moreover, they must have a temperament and empathy that supports the police as both law enforcement and civil service professionals, in all their duties being committed to advancing civil society and the principles of democracy.

Arguably, just as law, engineering, nursing, medicine, and other occupations evolved to

include self-governing bodies that established professional standards, base educational credentials, and defined specific scopes of practice, the time has come for policing to

“...formalize its professional framework” (Neyroud, 2011a) through the establishment of the Alberta College of Policing.

Modern policing requires more well educated, comprehensively trained, and socially diverse officers.

Professionalizing Police The Alberta College of Policing

Professional bodies characteristically are what distinguish a *profession* from an *occupation*. While a profession is an occupation, an occupation is not necessarily a profession — *a profession being an occupation directed by a government registered body that establishes the scope of practice, minimum educational credential, continuing education requirement, and oversight process.*

A central aim of a professional body is to protect members of the public from professional malpractice and misconduct. Moreover, professional bodies also advance professional practice by supporting ongoing industry-specific research, scholarship, and learning. Lastly, professional organizations play vital roles in upholding professional practice by regulating the licencing of practitioners, as well as responding to complaints against licenced practitioners.

There is no doubt, Albertans expect more from their police. The proposed Alberta College of Policing provides a substantive response to the call for criminal justice reform in Alberta. This proposed professional college would address the noteworthy public demand for higher standards

for policing in general. As with other professional colleges (e.g., College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, Law Society of Alberta, etc.), the primary goals of the Alberta College of Policing would be to:

- *protect members of the public from ‘policing’ malpractice and misconduct;*
- *register, licence, and certify police officers across Alberta;*
- *institute the professional code of ethics for police officers across Alberta;*
- *establish, review, and advance evidence-based, community-informed, and standardized enforcement and investigation policies, processes, and practices;*
- *clearly define the roles, functions, and responsibilities for police in Alberta;*
- *establish the base educational credential required to become registered, licenced, and certified as a police officer;*
- *determine the compulsory continuing professional education required for police officers to maintain their registration, licence, and certifications;*

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- *develop and advance the research and scholarship specific to the profession of policing by supporting and collaborating with provincial, national, and international post-secondary institutions and other researchers;*
- *receive, evaluate, investigate, adjudicate, and make rulings regarding complaints involving police officers; and,*
- *support and advance the professionalization of police at the national and international levels.*
- ***Standardized Policing:*** *Standardized police policies, processes, and practices — include a uniform code of ethics, cognate officers trained and educated, and comparable approaches to patrol and investigative services — must be consistently applied by every officer, at every rank, in every police agency across Alberta; and,*
- ***Accountable Policing:*** *An independent, transparent, responsive, capably staffed, adeptly appointed, and well-equipped police oversight and investigative body must be a central element for all police activities in Alberta. This body — proposed as a significant part of the Alberta College of Policing and entirely separate from any other police agency — will protect the public from police malpractice and misconduct, build community trust through transparency and accountability, while also consolidating and streamlining the way complaints involving police officers are received, investigated, and addressed.*

Based on the following principles, the Government of Alberta will assume the national leadership role for advancing the professionalization of policing:

- ***Trust and Legitimacy in Policing:*** *To achieve public trust and legitimacy, police policies, processes, and practices must be grounded on the Peelian principles of accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity, openness, respect, and selflessness;*
- ***Evidence-Based Policing:*** *Evidence must form the basis of all police policies, processes, and practices, with education, research, and scholarship being foundational and sustained elements of all police services;*
- ***Democratic Policing:*** *The fundamental protections offered by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must form the basis upon which all police decision-making and practice occur. Open and democratic debate must be the genesis for all police policies, processes, and practices;*

The genesis for proposing the Alberta College of Policing comes from the recognized need to bolster public confidence and trust in police across Alberta. If the Government of Alberta establishes the Alberta College of Policing, Alberta will stand as the first jurisdiction in Canada to advance the paradigm of policing as an evidence-based and community-centric profession. The Alberta College of Policing will have the explicit mandate to protect and serve the public interest.

Accepting that police authority is granted by the public through our democratic institutions and processes, and acknowledging that police

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effectiveness and legitimacy is measured by the level of public support, the Alberta College of Policing will be led and governed by an involved public board under the authority of provincial legislation.

