



**Options for Service Delivery in the
Greater Vancouver Region:**

***A Discussion Paper of the Issues Surrounding
the Regionalization of Police Services***

**Prepared by the
Planning, Research and Audit Section**

For

**The Vancouver Police Board and
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Executive Summary

The creation of a regional police service in the Greater Vancouver Region (GVR) has been the subject of debate and discussion for several decades. A number of high profile incidents have served to re-focus attention on the increasingly complex challenges facing police services in the region and raised concerns with the current arrangements for the delivery of police services.

The present report was designed to provide the Chief Constable of the Vancouver Police Department and the Vancouver Police Board with an objective review of the issues and challenges confronting police services in the GVR. More specifically, the objectives of the project were 1) to identify the key issues and challenges that surround the current arrangements for police services in the GVR; 2) to consider the experiences of other jurisdictions with regional police services; and, 3) to identify implementation and integration considerations that would surround any change in the existing arrangements for police service delivery in the GVR.

The report considers the experiences of other jurisdictions with regional police services and identifies the challenges surrounding governance of a regional police service so as to ensure local accountability and input while also achieving economies of scale and a high standard of police service delivery. The issues surrounding policing in the GVR include service disparities, accountability, service gaps and economic disparities.

Three options for structuring policing in the GVR are set out and the potential strengths and limitations of each option are discussed:

1. **Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo**
 - Poses no threat to the current police agencies.
 - Would likely continue to function by utilizing integrated units and secondments.
 - However, the dysfunction within the system, including service disparities and funding inequalities, will continue, and will likely be exacerbated in the future due to the inevitable growth the GVR will see in coming years.

2. **Option 2: Amalgamate and Regionalize Police Forces in the GVR**
 - Essentially creates a 'blank slate' where the exact makeup and geographic territory of one (or several) regional forces would be created after careful analysis of regional needs.
 - Would allow for a unified system whereby priorities are set both locally, and regionally, and would reduce funding inequities and increase service levels to the region as a whole.
 - The difficulty with this approach lies primarily in the creation of a governance structure, which would require the cooperation of all agencies to come together in its development.

3. **Option 3: Create a Hybrid Model**
 - Would see a regional police force that would have responsibility for the policing priorities of the region, and local police forces that would continue the "everyday service" to that area.
 - This system would create a common governance model for all local police services, which would all support the regional service, allowing more effective and efficient policing.
 - There would be significant challenges to this approach, particularly in terms of the cooperation of the RCMP and municipal agencies, and the development of a governance and funding model for all agencies involved.

It is the assertion of the Vancouver Police Department that any deliberations on altering the status quo for police service delivery in the GVR must consider the unique needs of each community in the region, and that communities have a voice in any new structure that is proposed. As there are numerous competing interests and stakeholders within the current structure of the GVR, the VPD advocates that any discussions of regionalizing police services be led by the provincial government, with the participation and cooperation of municipal governments. With their leadership, a unique opportunity exists for the development of collaborative and creative solutions to the challenges that exist, and for providing the best possible policing service in the interests of public safety. The specific models of policing that are ultimately considered for the GVR and the model that is ultimately selected will rest on the outcomes of additional study and extensive discussions among all of the affected parties. The VPD is prepared to assume an active, collaborative role in any discussions surrounding options that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policing services in the GVR.

Introduction

The creation of a regional police service in the Greater Vancouver Region (GVR)¹ has been the subject of debate and discussion for several decades. In 1924, a local newspaper discussed the possibility of a regional police service in an article entitled, 'Regional Police Just Around the Corner' (Ministry of Attorney General, 1992: Tab A1). Between 1978 and 1994 there were eight regionalization studies conducted on police services in BC (Graham, 1994:35). More recently, the escalation of drug and gang-related violence in the GVR has led to a renewed focus on the increasingly complex challenges facing police services and how the capacities of the police in the GVR might be improved. One option that is frequently put forth is the creation of a GVR police service.

The regionalization of public sector services is a key feature of the British Columbia landscape, the most notable examples being health services and transit. To date, however, there has not been an informed public debate on possible options for policing the GVR generally, nor, specifically, the creation of a regional police service. Despite the extensive regionalization of police services in the eastern regions of the country, there has been little empirical analysis of the major issues surrounding regionalization premised on the best practices literature and the experiences of other jurisdictions. Rather, the discussions have remained primarily at a political level. As such, alternative models of police service delivery that hold considerable promise in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the police in the GVR have not been explored.

A close examination of the policing arrangements in the GVR would discover economic inefficiencies, service and funding disparities, separate complaint and accountability processes, and a lack of policies and procedures to facilitate collaboration and coordination among the myriad of police services in the region. An exception to this is the recently-created Greater Vancouver Regional Transit Authority Police Service (GVTAPS), a regional police service with responsibility for transit-focused policing services in 13 municipalities.²

In the early 21st century, it is recognized that the public sector, including policing, must demonstrate that resources are being utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible. Further, the structure for the delivery of public services, including policing, must serve to "maximize organizational, community, regional, and provincial policing capacities (Duda, 2003:7). Based on these premises, it is incumbent upon politicians and police practitioners to ensure that the model of police service delivery in the GVR provides the police with the highest level of effectiveness in crime prevention and crime response.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the Greater Vancouver Region is viewed as including Squamish, West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, New Westminster, Richmond, Delta, Surrey, and Langley.

² GVTAPS: The regional transit police, Canada's first armed transit police, is a regional police service, providing transit-focused policing services to 13 municipalities. This police service is organized to reflect the reality that transit services, including the SeaBus, West Coast Express, SkyTrain, and buses, move across municipal boundaries. Similarly, criminal offenders move across municipal boundaries, calling into question the rationale for utilizing municipal boundaries as the basis for deploying policing services. The creation of GVTAPS was supported by provincial and municipal politicians. The fact that GVTAPS was a new police service that did not encroach on existing policing boundaries was likely a major reason for the widespread support for the creation of this police service.

This paper is designed to contribute to the discussions regarding options for the delivery of policing services in the GVR. It is assumed that these discussions, involving the provincial and municipal governments, the various police services in the GVR, and the affected communities, will address a wide range of issues. The intent of the authors has not been to conduct an exhaustive review of the literature and previous reports on regionalizing police services, but rather to identify a number of the key challenges that currently confront police services in the GVR, to consider the experiences of other jurisdictions with regional police services, to identify considerations for the GVR for integration and amalgamation and to consider options for the delivery of policing services in the GVR. This includes a discussion of the challenges surrounding governance of a regional police service so as to ensure local accountability and input while also achieving economies of scale and a high standard of police service delivery. To date, for a variety of reasons (including political considerations), discussions of alternative models for providing police services in the GVR have been limited and sporadic.

As a discussion paper, this document contains only a limited analysis of the issues that are raised. It is for governments, police services, and communities to take the deliberations to the next level.

It should also be noted that this discussion paper is designed to provide the Vancouver Police Board with an awareness of the issues surrounding the delivery of policing services in the GVR, the experience of regionalization in the Province of Ontario, and possible options for service delivery that might be considered in the GVR. As such, this paper is best viewed as a preliminary document that can inform and provide a catalyst for discussion among all interested parties, including the provincial government, the RCMP, and municipal governments in the GVR. To this end, there were no consultations with other municipal or RCMP police services in the region. Given that this paper was prepared for the Vancouver Police Board, the issues surrounding the delivery of policing services are, necessarily, presented from the position of the Vancouver Police Department, which is the largest municipal police service in the region. The specific models of policing that are ultimately considered for the GVR and the model that is ultimately selected will rest on the outcomes of additional study and extensive discussions among all of the affected parties. The VPD is prepared to assume an active, collaborative role in any discussions surrounding options that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policing services in the GVR.

Finally, it is not the intent of this paper to “advocate” for any one of the possible options for police service delivery in the GVR, nor to presuppose the components of such a model. Rather, this paper is best viewed as an “ideas and issues” paper that can contribute to discussions of effective service delivery in the region. These discussions would involve the RCMP, municipal governments, and other stakeholder groups throughout the region. It would also be important that the framework for considering the various options for service delivery in the GVR include a strong analytical component.