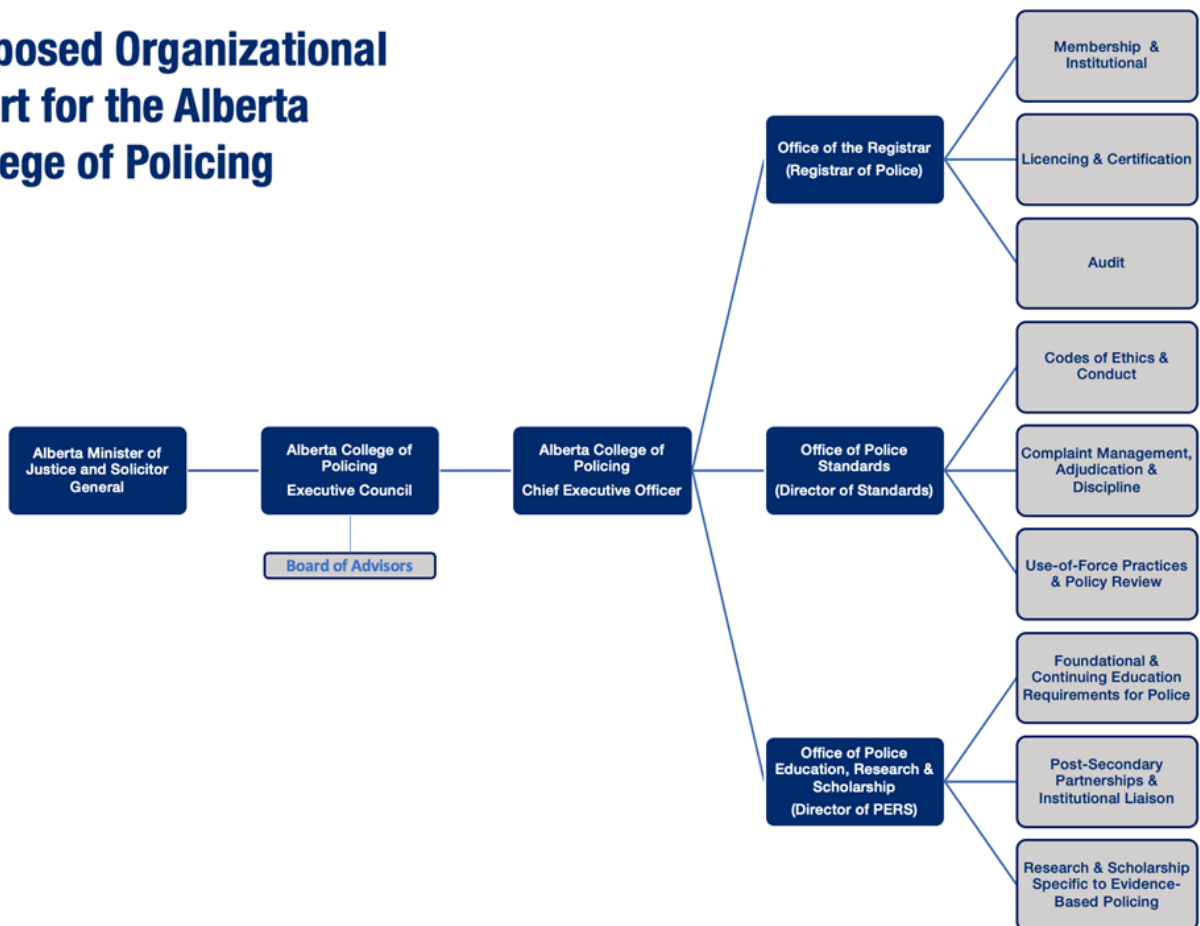
Just as physicians, lawyers, paramedics, nurses, and teachers, to name a few, professionalized over time through the emergence of independent self-governing professional colleges and societies, it is our belief the occupation of policing has matured to a point where it too must become a formal profession.

In reviewing professional bodies such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Law Society

of Alberta, Alberta College of Paramedics, College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, and the Alberta Teachers Association all stand as examples upon which the Alberta College of Policing can be established.

As depicted by the chart below, the Alberta College of Policing would be accountable to Alberta's Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and governed by an executive council comprised of experienced policing and criminal justice professionals, members of the public, and other experts committed to advancing the profession of policing while also protecting the public from police malpractice.