The experience in other Canadian jurisdictions suggests that there is a political dimension to any discussions of regionalizing police services. Municipal governments, for example, may understandably be reluctant to give up control over a local police service, particularly in situations where a “no call too small” policy exists. However, an examination of the “real costs” of “Cadillac” service and the extent to which such a model of police work is sustainable going forward remains to be conducted .

A major question that requires detailed further study is whether the current arrangements for the delivery of policing services in the GVR provide the best “value for service”, the most effective and efficient utilization of resources, and the most effective structure for responding to the challenges of crime in the region.

There are, for example, a number of “hidden” costs of the current structure for policing in the GVR that should be explored in any examination of the most effective model for policing the GVR. These include competition among police services for new recruits and in-service police personnel, and the issue of whether integrated police teams are the most effective use of police resources. There is little doubt that there will be increasing socio-demographic, economic, and crime challenges to police services in the GVR in the coming years and decades, and it is prudent to begin considering what model of police service will be best positioned to meet these challenges.

As well, discussions of the best model for police service delivery should be informed by best practices, the experiences of the jurisdictions where police services have been regionalized, and on which model of service delivery will be most effective in preventing and responding to crime and disorder in the region. The creation of a regionalized police service has the *potential* to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of police service delivery, police transparency and accountability, capacity for strategic planning, administration and operations, and public safety and security. Alternatives to the current arrangements for police service delivery provide the opportunity to reduce the existing duplication of services, to reduce administration overhead and to standardize policies and practice.

The extent to which the potential of any one option for police service delivery is realized would depend upon effective, visionary leadership, effective collaboration and cooperation among the affected municipalities and police services, and the effective organization and delivery of policing services. In addition, key core capacities would have to be developed including a strong policy, planning, and analytical capacity and the ability to incorporate best practices. The creation of this administrative and operational framework and the development of goals, objectives, and performance measures in each sector of operations should be guided by best practices and accompanied by the capacity to evaluate and monitor performance on an ongoing basis. The failure to develop these capacities would limit the potential of a regional police service and perpetuate the difficulties that currently exist.

Having some form of regional police arrangement would be conducive to a regional focus on crime, as well as provide an enhanced capacity to address crime “hot spots” across the region as well as to track offenders. Regardless of what model was ultimately selected, a key objective would be the provision of a high standard of police service.

Objectives of the Project

The project had a number of objectives:

- 1) to identify the key issues and challenges that surround the current arrangements for police services in the GVR;
- 2) to consider the experiences of other jurisdictions with regional police services;
- 3) to identify implementation and integration considerations that would surround any change in the existing arrangements for police service delivery in the GVR; and,
- 4) to identify potential options for the delivery of policing services in the GVR.

This discussion paper will identify the issues that surround the various dimensions of considering a regional police service for the GVR, including legislative, jurisdictional, governance, accountability, and operational issues as well as identifying the legislative, governance, and core capacities required for a “best practice” regional police service.

The Current Arrangements for Police Service Delivery in the GVR

The current arrangement for policing in the GVR, whereby the RCMP are involved in policing large municipalities under contract adjacent to independent municipal police departments, is unique in Canada. Further, this arrangement was not the result of a systematic examination of what model of police service delivery would be most effective and efficient for the region.

The Commission on Policing in British Columbia (Oppal, 1994) concluded that the current arrangements for the delivery of policing services across the GVR raise issues related to economics, equity and consistency in policing, investigative continuity, and a number of human resource concerns. Numerous reports (Oppal, 1994) have raised serious questions as to whether the current arrangements for the delivery of policing services are cost effective, provide for the effective and efficient deployment of resources, and whether these arrangements actually hinder effective crime prevention and crime response.

More specifically, concerns have been raised that the fragmentation of policing services hinders effective investigation of serious crimes, crime analysis, and deployment of patrol and investigative resources. Rather than decreasing the quality of police service delivery, it has been suggested that a regional police service would result in improved service delivery.

Project Method

For the present project, a “mixed method” was used to gather data. This included archival research (literature review), qualitative research (interviews), and an initial analysis of the economic costs associated with the current policing arrangements.

The regionalization of police services in Canada is most extensively developed in the province of Ontario. This regionalization took the form of amalgamation, i.e. existing police services were merged to form a new regional police service. To this end, members of the project team travelled to Ontario to gather information on the rationale, objectives, and experiences of the amalgamation in Ontario. This included speaking with the leadership of regional police services in Halton Regional Police, Durham Regional Police, Ottawa Police Service, Hamilton Police Service, Waterloo Regional Police, Niagara Regional

Police, and Toronto Police Services; members of regional police service boards; mayors and municipal and regional government officials, city councillors; sworn members; persons from the private sector; and provincial police services officials. Respondents were queried on a wide range of topics, including the origins and evolution of regional policing, the benefits, challenges, and experiences of regional policing, and the “lessons learned” from regionalizing policing in the province. Interviews were also conducted with senior police leaders from Halifax who were intimately familiar with not only an amalgamation of police services, but also the subsequent implementation of a “blended” municipal/RCMP policing model in that jurisdiction.

A caveat: Although the province of Ontario has the most extensive experience with regional police services, there was among the respondents considerable variability in their knowledge and understanding of policing arrangements in the GVR. While the senior police leaders who were interviewed had a good grasp of the major issues in the GVR, others, such as city councillors, based their responses entirely on experiences and observations in their specific jurisdictions. To this end, the information gathered from Ontario (and from Nova Scotia) should be taken as illustrative rather than as directive.

Issues Surrounding the Regionalization of Police Services

Arguments Offered in Support of Creating a Regional Police Service

There are a number of assertions that are generally offered to support the creation of a regional police service. Supporters of regionalization contend that a regional police service would result in improved levels of communication, standardized policies and practices across a region, improved ability to rationalize and monitor resource utilization, improved investigative and patrol capacities, reduced duplication of services, and the end of competition between police services for recruits, in-service police personnel, and civilians with specialized skills. It is important to note, however, that these assertions are generally made in the absence of supporting empirical documentation: to date, there have been no systemic evaluations of the impact of regionalization on costs, the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, or on any of the other above-noted assertions. Nor have controlled “before and after” studies been conducted that would facilitate a comparison of costs and policing outcomes prior to, and following, regionalization been conducted. This, however, does not detract from the viability of the arguments offered in support of regionalization, as it is equally incumbent upon supporters of the status quo to offer similar evidence in support of their position.

More specifically, proponents of regionalization contend that the creation of a regional police service would allow for enhanced:

1. Communication

There is potential for more structured information sharing among police agencies (Ministry of Attorney General, 1983:10). Currently, there is a limited ability for police services in the GVR to share information on a formal, strategic, ongoing basis and this compromises the effectiveness of the police and public safety. All agencies in the GVR currently use PRIME, which allows *access* to “general occurrence” reports submitted by every agency, but this is quite different than sharing strategic and tactical information. Many agencies also use the services of E-Comm. Both PRIME and E-Comm would facilitate coordinated communication in a regional police service. Examples of where GVR communication currently breaks down include sharing of information relating to crime patterns and analysis, and

operational, investigative and tactical priorities. Communication issues are discussed in more detail in the “Coordination Gaps” section of this report. The extent to which information-sharing could be improved with a regional police service, however, would depend upon a myriad of factors, including leadership and a sound organizational and operational structure.

2. Financial Benefits

It is generally acknowledged that regionalizing police services, in itself, does not decrease operating costs which are the most commonly measured cost of policing, (McDavid, 2002:4). However, regionalization does hold considerable potential to reduce some of the “hidden costs” associated with having separate police services policing in the same region, e.g., competition for applicants, separate recruiting units, etc.

There are also potential savings with a large regional police service having greater purchasing power and being able to acquire equipment and supplies in large quantities. Another example is having officers in regional police service using the same model of firearm. Currently among the municipal and RCMP detachments in the GVR, officers use a variety of handguns. There are even differences in the sidearms carried by Vancouver police officers and their independent municipal counterparts, resulting in increased training costs. There will also be the potential for “economies of scale”, the use of specialized resources and assistance in the purchasing and use of equipment (Ministry of Attorney General, 1992: Tab A4). There would also be potential cost savings in centralizing record systems, and regionalization has the potential to eliminate duplication in many other areas as well. Depending upon the organizational structure, a regional police service may have fewer senior police leaders and support staff (McCaffery, 1992:13). This would have the potential of reducing wage costs, as there would be fewer officers in the senior ranks (Ministry of Solicitor General, 1990:7). Perhaps most importantly, regionalization has the potential to create a more equitable distribution and sharing of resources and would enable consistent and equitable policing across the jurisdiction (Graham, 1994:6; Ministry of Attorney General, 1992: Tab A3).

3. Professional and Career Development

Regionalization has the potential to create a standardized recruitment and training process, create pay equity, and provide deployment and professional development opportunities (Graham, 1994).

4. Community Relations

A major concern that is often expressed about regionalization is that there will be reduced police contact with the community and that levels of service will decrease. There are a number of strategies that can be employed to address these concerns, including ensuring that patrol resources are allocated on an evidence-based model and that local precinct stations are maintained (Ross, 1978:182). Regionalization of police services provides an opportunity to give the community a more uniform view of police policies and procedures. For example, one jurisdiction may apprehend a suspect a particular way, but another jurisdiction will do it differently. Currently, citizens become confused with the differing policies that are in place (Sandrock, 2002:5).

5. Effectiveness in Providing Safety and Security

The provincial government has noted that a regional police service would, with sufficient resources, have the flexibility required to provide superior service to a greater extent than a smaller police service (Ministry of Solicitor General, 1990:5). Further, given that criminal activity is becoming more

sophisticated and, in some cases, more violent, there is a need to bring as many resources to bear on crime problems as possible. Concern has been expressed that smaller police services are not adequately equipped to effectively respond to more sophisticated types of criminal activity, including conducting investigations into violent crimes that are associated with multi-jurisdictional drug syndicates. For example, cyber crime is an emerging trend and unfortunately smaller agencies might not be equipped to deal with these new types of crimes (Tully, 2001:3). Observers have argued that regional police forces can provide better service for protecting citizens, by undertaking quality investigations, adequately deploying patrol resources to deal with emergency situations, and responding faster to emergency calls (see Tully, 2001:3).

In interviews conducted with provincial and municipal officials, members of regional police boards, and senior police leaders in Ontario, a number of benefits of a regional police service were identified:

- better equipment
- more staffing
- the ability to mount, and support, specialty squads, and the ability to maintain an interface between specialty squads and the service as a whole (something which is generally not possible with the province-wide integrated units)
- the ability to back-fill positions
- the ability to move people and expertise across the region in a seamless manner
- the ability to supplement staffing levels in one district from another, should levels fall below the mandated staffing minimums

Arguments Offered in Opposition to the Creation of Regional Police Services

A number of points have been raised about the efficacy of regional police services, including:

1. Start up Costs

A key question that surrounds discussions of creating a regional police service is the source of financial resources to set up the force and the unanticipated costs for any problems that might be encountered along the way (Ministry of Solicitor General, 1990:21).

2. Decline in Service Levels

Concerns are expressed, particularly in those municipalities where police have a “no call too small” policy, that there will be declines in service levels under a regional police service model. This would be accompanied by a loss of the more personal relationship that may exist between police and community residents.

3. Personnel Issues

Concerns are expressed about the impact of regionalization on collective agreements and benefits, the loss of senior positions and the impact on promotional opportunities.

4. Domination

There are concerns that a larger police service in the region might dominate the smaller forces in the region. This view is premised on the assumption that ‘regionalization’ would equate to ‘absorption’ of these services within into the largest agency.

5. Effectiveness

Opponents of regionalization point out that work produced in a large police organization will not necessarily be effective. There are always problems with miscommunication, isolation, lack of co-operation, and difficulty in communication between departments within the police department (Lithopoulos and Rigakos, 2005:342).

6. Loss of Control

Opponents of regionalization contend that the creation of regional police services results in a loss of community control over policing and a reduction in service levels, particularly in communities where a “no call too small” policy is in place.

Policing Services in the GVR: Current Arrangements and Concerns with Current Structure

I'm surprised that police services in Vancouver are not amalgamated.
Toronto City Councillor and Member, Toronto Police Services Commission

The GVR is policed by both municipal police services and RCMP under contract. There are a number of key issues that surround the current structure for the delivery of policing services in the GVR which may significantly impact the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in the region.

The current arrangements for policing in the GVR involve police forces that are subject to different legislation and have different governance structures. While the independent municipal police services are overseen by police boards and officers are accountable under the BC Police Act and to the BC Police Complaint Commissioner, RCMP officers policing under contract at the municipal level are accountable to the federal RCMP Act and to the federal RCMP Public Complaints Commissioner. Further, there are different operational policies for RCMP officers and municipal police officers. With respect to training, patrol officers receive different training regimens, with RCMP recruits being trained at Depot in Regina, and officers in the independent municipal police services receiving training at the JIBC Police Academy.

While a number of concerns have been raised with respect to municipal contract policing, a comparison of the effectiveness and efficiency of police services provided under contract and those provided by independent municipal police services has not been conducted (see Auditor General of Canada, 2005; Oppal, 1994; Bish and Clemens, 1999;).

There are a number of important questions that must be asked about the current arrangements for policing in the GVR, including:

- Do the current arrangements facilitate the delivery of effective and efficient police services?
- Do the current arrangements provide police services with the optimal ability to prevent and respond to crime?
- Would the adoption of a different model of police service delivery, including the creation of a new regional police service, address the significant issues and challenges that currently surround police service delivery?

The answers to these questions are far beyond the scope of this discussion paper. However, these questions should be part of any more detailed analysis and deliberations about creating a regional police service for the GVR.

Given the importance of the safety of the residents of the GVR and that the police have the support and confidence of the residents of the region, it is imperative that discussions surrounding the creation of a regional police service be informed by best practices and the experience of other jurisdictions, rather than by political considerations. Similarly, should a regional police service be created, it is equally imperative that this service have the capacity to respond to the demands of the region in a manner that ensures that resources are utilized effectively and efficiently. It is important that a regional police service be accountable and transparent in its operations and that the needs of specific areas in the region be incorporated into police policy and practice.

Given the questions noted above, some of the problems and issues with the current model that would have to be addressed include:

- The involvement of the RCMP in municipal contract policing presents a challenge, albeit not an insurmountable obstacle, to the creation of a regional police service in the GVR.
- The current arrangement for police services prevents the development of a comprehensive crime prevention and crime reduction strategies for the GVR.
- All else being equal, the delivery of policing services via a myriad of independent municipal and RCMP detachments hinders the effective use of problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing, and coordinated police initiatives to address crime hot spots, chronic offenders, transnational crimes such as human trafficking, and hinders effective intelligence collection and utilization. The current arrangements also present challenges in case investigation, information and intelligence-sharing, and in continuity of collaborative investigations. While the creation of a regional police service, in itself, would not guarantee effective police practice, it would provide a more comprehensive organizational and operational framework within which effective practices could take place, if the requisite capacities were present.
- The current arrangements for police service delivery result in a situation where the region's taxpayers do not share equally in the provision of police services. In the GVR there is a "core city" phenomenon, whereby large numbers of persons from the outlying municipalities travel into Vancouver for work, leisure, and entertainment. This creates situations where Vancouver taxpayer-supported police officers spend large amounts of time policing non-residents. This situation is exemplified by the challenges of policing the Granville Entertainment area and the escalating costs associated with policing this area, due in part to its late-hour bar closings. Many of the patrons that attend the Granville area are not residents of the city of Vancouver.
- The current arrangements for police services do not lend themselves to coordinated regional deployment in the event of a major incident or natural disaster. There is a lack of common standard procedures for consequence management for numerous types of major incidents which may occur, such as planned celebrations, riots, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks. The main issues surround how to deploy diverse groups, and whether the units from different

agencies will take direction from the central command of the jurisdiction where the event is occurring or deploy on their own initiative as per their command structure.