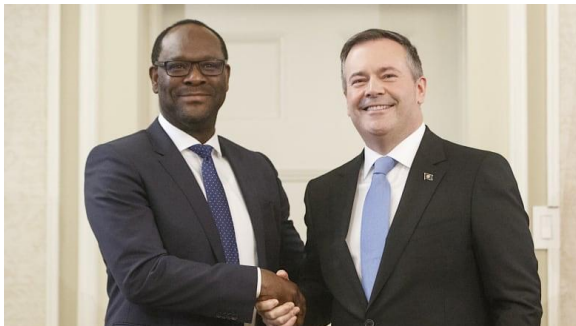
Proposed Organizational Chart for the Alberta College of Policing



Alberta's Minister of Justice & Solicitor General

In relation to the Alberta College of Policing, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General would:

- *Establish the Alberta College of Policing;*
- *Appoint the College's inaugural Executive Council;*
- *Review the College's annual report and provide strategic guidance;*
- *Approve the College's annual budget and allocate funds to the College; and,*
- *Address any significant public concerns regarding the College.*



Hon. Kaycee Madu, QC – Minister of Justice & Solicitor General
Hon. Jason Kenney – Premier of Alberta

Photo Courtesy: Jason Franson / Canadian Press

Executive Council

The Executive Council for the Alberta College of Policing will supervise and regulate the operations of the Alberta College of Policing, and also provide direction and guidance relating to policing standards, education, oversight, and related professional activities. This Executive Council will also assume primary responsibility for establishing, developing, managing, and amending the College's policies, processes,

practices, budgets, finances, and strategic planning — including the hiring and directing of the College's Executive Director.

The Council will be comprised of members having direct knowledge, experience, and involvement with policing, public safety, and security, with the Council's Chair being a person independent of police who is appointed by Alberta's Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. The Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer will be selected from the Council's membership, with the Council membership including:

- *One member selected by the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police;*
- *One member selected by the Alberta Association of Police Governance;*
- *One member selected by the Alberta Federation of Police Associations;*
- *One member selected by the Assembly of First Nations Alberta Association;*
- *One member elected by the Western Society of Criminology who has been qualified as an expert on policing matters by an Alberta court and who is a resident of Alberta;*
- *One member selected by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General; and,*
- *Four members elected by the membership of the Alberta College of Policing.*

Of significant importance is ensuring the composition of the Executive Council is representative of Alberta's diverse population, including, but not limited to, members who are female, Indigenous, LGBTQ2, along with others

from diverse communities. Moreover, it is essential that all members have direct knowledge, experience, and involvement with policing, public safety, and security organisations and activities. Ideally, people within the Executive Council positions should have professional backgrounds such as practicing lawyers, chartered professional accountants, certified human resource professionals, and skills in public relations.

Board of Advisors

The Executive Council could appoint a Board of Advisors comprised of representatives from professional associations, societies, or government agencies, such as:

- *Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police;*
- *Alberta Association of Police Governance;*
- *Alberta Federation of Police Associations;*
- *Assembly of First Nations AB Association;*
- *Minister of Justice and Solicitor General;*
- *Law Society of Alberta;*
- *Alberta Psychiatric Association;*
- *Psychologists' Association of Alberta;*
- *Alberta Urban Municipalities Association;*
- *Rural Municipalities of Alberta;*
- *Western Society of Criminology;*
- *Alberta Crime Prevention Association;*
- *AHS – Addiction & Mental Health Division;*
- *Alberta Human Rights Commission; and,*
- *Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta.*



Photo Courtesy of Taber Police

Chief Executive Officer

Hired by the Executive Council, we suggest on a five-year term (one-time renewable), the College's Chief Executive Officer would assume primary responsibility for:

- *Implementing the College's strategic plan*
- *Leading and managing the College's day-to-day operations;*
- *Overseeing the College's budget and finances;*
- *Serving as the College's official spokesperson;*
- *Liaising with College stakeholders (individual and organizational);*
- *Hiring, leading, managing, and developing College personnel;*
- *Reporting the College's activities and initiatives to the Executive Council; and,*
- *Organizing and supporting Executive Council and Advisory Board meetings.*

Office of the Registrar

The Office of the Registrar, led by the *Registrar of Police* would:

- *review and approve membership applications;*
- *maintain the registry of members (including a record of each members affiliation, academic credentials, and professional certifications); and*
- *periodically audit memberships.*

The *Registrar of Police* would ensure the ethical, transparent, and effective registering, licencing, and certifying of police officers across Alberta.