Service Disparities

The primary focus of most independent municipal police agencies is the delivery of frontline policing services. These uniformed officers focus on rapid response, community policing, traffic enforcement, and other functions associated with general patrol. These agencies provide services to jurisdictions that do not see it as their responsibility to work on more complex and organized crime targets. The reasons for this view include:

- A lack of expertise within their agency;
- The fact that these agencies do not police the central business district or the ports, which is where many organized criminals prefer to operate; and,
- Smaller agencies cannot build up the critical mass to have an effective unit to target organized crime (CFSEU is supposed to serve this function, but generally focuses on high-level targets, leaving limited resources to target mid-level organized crime groups.

Larger agencies such as the VPD are under pressure to reduce the number of officers in specialty units that would target these types of criminals in order to increase the number of patrol officers. The end result is that, since agencies want to only look after “their backyard”, the enforcement attention paid to more sophisticated and less visible criminals is insufficient.

Across the GVR there is considerable diversity in organizational core capacities. Smaller departments do not have the capacity to investigate homicides and rely upon the Vancouver Police Department or the RCMP’s Integrated Homicide Investigation Team, respectively. Mobilizing a critical mass of investigators to respond to serious incidents, such as the 2006 kidnapping of Graham McMynn, is costly and cannot be sustained for an extended period of time. An investigation of this size would still be a strain on a regional police service’s resources, but there would be more resources to draw on quickly in order to front-end load the investigation. A regional force would have the capacity to respond to major investigations more effectively on a consistent basis, with far fewer obstacles to acquiring and organizing an effective response.

Comparison of Police Services

The following are specialty squads which exist in the GVR. Not all agencies are able to provide these services and rely on the larger organizations to provide the service and expertise. The fact that smaller agencies rely on the services provided by larger agencies substantiates the case for regionalization.

Examples of services provided by larger agencies

There are numerous VPD units that provide specialty services when requested by smaller agencies. A number of these specialty units include investigative follow-up expertise for more serious or complicated offences including, Major Crimes (e.g., homicides), Sex Crimes Unit, Gangs and Drugs Sections, and the Dog Squad. These units have the investigative expertise and specialized training that smaller agencies are often not able to develop or support due to their size. A notable example is the VPD’s Strike Force (surveillance and arrest) teams, which conduct surveillance on serious criminals (e.g., homicide and robbery suspects). Not only do the Strike Force teams assist other agencies upon request, they also work on targets that are involved in crime across the GVR, providing a de facto regional surveillance service that smaller jurisdictions benefit from.

In addition to investigative expertise, the VPD provides the services of specialty units that necessitate advanced equipment or technology that may not be available in smaller agencies. These may include Forensic ID services, Polygraph services, wiretap services, the Marine Squad, and in particular, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) for their specialized weapons and tactics in highly volatile or dangerous situations.

The VPD, often due to their size, are also in a position to provide support in terms of crowd control, motorcade support, additional training seats for smaller agencies, and jail services.

Services that GVR agencies share

Some agencies within the GVR utilize the services of E-Comm to provide Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and 9-1-1 call takers. This radio network is also utilized throughout Metro Vancouver by fire and ambulance personnel. In addition, E-Comm provides the records management environment (PRIME-BC) for all police agencies within the GVR, which allows for all agencies to share the same records environment and access information cross-jurisdictionally. The PRIME-BC environment, however, has only recently included all jurisdictions in the GVR, and as such, has certain data limitations for intelligence and information sharing. In 2007, the VPD's budget for E-Comm and PRIME-BC was over \$15 million.

All municipal agencies make use of the services of the JIBC for training – both recruit, and some in-service training. Additional training is provided by the Canadian Police College (under contract from the RCMP). GVR agencies also make use of other national police services, such as the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), and the forensic crime laboratories and fingerprint identification services of the RCMP³. The Police Complaints Commissioner may request either municipal or RCMP investigators to conduct internal investigations for another agency.

Duplication of Services

Separate agencies have independent units that duplicate what can be done centrally. This includes planning and research to write individualized policies, financial analysis, procurement and stores, crime analysis and training.

An excellent example of this is the VPD's innovative approach to data mining and database creation for police information. In the later part of 2005, a VPD IT project team embarked on revamping the intelligence and crime analysis capabilities of the VPD. The project team, working with E-Comm, developed a "Data-Mart" extract process that captured police investigation details, dispatch information and aggregate incident data in an internal VPD database. The creation of a VPD Data-Mart containing PRIME information was the first of its kind in British Columbia and the first time this had been accomplished in North America using a Versadex Records Management System. The VPD project team accomplished what no other agency or the Versaterm vendor had been able to develop. PRIME Corp. is currently engaged in leveraging the VPD's accomplishments in the creation of a regional Data-Mart grounded in the technological achievements of the VPD system. A five agency test system, the initial component of a larger regional roll-out, is currently under construction. The result is the integration of information from a central database, thereby eliminating silos of information, which in turn helps guard against crucial data being overlooked during investigations and crime analysis. This initiative could have

³ Although the RCMP provides some fingerprint identification services, BCAFIS (Automatic Fingerprint Identification System) is a joint operation between the VPD and the RCMP, and is run by the VPD.

been developed for the entire region from the outset if the RCMP and municipal agencies were in a regional structure, avoiding duplication and delay.

Weak Regional Crime Voice

The (Census Metropolitan Area) CMA Phenomenon

The majority of demographic and social statistics are compiled at the CMA level. For many cities, the city core will encompass much of the CMA, and as well, one police department is responsible for the entire metro city, and therefore, a great deal of the CMA. Statistics Canada, recognizing the difficulties with comparing cities, uses statistics compiled according to the CMA, as this encompasses both inner city cores and surrounding suburban and rural areas. They directly recognize the difficulty in comparing crime rates among police services:

A CMA is a large urban area with a core population of at least 100,000 and includes the surrounding suburban and rural areas that are socially and economically integrated with the urban centre. *The areas that police services serve may differ in their mix of urban/suburban populations, and some inner-city police services are responsible for policing many more people than the resident population, as large numbers of people enter the urban core to work and shop during the day [emphasis added].* For these reasons, it is difficult to compare crime rates among police services. This lack of comparability is addressed by analyzing crime rates by CMA. In order to present data at the CMA level, the data from all police services providing services within the boundary of the CMA, including urban, suburban and rural areas, have been combined. However, expenditures (per capita costs) are not available at the CMA level due to the number of provincial policing detachments within the CMA for which detachment-specific costs are not available.⁴

However, Vancouver is unique among the major cities in Canada insofar as the population within the municipality is only slightly more than one quarter of the CMA population. Due to the recognition that many people travel in to Vancouver for work, leisure and entertainment, the actual population within the municipality may fluctuate widely from the City's residential population according to the day of the week, or time of day. What this may equate to is a weaker regional voice overall, and weaker advocacy for the region as a whole. Although Statistics Canada generally only publishes data regarding Vancouver CMA, it is left to individual municipal departments and individual RCMP detachments to make cases for funding or staffing increases, which is problematic with very little published on a municipal basis that is appropriate for comparison to other municipal agencies within the Vancouver CMA. Regionalization would remove this difficulty in assessing police services and the residential population that police serve, as the region would be considered as a whole and not the sum of its very different, yet interconnected, parts.

As is shown below, the Vancouver CMA has the lowest number of officers per 100,000 population out of the five largest CMAs in Canada, and thus has the highest population per officer. This is a fact that is frequently misunderstood by politicians and the media, who allude to Vancouver's "high" rate of police to population ratio and fail to acknowledge they are comparing an anomalous core city to other jurisdictions in which the majority of the metro population is policed by one agency. When compared

⁴ Catalogue no. 85-225-XIE, Statistics Canada; Police Resources in Canada 2006

on a CMA basis, the Vancouver CMA has relatively fewer officers than any major city in Canada, and has the challenge of being confronted with the highest crime rate of the largest five cities.

⁵ Census metropolitan areas (CMA)	Population 2006	# of Police		Pop per Officer	2006	% change '97 to '07
		Officers ('07)	Officers per 100,000 Pop		Crime Rate	
Toronto	5,418,989	9,483	175	571	5,020	9.8
Montréal	3,706,698	6,837	184	542	6,912	5.5
Vancouver	2,181,591	3,236	148	674	10,609	4.8
Calgary	1,108,907	1,696	153	654	6,954	11.1
Edmonton	1,059,826	1,666	157	636	10,079	12

With a regional voice, national comparisons would be made possible for policing services. This is necessary not only in terms of police strength, but would allow for the region to bring forward characteristics of the GVR that are fairly disparate as compared to other CMAs in Canada, such as the temperate climate, which arguably affects crime rates in many ways due to offenders migrating west, and a greater homeless population. The GVR, and Vancouver in particular, are often left to support social programs without the requisite ability to pay:

Municipalities have little choice when it comes to such pressing social issues as homelessness, immigration, and settlement services, drug abuse and crime. When other orders of government fail to provide adequate funding or supports to assist municipalities with these social obligations, cities are left with both the social and economic consequences. (*Big City Mayor's Caucus, 2006*)

Currently, the disparity exists not only on a national CMA-level, but also within the Vancouver CMA. As is shown below, the crime rate on average for RCMP detachments is 17% higher than the municipal detachments; however, the officers per 100,000 population in RCMP detachments is 37% below the average number of officers per 100,000 population in the municipal detachments. Such disparity in staffing and priorities would be alleviated by a regional structure.

⁵ Catalogue no. 85-225-XIE, Statistics Canada; Police Resources in Canada 2007

⁶		<i>2005 Crime Rate per 100,000</i>	<i>Population 2006</i>	<i>Officers 2006</i>	<i>Officers per 100,000 2006</i>
Municipal Police	Vancouver	11,719	584,701	1303 ⁷	223
	Delta	7,372	102,661	159	155
	New Westminster	16,162	57,480	112	195
	West Vancouver	6,003	46,595	82	176
	Port Moody	6,666	28,458	44	155
	Average Municipal	9,584			181
	Median Municipal	7,372			176
RCMP Detachments	Surrey	12,673	393,256	483	123
	Burnaby	12,334	204,320	221	108
	Coquitlam	9,988	121,989	120	98
	Richmond	9,411	173,429	173	100
	Langley Township	10,832	97,682	125	128
	North Vancouver District	6,661	88,461	90	102
	Maple Ridge	13,598	73,531	78	106
	Port Coquitlam	11,206	57,569	58	101
	North Vancouver	11,687	47,131	50	106
	Langley	17,639	25,716	40	156
	White Rock	8,428	19,577	24	123
	Pitt Meadows	10,112	16,673	18	108
	Average RCMP	11,214			113
	Median RCMP	11,019			107
	RCMP vs. Municipal Average	17%			-37%

Crime Analysis

Currently, the analysis of crime patterns and the use of statistical analysis to identify crime “hot spots” and chronic offenders is fragmented across a number of independent municipal and RCMP detachments. There is currently some capacity for a region-wide analysis of crime, crime trends, and those persons involved in criminal activity that may cross municipal boundaries; however, currently there is no “one brain” to direct the analysis and make decisions about how address crime issues on a regional basis.

Accountability

Officers in RCMP detachments policing under contract operate with a separate organizational and legislative framework. While police officers in the independent municipal police services are accountable under the BC Police Act and to the BC Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner, RCMP officers are policed under the federal RCMP Act and are accountable to the federal Commissioner for Public Complaints Against the RCMP.

⁶ Catalogue no. 85-225-XIE, Statistics Canada; Police Resources in Canada 2006

⁷ It is unclear why this number is incorrect as reported by Statistics Canada; the VPD’s authorized strength at this time was 1,214.

Inconsistent Public Complaint Process

In Metro Vancouver there exists two separate and distinct public complaints processes for police agencies.

The independent police agencies are under the complaint process of the *Police Act* of British Columbia. The *Act* establishes a process for the acceptance of complaints through the police agency or directly to the Police Complaints Commissioner.

Each police agency, through the authority of its Chief Constable, undertakes the investigation of the complaint. The nature of the *BC Police Act* is to be corrective in nature. Emphasis is put on informal resolution of complaints. Where a disciplinary default is proven, the *Act* emphasizes corrective discipline rather than punishment. Each Police Board has the responsibility for responding to all service and policy complaints made against their police agency.

The *Act* also establishes clear lines of authority for the investigation of complaints and the review of those investigations by the Complaint Commissioner. This includes a review of the investigation, ordering a new investigation and a review and acceptance of corrective discipline imposed against a police officer. The Police Complaint Commissioner is an independent appointment of the BC Legislature. The clear intent of this is to place the position beyond political interference.

The RCMP has a different system. The RCMP receives complaints directly from the public and investigates the complaints through their internal process. The findings of the investigation, if substantiated, are presented to a disciplinary board. The RCMP Act also establishes two separate agencies for handling complaints involving the RCMP.

The Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP (CPC) can receive direct complaints from the public but forwards them to the relevant RCMP detachment for investigation and resolution. The CPC also has the responsibility to review RCMP handling of complaints made by a member of the public against an individual RCMP member. The CPC makes non-binding recommendations to the Commissioner with respect to their findings. The CPC can self initiate complaints and hold a public inquiry into complaints but this is rarely done. The RCMP External Review Committee (ERC) reviews and makes non-binding recommendations to the Commissioner with respect to certain types of grievances from members and appeals from disciplinary actions by management.

The existence of the two separate systems causes confusion within the public and leads to difficulties in dealing with complaints against members within integrated units. Team members are subject to different disciplinary procedures and complaint processes.

Liability

The Police Act contains a statutory requirement obligating a police agency to provide temporary assistance to another agency, if so requested. Section 68 of the Police Act states:

- 68 (1) The provincial police force, a municipal police department or designated unit must, on receiving a request for temporary assistance made by another police force, police department or designated policing unit, assign to the requesting police force, police department or designated policing unit the officers and equipment practicable to assign for the purpose.

(2) A police force, police department or designated policing unit that requests and receives assistance under subsection (1) is responsible for all costs of that assistance.

These provisions act as insurance for residents in municipalities policed by smaller agencies, where the agency may not be able, or decide not to staff various specialized units itself. The Police Act directs that the agency requesting assistance is responsible for all “costs” of that assistance. The costs of assistance would clearly encompass the hourly wages and overtime of the officers assisting, as well as equipment consumed. Of course the true costs would further include wear and tear and depreciation of equipment used, a portion of the costs of the specialized training those officers had received, and various other incidentals.

The requesting agency, its police board and its municipal government commonly do not consider that the “costs” may also include liabilities incurred as a result of the actions by the assisting agency. If property is damaged or persons are injured, as a result of actions taken by assisting officers, the Police Act provides that the assisting officers’ home municipality (Police Act section 20) or the provincial government (Police Act section 11) are jointly and severally liable; however, the section 68 assignment of the costs, for the assistance, to the requesting agency, may transfer those liabilities. The result is that the requesting agency’s municipal government may be financially liable for the actions of officers from another agency, officers whose actions its own police board and appointed Chief Constable do not control.

Similar potentially problematic liability issues arise in relation to municipal officers seconded to integrated teams led by the RCMP. Where a plaintiff in a civil lawsuit is awarded damages arising out of the actions of a municipal officer, the home agency’s municipal government is financially liable (Police Act section 20). In the first instance, the home municipality will likely incur this liability, even when its officer was acting under the direction of the RCMP and working in another municipality. Section 11 of the Police Act may also make the provincial government liable to the plaintiff, but it is unclear how liability would be apportioned between the two levels of government. In any event, the home agency remains liable for the legal costs of defending their police officers (in accordance with provisions of collective agreements). To date, secondment agreements have not effectively dealt with the assignment of liabilities between the participants in integrated units, and the secondments present liability risk not being given full consideration, or factored in as potential costs, by municipal governments.