Addressing Public Complaints of Police Officers: The College's Office of Professional Standards

Typically, professional colleges and societies address complaints regarding member conduct or professional malpractice. The College's *Office of*

Professional Standards would constitute the body responsible for receiving, reviewing, investigating, and adjudicating complaints involving police officers.

When the College determines an officer has engaged in misconduct or malpractice, a disciplinary panel would levy a decision that the Chief Constable of Police is bound to enforce. Appeals of a sanction levied would be heard by the College's Appeal Board, with the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench serving as the final level of appeal.

As noted by the established literature, public trust and accountability are eroded when police investigate themselves (Crehan & Goodman-Delahunty, 2019; Porter, 2020, Stelkia, 2020). Currently in Alberta, the Chief Constable of Police oversees all discipline matters involving police officers, with police officers investigating complaints against fellow officers. The only exception is when the *Alberta Serious Incident Response Team* (ASIRT) conducts an investigation pursuant to section 46.1(1) of Alberta's *Police Act* (2000).

Notwithstanding that police across all ranks do their best to remove biases from their decision-making process, bias can never be completely avoided. To this point, and as supported by research, if the police continue to investigate themselves the public will continue to be unconvinced of the officer complaint process (Parent & Parent, 2018).

An important point is that nothing within the professional model prohibits or restricts police associations from fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities to police officers. Collective

bargaining and the responsibilities of Associations within collective agreements are not impacted by professionalization.

The Alberta College of Policing stands as an important and definitive means for the Government of Alberta to demonstrate its commitment to improving policing across Alberta. Under the College's *Office of Professional Standards*, the public can be confident knowing that complaints involving the police are addressed in the most professional, objective, and timely manner possible by an independent civilian oversight body whose primary mandate is to protect the public from police misconduct and malpractice.

While ASIRT could continue to investigate serious incidents as per Alberta's *Police Act*, the College's *Office of Professional Standards* would inevitably replace the professional standards units currently found within Alberta's municipal police services.

The *Office of Professional Standards*, led by the *Director of Professional Standards* (hired by the Executive Director on approval of the Executive Council), would:

- *Establish the Code of Ethics for police officers in Alberta;*
- *Educate police officers regarding the Code of Ethics;*
- *Uphold and enforce the Code of Ethics;*
- *Review, issue, and revoke licences to practice policing;*
- *Review, approve, and rescind professional certifications;*
- *Receive, evaluate, investigate, adjudicate, and make rulings regarding complaints involving police officers.*
- *Evaluate police use-of-force policies, procedures, and practices and, when appropriate, make recommendations on how to improve use-of-force policies, procedures, and practices; and*
- *Review and provide advice regarding evidence-based, community-informed, standardized enforcement and investigation policies, processes, and practices.*

Supporting Evidence-Based Policing: The College's Office of Police Education, Research & Scholarship

The Office of the Police Education, Research, and Scholarship (PERS), led by the *Director of PERS* would:

- *Advise/describe what the roles, functions, and responsibilities are for the profession of policing;*
- *Recommend the base educational credential required to become registered, licenced, and certified as a police officer;*
- *Approve the compulsory continuing professional education required for a police officer to maintain their registration, licence, and certifications; and,*
- *Develop and advance the research and scholarship specific to the profession of policing by supporting and collaborating with provincial, national, and international post-secondary institutions and independent researchers and organizations.*

Foundational Education

As with most professionals, the individual is responsible to gain the requisite knowledge and education to become registered within the profession. In the past in Alberta, most police agencies have engaged police officers based on the standards found in the police recruitment and selection standards — *meaning there was no requirement for any foundational, theoretical, or practical education prior to engagement with the police.*

We note that in several other countries, pre-employment foundational education is a requirement to engagement with the police (College of Policing, 2017; New South Wales Government, n.d.; Politie, n.d.). Although this may have served a purpose in the past, the public expectation is that police officers have a base of education — *specific to the role of a police officer who works in a problem-solving environment, enforcing complex laws, investigating serious crimes, within the principles of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* Furthermore, the powers and authority granted to police need to be understood within the context of social justice and policing in a democracy.

Pre-employment education is the primary focus of post-secondary education. We suggest engaging Alberta post-secondary institutions in the creation of a flexible learning model in which potential police officers must undertake a series of courses of education. The curriculum and content of the courses must be approved by the College as meeting the requirements of the profession. We also understand the post-secondary institutions may offer a program

exceeding the basic requirements of the College, which would be both accepted and encouraged.

Flexibility is the key, especially with potential applicants that come from different industries, are adult learners, new Canadians, or have life experiences that would benefit the profession. The College should implement a program that allows for temporary certification based on the applicant meeting the foundational educational requirements after engagement. For example, a person can be engaged with the police as a probationary member of the profession if they successfully complete the educational requirement within two years.

As with adult learning, the College should also implement a program in which a person's education, external to policing, but applicable to the profession, can be assessed for potential full or partial certification. For example, a lawyer who applies to be a police officer would not be required to take courses on the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or criminal law. Equally, only a university or college educator who has a law degree and experience in criminal law would be approved to deliver an approved criminal law course.

Systems will be created, within standards, to allow for the largest number of police applicants, while at the same time ensuring the needs of the College and the public are met. Importantly, the foundational education piece should be rigorous enough that once successfully completed, aptitude or written testing for entrance to the college would not be required. The College would be responsible for setting the standards and auditing the courses offered by post-secondary institutions to ensure graduates have

the requisite knowledge and skill needed to be successful police officers. It would be our intent to create credentials rigorous enough to be applicable to law enforcement vocations other than policing.

On-Boarding

A central goal of the College is to encourage, support, and accommodate candidates from broad and diverse communities. To achieve this goal, the College will incorporate an on-boarding strategy that decisively promotes diversity, incorporates flexibility, and accommodates the needs of as broad a cross-section of society possible.

While the standard approach to on-boarding will involve applicants first completing the prescribed online police foundations certificate, it is understood the process must allow for unique circumstances — especially in the initial years of the College. A central aim of the College must be to attract diverse members of society to pursue a policing profession, and ensure its on-boarding processes are as inclusive and flexible as possible.

Once the educational requirements are met, the applicant may make an application to the College for probationary certification. This will require the registrar of the College to review an application form, ensure the applicant has met the standards and requirements, followed by paying a fee for registration.

Alternatively, police services may recommend one of their applicants be given probationary certification based on a careful assessment by the service. In such cases, the College will ensure an

academic standard is applied, a course of study is undertaken, or a prior learning assessment developed to confirm the foundational education standards are met prior to full certification.

The on-boarding process must be flexible in its approach to allow police services the ability to employ people of all backgrounds and with diverse thought and experiences. Moreover, the on-boarding process must be permissive rather than a process to exclude potential candidates into the profession — *a significant paradigm shift from the historic hiring process of police officers in Alberta.*

Competency Development and Ongoing Education

Professionals must remain current in their ability to perform the practices of the profession. Ongoing education and competence development are key to ensuring public trust and legitimacy. The College will develop and deliver a robust and evidence-based continuing education program that supports police officers being current in their professional practice.

Police officers who do not undertake continuing education will be de-certified to practice. It is important there be balance between the types of assessment, the time requirements to undertake the continuing education, and the ability of the College and employer to gauge this requirement.

Building on the existing Alberta police courses, programs, and regimes that have successfully advanced the professionalization and standardization of police training (e.g., the Investigative Skills Education Program - ISEP), the College can bolster the training provided by