Coordination Gaps

At present, there are no formal protocols for information, crime analysis, and intelligence-sharing between the various police services in the GVR. Rather, such information sharing, when it does occur, is on a personal, ad hoc, and reciprocal basis. This arrangement is far from a best practices model for crime investigation and cannot be justified on the basis that there are a number of integrated investigative teams throughout the region. The presence of these teams does not guarantee information-sharing, as again, there are no protocols in place that require integrated teams to share information with the police services from which members of these teams are seconded, nor is there any indication that information feedback loops exist on other than an ad hoc basis. Any option designed to improve police service delivery in the GVR would have to address this issue.

Recently, the police agencies that comprise the GVR have come together to co-ordinate their efforts in order to combat significant crime problems. There is a realization that individual police agencies cannot combat multi-jurisdictional crime issues (such as gangs) on an individual basis. The municipalities realize there is a need to coordinate and pool resources for short-term initiatives in order to effectively address serious crime issues in a timely fashion. These agencies recognize that there is a need to be proactive rather than reactive, in these instances and that there is a need for a strategic plan for the region. Not only does the province need a provincial strategic policing plan; each region needs to develop a regional strategy based on the priorities set by the province.

Currently there are no over-arching strategic plans, strategies or set priorities to address the future of youth gangs, regional crime reduction, DARE programs, human resources, training, recruiting and retention, just to name a few.

Investigations

The current arrangements for policing the GVR present challenges in case investigation, information and intelligence-sharing, and in the continuity of collaborative investigations. The increasing complexity and costs of case investigations requires the adoption of one model of case management throughout the region. A recent example highlighting the difficulties associated with fragmented policing services is that the VPD is not involved in the investigation of the multiple, drug-related murders that occurred in Surrey in October 2007, despite the fact that this incident is likely related to the ongoing drug/gang violence that is occurring throughout the region. A number of recent, high profile cases, including the Missing Women's case, highlight the need for "seamless" patrol and investigative police services throughout the GVR.

When agencies do come together on an investigation whether through an integrated Unit or Joint Forces Operation, the investigators use the same command structure for investigating major files, but are trained on and use different software systems for managing information. This bifurcated approach is neither efficient nor effective and may hinder the provision of a high standard of policing services to the citizens of the GVR.

Priorities

Although there are between eight and ten strike force-type (surveillance) teams across the region, there is no procedure for prioritizing targets among the different police services. While one area may have numerous high-priority targets, another area may have relatively few. If both regions have a similar amount of officers assigned to this detail, there may be instances where insufficient resources are spent on high-priority targets (which in all likelihood should be priorities for the entire region), while other low-priority targets have a disproportionate number of resources dedicated due to the compartmentalization of targets, resources and priorities. Having a regional structure would also allow for more experienced officers to be assigned to more dangerous or "heat conscious" targets, while those with less experience could be assigned as appropriate for safety and effectiveness.

Human Resources

The current structure of policing the GVR presents significant challenges in the efforts of police services in the area of human resources. Among the more pressing human resource issues are:

Professional and Career Development

Under the current policing model, the professional and career development of members is the responsibility of each organization, and as such, is quite unequal due to varying budgets, needs, and rank structuring. Although recruit training for the independent police agencies is standardized through the JIBC, additional training depends on each agency's policies and budget. Opportunities for operational, administrative, investigational and supervisory roles, along with promotional opportunities, are also unequal. Often this is a direct result of the size of a police service, as smaller agencies do not have as much flexibility as large ones to transfer members for career development, nor are there as many senior positions available for junior members to be promoted into. In the case of an assignment to an integrated unit, operational experience may be gained, but there is no performance management system to measure or document the experience in order to properly inform the member's agency.

Development for the supervisory, management and executive ranks needs to be addressed, as opportunities to gain experience and knowledge for advancement through each of these ranks are necessary, but vary within each department. Many independent police agencies can provide only limited development opportunities within their respective organizations due to their size.

There may be options for police service delivery in the GVR that would facilitate the standardization of recruitment, training and professional and career development.⁸ A performance management system could be used to ensure that all members are receiving the necessary training and experience. The system would allow for the development and training of future leaders. In the United Kingdom, officers are transferred to positions of increasing responsibility in order to prepare them for higher rank.

Recruitment

There is intense competition among police services (independent municipal and the RCMP) in the GVR for new recruits and for in-service officers. This competition is costly, inefficient, and hinders both planning and operations. Smaller police services may have a much more difficult time attracting and retaining police recruits.

Retention

The cost associated with the loss of experienced, in-service officers to larger police services such as the RCMP and Vancouver Police Department are not included in a municipality's policing costs, yet these costs are extensive. Small police services in the GVR are being devastated by officers resigning to go to other departments, including the RCMP. The expertise and experience of officers cannot be replaced merely by hiring new officers. A separate issue concerns the recognition that in smaller agencies, younger, more energetic officers may find themselves serving areas with lower instances of crime, thereby decreasing their opportunity to learn and be challenged in the workplace. This may have the unfortunate effect of those officers leaving for larger, more "eventful" areas or agencies.

Secondments

The use of integrated policing teams, composed of municipal and RCMP officers seconded to address specific issues, might be viewed as a "band-aid" solution for the lack of a regional presence. The creation of integrated units to address regional issues suggests the need for a regional police agency.

⁸ Another issue that bears mentioning is the recognition that while many RCMP members and Executive Officers may come from other areas of the province or even the country, on the whole, VPD officers and members of the Executive have been born and raised in the GVR, and as such, are more cognizant of local concerns and issues.

In the absence of a comprehensive plan for maximizing police resources in the GVR, the rationalization and sharing of resources has developed on an ad-hoc basis through the use of integrated teams, task forces, and secondments. This is costly and the effectiveness of this approach has never been empirically assessed. Despite the extensive reliance on integrated teams to address such issues as traffic, gang violence, and drug-related violence, and the significant costs associated with this approach, there has been no evaluation to date of the effectiveness of this strategy. There is ongoing concern among many police services with the numbers of seconded officers who are assigned to these special task forces and teams. Major concerns include the absence of information “flowback” to the officers’ home departments and that officers may “disappear” into special police teams for years at a time. As well, these teams drain experienced officers from the individual police services, a significant concern given the retirement of experienced senior officers and the large number of police officers who are junior in rank throughout the GVR.

There is also concern that the police service’s investigative expertise is diminished. This is of particular concern given the high percentage of officers with less than five years of experience, making even more important the presence of seasoned officers in the police service. As well, concerns exist over officers being supervised and taking direction from another agency. Most integrated teams are headed by the RCMP, which will not be familiar with the regulations and procedures and collective agreements of the municipal members’ home department. Yet if a public complaint about the actions of a municipal officer is made, in part the rules and regulations of the officer’s home department regulate his or her actions, and not those of the RCMP may have in place for the team. A regional police service would decrease the need for integrated police task forces and units composed of officers from municipal department and RCMP detachments. This has been the experience of the regional police services in Ontario.

Economic Disparities

Introduction

At the present time there are insufficient data to develop a cost benefit analysis of the various options for regionalizing police services in the GVR. The available data and information relating to costs and levels of service provided to the municipalities are not sufficiently precise to make this exercise useful. This is an area that should be investigated as the discussions of options for policing the GVR move forward. What is presented below are some of the issues that arise due to the current structure, and the disparity of funding and services in police services in the GVR.

Economic Inefficiencies

Any analysis of the “costs” of policing the GVR must extend beyond the traditional measure of “costs per officer” and include the “costs” associated with failing to apprehend serious offenders in a timely fashion and the “costs” associated with not having sufficient coordination and resources to conduct an investigation at a level that ensures a conviction. One need only consider the “costs” associated with the Missing Women’s case to realize that any economic analysis must consider a wide range of factors.