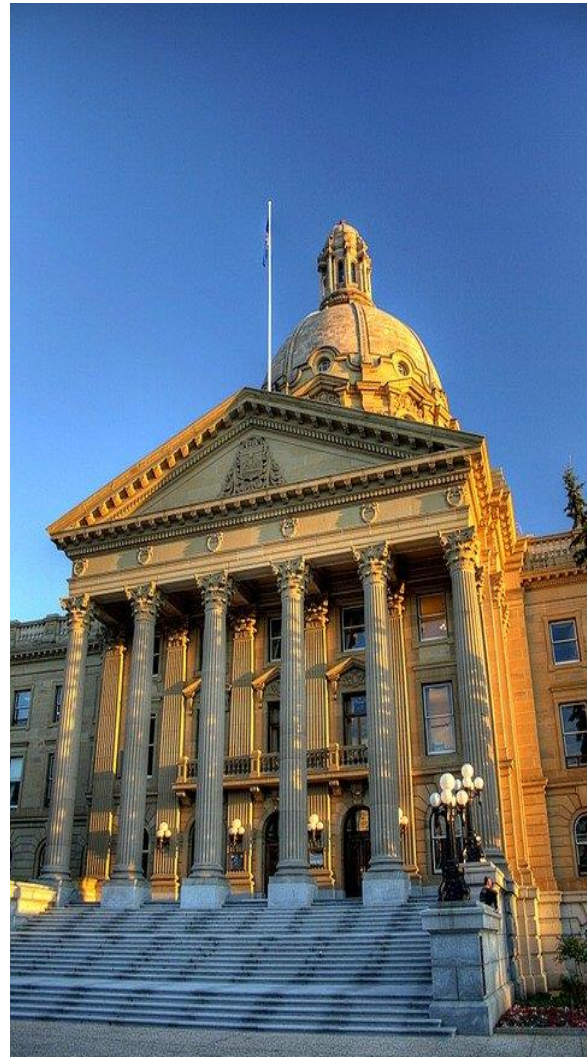
police services, while also advancing the College's assessment rubric. By assessing and auditing the curriculum offered by independent police services and other agencies, the College will be supporting the peer-review and standardization of police practices — again, supporting and promoting public trust and legitimacy in Alberta's police services.

Professional Development

Police education and training occurs over a career, and other than Alberta's *Investigative Skills Education Program* (ISEP), the current state of professional development in policing is not standardized, lacks consistency, and is made up of a cadre of ad hoc courses. Within some services there have been attempts to establish some cohesive linear progression to professional development, but it is often based on the desire of the police officer themselves, not centrally controlled, and based on little to no evidence.

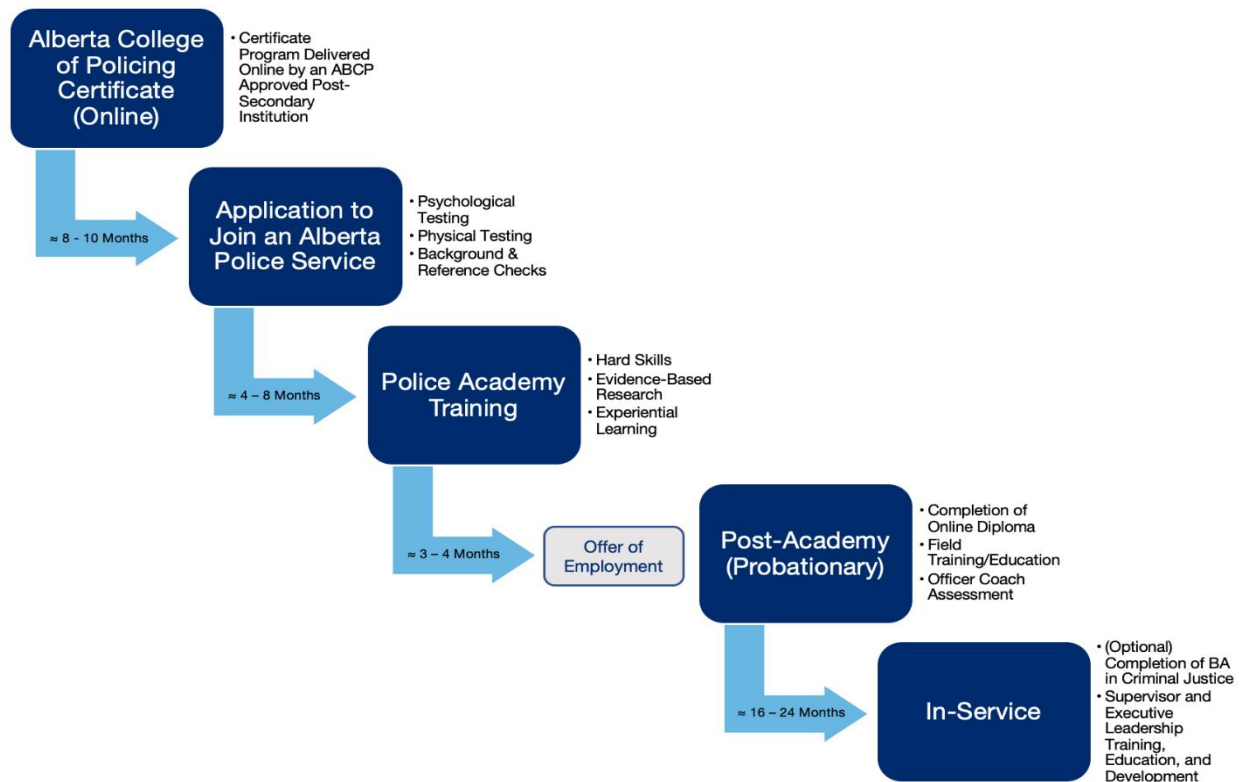
The Alberta College of Policing will establish a base line of courses and developmental opportunities that are necessary and required for police officers as they advance in their careers. In combination with ongoing education, the learning outcomes and practices achievable through a regimen of requirements will support the creation of professional practice standards. The College will also be required to assess each course of training against learning outcomes, assess curriculum for currency, establish authentic assessment, and ensure the courses overall fit into the profession of policing. Iterative processes should be utilized to build an officer's practice based on the placement within the organization, and their wishes for future assignments in different units within the profession.