The cost of policing services in Vancouver reflects both the actual policing on the ground and the use of police resources by other departments. Today, as documented elsewhere in this report, there is a wide disparity of services in different policing jurisdictions in the GVR. There are differences in philosophies⁹,

⁹ For example, the “no call too small” model of service delivery is not embraced by all police agencies.

there are differences in response times to similar calls for service,¹⁰ and there are differences in the number of officers responding to similar calls¹¹.

There are a variety of economic inefficiencies associated with the current regional structure in the GVR in which six are separate municipal agencies, while 12 municipalities are served by the RCMP. Broadly speaking, the current mixture of RCMP contract and multiple independent municipal police services would be appropriate if crime were isolated in each of the different districts. In such an environment, each of the agencies would have a crime stance appropriate to its own city or municipality. Each community would bear the resource costs necessary for the level of service determined by that city or municipality as appropriate. However, it is not the case that either crime or resource allocation currently takes place in single municipalities. As a consequence there are a myriad of inefficiencies associated with the current policing structure. These inefficiencies can be described as arising from free riding, inappropriate levels of specialization, failing to take advantage of economies of scale, inadequate characterization of levels of service and costs of service provision, and a mismatch of taxation and service provision.

Measuring Police Costs but not Police Service

The observation that Victoria and Vancouver have high per capita policing costs should come as no surprise. Both are the largest cities in their region, and consequently provide services outside their local communities. Vancouver is a qualitatively different policing environment than any other policing area in BC. The economic activity of the City is proportionately greater than its size as it is both a financial hub and a regional hub. It is the center for protests and the destination for tourists. Gangs are particularly active with access to both the port and the entertainment district.

The observation that Vancouver is a regional economic centre also means that the population that has to be policed may differ significantly from the population that is recorded by Statistics Canada. Estimates are that Vancouver supports a population that may be more than 40,000 higher than the resident population on average during a 24-hour period.¹² This leads to an increased cost of policing in the City of Vancouver in particular, as measured by the per capita cost (residential population only). What also results is that although outlying (or ambient) municipalities 'supply' much of this 40,000 person increase to Vancouver, they are in effect not paying the VPD for it, and rather, only pay their own municipal police force for their residential population (which may not be present most of the time in that municipality). Statistics Canada recognized several years ago the need to amalgamate the crime data for Metro Vancouver in order to report comparable data for other large urban areas in Canada.

Measuring policing costs is of interest to taxpayers, but equally important and generally unmeasured is the value of the service provided.¹³ This is not easily captured by our usual financial measures since the

¹⁰ VPD Planning, Research & Audit internal report

¹¹ The decision to respond with a single officer, multiple officers, and/or ERT, is not standardized across municipalities.

¹² These estimates are based on research provided by private communication from Professor Martin Andresen (SFU Criminology), June 27, 2007.

¹³ Policing services are hard to measure from the raw data provided by Statistics Canada. A police establishment's nominal size may not be its actual size.

underlying prevalence of crime is generally unmeasured.¹⁴ The City of Vancouver has a more complicated crime environment than most other municipalities. Just like a big city hospital may record a higher death rate than other hospitals, it would be foolish to conclude that the city medical staff is less competent than those in the rural areas. What may occur is that the most difficult cases come or are transferred to the city hospital, and while staff may be giving significantly better and more specialized service, their case outcomes are measured as worse if the per case yardstick gives no consideration to case complexity.

Consequently, per capita policing costs may have great appeal but they suffer from the important deficiency that they do not reflect the value of the service provided. Implicitly, comparisons of per capita costs of police services assume that the services provided are identical. This is clearly untrue.

Tax Collection and Subsidies

One feature of policing budgets is that they are dependent upon municipal lines. Above it was argued that the appropriate geographical extent of the police force is related to the geographical extent of the criminal activity. Similarly, police funding should be related to the location of the population whom the police are serving. Thus, if all policing were municipal because all crime was local, then it would be appropriate for the locus of budgeting to be local as well. Crimes that are regional need to be funded regionally as the regional taxpayer is the beneficiary. This is not simply a statement of philosophy, but a statement about efficiency.

To the extent that one city subsidizes the policing activities of another say, town, then a reasonable case can be made that the taxpayers of the city are supporting the taxpayers of the town who are not paying a share commensurate with the service they are receiving. Further, the level of the subsidized activity will be less than that which would be provided by the taxpayers acting in concert as a single source of financing. As it stands now, the city will tend to under-provide the service, since it is more costly than it should be to the city residents, and the town's residents will receive at least some benefit for which they do not pay. Citizens of the city will be paying more in city taxes and receiving less in city policing services than their taxes should support. This leads to an environment in which city police services are seen as delivering less service than the level of taxation should permit. Consequently, there will be constant pressure for increased city front line policing that will tend to diminish the resources for specialized police services.

Regionalization is just one of the ways to deal with this persistent problem. Other options may include charging out for services utilized by other agencies, special provincial grants, or other funding support. However, one of the key points for the present situation is the recognition that the VPD, although providing many specialty and support services to smaller agencies, does not charge out for these services on a regular basis.¹⁵ Even if these services were charged out consistently to other agencies, the benefit of this approach to alleviate cross-jurisdictional policing issues is not straightforward.¹⁶

¹⁴ Of course Crimes Known to the Police and the Social Survey provide some insight into part of the crime prevalence as they record some victimizations. But gang related, drugs, financial frauds and a host of other types of crimes are not necessarily reported or even recognized by the public except as individual cases make the press.

¹⁵ It is expensive to try to break down every cost for each operation. While it can be done, it is not likely to be done easily. One can imagine the entire process degenerating into a constant tussle across municipalities about what is being charged to whom. These costs are internalized in the course of normal single unit budgeting.

¹⁶ For example, a criminal may act criminally in the City of Vancouver yet not engage in offensive behaviour at 'home' in another municipality. Local police have no reason to be actively interested. However, City police need to

Although the VPD uses the services of the RCMP National Lab Service at no cost, the service is jointly funded by the Federal and Provincial Governments for service provision to all BC police agencies.

The Municipal governments in the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) identified that there is a fiscal imbalance between local government's reliance on property taxes as its major source of revenue versus ever increasing costs. This is especially true of increasing policing costs. This has been acknowledged for many large cities in Canada, although nowhere is this truer than in the GVR, as it is the last major metropolitan area without regionalized policing.

Canada's big cities, like all municipalities, are simply too dependent on only one tax source – the property tax. The lack of diversity in municipal tax tools is highly problematic. The property tax is inelastic – the revenue produced tends to grow slowly, often failing to keep pace with population growth, inflation, and economic expansion. Big city responsibilities have also expanded dramatically. Cities are finding themselves having to provide more and more services to 'people' as opposed to 'property', a task for which the property tax is ill-suited. *With more and more residents filling the beltways around our city-regions, big cities find themselves having to provide services and infrastructure to a growing population who pay their residential property taxes elsewhere [emphasis added].*¹⁷

The City of Abbotsford has undertaken an initiative to bring to the UBCM a call for equitable police funding. Their report points out that the Federal Municipal Policing Agreements provide for a contribution of federal funds towards policing services costs to municipalities with the RCMP. However, the independent police services costs are paid entirely by local municipal taxpayers. These taxpayers are required to pay twice for policing: once through federal/provincial tax and again through municipal property tax (City of Abbotsford, 2007). In January 2008, both the City of Saanich and the City of Vancouver have put forward similar initiatives.

The US Example

In the U.S. 16 states permit municipal governments to collect local income taxes. (Slack, 2005) Couple the access to these revenue sources with federal programs such as TEA-21 that provide U.S. cities with access to over \$100 billion for transportation infrastructure, and Canadian municipalities quickly lose any competitive advantage. (as cited in *Big City Mayor's Caucus, 2006*).