The College could create a series of courses that are required to apply for promotion and may perform the function of initial screener for police services who want to make sure they have a group of persons who are ready to enter promotional processes.



Open source photo of the Alberta's Legislature

In keeping with the concept that the future police officer should be responsible for their own foundational education, the model below depicts the process for potential engagement with police services in Alberta. We understand the model does not encompass all paths to engagement within a police service but is descriptive for the purposes of this discussion.



Leadership Development

The Alberta College of Policing can provide a clear path to prepare police officers for promotion opportunities for advancement in police services. We suggest the College create a regimen of courses, experiential learning opportunities, and mentorships for officers wishing to advance their careers.

Through continual literature review, partnerships with post-secondary institutions, and ongoing efforts to advance the educational competency rubrics of policing, the College will effectively ensure a sustained body of knowledge exists and develops for the profession of policing.

As the scholarship specific to policing suggests (Neyroud, 2011a; Sloane, 1954), police executives need to clearly understand complex business acumen, accountability, and police command. Although a made-in-Alberta approach will be necessary, the College must continually examine global practices and reflect on policing scholarship from around the world.

Defining the Scope of Professional Police Practice

Equal around the world, there are specific roles within policing that are defined by specialty training, experience, skills, and competence. Different countries have recognized that certain functions with the profession of policing do not have to be undertaken by armed and sworn police officers. There are roles that are more akin to technical expertise and functions that serve the purpose of policing in a more cost effective, effective, and professional way.

The College would apply to all persons working for a police service and conducting ‘policing’ duties (e.g., patrol, crime analysis, investigation, intelligence, training, etc.) — meaning all policing employees (sworn officers and civilian professionals) would be certified by the College and required to maintain the requisite standards.

By having all police service employees certified by the College, expertise across all policing functions will be achieved, with career paths being focused on a specialty rather than on progressing through ranks. The benefits of certifying both sworn and non-sworn specialists is that police professionals become masters at the function, and not redirected to another function they have little experience simply because of an antiquated paramilitary process. Simply, police services would hire personnel based on their specific expertise in policing, and not exclude them based on a primarily fitness basis. This is not to say that police officers cannot become experts, rather it recognizes there are

alternatives to who can perform the function within the policing profession.

This same argument can be applied to the different complexities of the police function that are performed by police daily. If viewed on a continuum, probationary police officers perform functions that are akin to the basic levels of policing, and progress from being a novice to expert via a rigid rank structure (e.g., officers begin in general patrol then can progress through an operational or investigative career



path, with few ultimately rising to executive management and leadership positions).

In most regards, the profession of policing has not delineated from its rigid and historic paramilitary roots. While many police services have successfully created *ad hoc* training regime for officers, there remains no evidence-based or peer-reviewed regime for professional police practices in Alberta. It is our view, that to bring legitimacy to the profession of policing, officers’ practice should be guided by their level of certification. This is not to say junior officers cannot experience and practice these skills under the supervision of a certified practitioner, but levels of mastery should be met in order to best ensure the public are being policed legitimately within the profession.

The certification of certain levels of police officer provides for legitimacy and removes some of the liabilities associated with neglect of duty, failure to investigate, and the ability of police officers to be sued for malpractice. Furthermore, we suggest the model allows for the concept of having police officers perform only the functions they have been trained to undertake, and allows for the concept of tiered policing. If implemented, this concept will fundamentally change the current systems of police officer remuneration — tying police officer's remuneration to the role they perform, rather than the years they serve.

Code of Ethical Practice

The College will create a code of ethics for practitioners to follow, and be subject to in their professional practice. Currently the *Alberta Police Act Regulations* provides for the definitions and offences of what is considered misconduct. We know the *Police Act* and the current provisions that are in place for police discipline are archaic, based on a paramilitary model, expensive to administer, take far too much time, and most importantly, do not have the full confidence of the public.

The funds allocated to professional conduct matters, including the requirements for the Law Enforcement Review Board, are exorbitant. We suggest some of these funds should be re-directed to the College of Policing so the professional body becomes the organization that provides for the regulation and protection of the public from police misconduct. This is similar to all other professions who take seriously the

responsibility to ensure their members meet the obligations of their code of ethics and do not undertake malpractice.

The role of the College does not end with police discipline. The College would be able to investigate and provide findings regarding standards of practice, and complaints against services provided by police services. It is important to note that the College will vigorously protect members of the profession who are acting within standards of conduct and professionalism. The College will also take steps to de-certify members of the profession who are tyrannical in their behaviour, or commit gross misconduct violations of the code of ethics.

College Funding

There are a few ways that funding of a professional body can occur. Although not a money-making enterprise, the College will need substantial support from government and the certified members. Adapted from the Neyroud Model, (2011a), membership in the Alberta College of Policing could be divided as follows:

- ***Honorary members:*** *for professionals who are no longer employed by a police service, but would like to retain certification on an annual basis. This could form a pool of certified police officers who could be engaged in a police service at short notice or who want to contribute to the profession even though they may be retired.*
- ***Technical members:*** *organizations in policing that can contribute to the evidence base and practices of professional policing. They are not sworn, but can carry out many technical or investigative functions.*

- **Probationary Member:** *for people working towards their full member status. Hired but not fully certified police recruits, or members who have faced discipline and require a probationary period for re-instatement.*
- **Affiliate Members:** *civilians within the police service who are not sworn, but may be recognized professionals from another recognized professional body.*
- **Institutional Member:** *those who are certified by the College to perform a function of or a service to the College. Educational institutions would be an example.*
- **Full Member:** *sworn officers who have completed all requirements for full appointment as a police officer.*
- **Chartered Member:** *those who have reached a higher level of expertise within the police service or who have been promoted.*
- **Fellow:** *awarded to those who have made significant contribution to the profession of policing. Members of the Order of merit, Senior Ranks, etc.).*

As is common with most professional bodies, each class of member would need to pay fees to the College.

Within the College model, the professional standards work shifts from the responsibility of the police service to that of the professional body. This should alleviate budget requirements from the larger police services in Alberta. This money could be diverted from the police service to the College. Moreover, because the length of the recruitment processes and/or training will be reduced due to the shift of responsibility to the

applicant, there will be money savings in police budgets that should be diverted to the College.

Final Thoughts on the Alberta College of Policing

The College of Policing is not a construct that will be created quickly. Although there are steps that can be taken in the short term, the College undoubtedly will take years to fully establish. Thinking ahead, we have developed a model for the foundational education process and will make that accessible if the professionalization model is accepted or gains traction.

It should be noted that in Britain, when professionalization was introduced, there was initial resistance to the change. However, with the understanding of the purpose of the College, the legitimacy and trust it built within police organizations and with the public, some of the fear of change subsided. There is no doubt that the same may occur in Alberta. Nevertheless, change needs to occur to enshrine trust and legitimacy within this profession.

The British Model relies on what they have labelled the Police Education Qualities Framework (College of Policing, 2017). The basis from which the framework derives its legitimacy is that it recognizes as police hold a tremendous amount of autonomy and the independence of judgement, they must have the requisite knowledge, both theoretical and applied to perform the function of police officer.

For years, police leaders have talked about the concept of professionalization, but very few have

taken the time to put on paper what that may actually look like. Often, leading change requires a crisis, and policing in North America is in crisis. In Alberta, we have not seen many of the complex issues, riots, and social change that are occurring in the United States, however we know enough to scan for those issues and understand they are closer than we think.

As academics, pracademics, and police leaders, we understand that this important discussion needed to commence. Whether the outcomes of our proposal are accepted is up to debate, but we know that police leadership, as a verb needs to occur now. This proposal is one-step in that potential direction.

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