While most Canadian municipalities take the majority of income from property taxes, many cities in the US have a far more extensive tax sharing plan with the Federal Government. One such example is Seattle, Washington (Vander Ploeg, 2005b):

spend resources to monitor the criminal's activities in both locations leading to both coordination issues and resource allocation issues.

¹⁷ Casey G. Vander Ploeg, Senior Policy Analyst, Canada West Foundation

LOCAL TAXES IN PLAY:

General Retail Sales Tax
Sales Tax on Entertainment
Sales Tax on Gambling
Sales Tax on Restaurants
Sales Tax on Bars and Pubs
Sales Tax on Vehicle Rentals
Gross Receipts Tax
Franchise and Utility Taxes
Motor Vehicle Excise Tax
Real Estate Excise Tax

TAX-SHARING

State Liquor Tax
State Fuel Tax
State Lodging Tax
State Insurance Premium Tax
State General Retail Sales Tax
State Leasehold Excise Tax
State Hazardous Waste Tax
State Utility Tax
State Timber Tax
State Solid Waste Tax

OTHER REVENUES

Federal and State Grants
User Fees
Interest, Licenses, Permits, Fines

OTHER TAXES AVAILABLE

Employee Head Tax
Square Footage Business Tax
Head Tax or Poll Tax

Although a complete discussion of the federal-provincial-municipal funding arrangement is beyond the scope of this discussion document, it is an issue that should be considered in any discussion of the regionalization of police services.

Free Riding

As highlighted earlier, the Police Act directs that a municipal police agency must, on receiving a request for temporary assistance made by another police agency, assign to the requesting agency the officers and equipment practicable to assign for the purpose. As a result, smaller agencies can rely on receiving assistance in relation to specialized investigations (e.g., homicides) or particular policing duties (e.g., crowd control). While it has not been demonstrated that smaller agencies rely on the Police Act assistance requirement when deciding whether or not to staff their own specialized units, it is common practice for smaller agencies to make event-type-specific advance arrangements with larger agencies for the provision of services. The Police Act directs that the agency requesting assistance is responsible for all costs of that assistance; however, in practice police agencies have historically not consistently billed each other for services requested and provided, due to difficulty in assessing costs incurred and the collegial relationship among agencies. As such, there is no fixed cost associated with the level and type of service that is provided, and no consistency in whether agencies are billed or not on an ongoing basis.

Generally, larger police agencies have more specialized units than smaller agencies. These units are made available to smaller agencies, as the goal of apprehending offenders is paramount to both large and small agencies. But currently the smaller agencies do not have to pay the full cost of these standing units. The previous section on “Comparing Police Services” outlined those specialized units that larger agencies make available to other police agencies on a regular basis. Insofar as other municipalities do not bear the costs of these units, they function as a costless form of insurance for smaller units. Consequently, the size of these units is smaller than if they were funded by all the users of the services, since the taxpayer in the municipality of the larger agency sees only the municipality-related benefit, yet bears all the cost. Free riding on larger agencies as a resource both degrades service from a specialized unit of a given size, and reduces the appropriate size of the unit providing those services.

The free riding of the smaller municipalities leads to an overemphasis on the delivery of local frontline services. Community policing, rapid uniformed response and traffic enforcement (among other functions) are delivered in the smaller municipalities. With the insurance of specialized task forces – like those described in previous sections – provided by the larger forces, the smaller forces do not need to maintain specialized expertise within their personnel. This results in these agencies having little capacity to respond to complex environments, such as ports, or complex situations such as organized crime. This is problematic, and may become more so in the future as cities grow, as surely the ‘big city phenomenon’ of Vancouver and the related challenges will continually emerge in other municipalities that are far less prepared.

The VPD is subjected to two pressures: the need to provide front line policing in the City of Vancouver, and the need to provide expertise for specialized tasks for police services both within the city and to the region. The pressure within the City of Vancouver and on the VPD is to move more resources into patrol, as this is what is most visible to the taxpaying public in Vancouver. However, this can only be done at the expense of expert crime fighting services that currently provide for both Vancouver and the broader community.

Economies of Scale

Larger policing agencies have the potential advantage of scale and scope. The distinction is that economies of scale arise in the application of a single police activity to a larger number of cases. For example, a department may have a small number of officers devoted to policing a particular crime which occurs with modest frequency. With a large number of cases, the same number of officers may be able to use a helicopter, or other specialized equipment that would not be justifiable otherwise. Similarly, the specialization offered in a larger force may offer more opportunity for additional training and interesting assignments. This may draw officers from smaller municipalities on a regular basis adding to their costs of recruitment.

Economies of scope occur when there are the opportunities to pursue many different activities that would not be possible without some kind of central distribution of the initial fixed costs. Thus a city like Vancouver can have a number of specialized squads while a smaller policing agency, might at best have a few.

Benefits of Current Structure

Cost Benefits

With the current structure, municipalities who contract the services of the RCMP gain by way of federal subsidies comprised of 10% of salaries plus training, equipment, and some administrative costs. When the RCMP’s current contract with the Provincial Government expires in 2012, it is uncertain whether these subsidies would remain in the next contract (if renewed).

Many communities may reap the benefit from the current structure, particularly if they are in a small municipality where a police officer will respond to every 9-1-1 call, regardless of the seriousness of the incident. What the residents do not realize is that often their police agency relies heavily on larger agencies for major incidents, and would be unable to provide an acceptable level of service if a high-priority case arose and they were without outside assistance from the larger agencies.

Amalgamating and Regionalizing Police: The Canadian Experience

*The two major questions were: “Is regionalization going to cost more?” and,
“Is regionalization going to result in less service?”*
Chief, Waterloo Regional Police

I can’t think of any downside (to regionalization) other than the uncertainty at Day One.
Retired Deputy Chief, Waterloo Regional Police Service

Regional policing is good for the police and good for the public.
Officer, Halton Regional Police Service

*Regionalization has been a huge success. There is no question, from the very
beginning, that it was the right thing to do.*
Member, Halton Regional Police Service Board

*Since the regionalization of the [Hamilton] police in 1975,
the police service has worked well.*
Member, Hamilton Police Service Board

Regional police services have been a feature of the Canadian policing landscape for over four decades. Notably, regionalization has occurred in the eastern regions of the country, with the largest regional police services being created in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. In the 1970s, there were over 120 municipal police departments in Ontario; as of 2006, there were 58.

The largest regional police forces in the country are found in Ontario: Durham Regional Police, Halton Regional Police, Ottawa Police Service, Toronto Police Service, Peel Regional Police, Niagara Regional Police, Hamilton Police Service and Waterloo Regional Police. A review of the evolution of regional policing in these jurisdictions suggests that a regional approach to police service delivery can provide effective, and efficient, service delivery that is premised on best practices, responsive to the needs of individual communities, and effective in the prevention and response to crime and disorder.

In 1953, 13 municipalities amalgamated into Metropolitan Toronto. It was the subsequent need to provide the citizens of the region with an effective and efficient police force that led to the amalgamation of 13 local police forces into the Metropolitan Toronto Police in 1957. This regional force was the first of its kind in Ontario and became a model for national and international agencies who wanted to improve their police service delivery in the same way. In 1998, Metropolitan Toronto merged into the City of Toronto and the police force became the Toronto Police Service.

Amalgamation and regionalization of police services have occurred in a number of other Canadian jurisdictions over the past several decades. In Eastern Canada, Bedford, Dartmouth and Halifax amalgamated into one police service in 1996 and subsequently integrated into the Halifax Regional Police. (McDavid, 2002:2).

The Service de Police de la Ville de Montreal (SPVM) was created in 1972, and included 25 smaller forces which police Montreal. SPVM is one of the largest police forces in Canada (Brodeur, 2005:256).

Regionalization took two phases in Montreal. The first was from 1987-93, the second was from 1994-2005 (Brodeur, 2005:259). Quebec felt that with regionalization there would be an optimum usage of resources, increased administration centralization, an improved structure of salaries, improved career plans, and a new structure for specialization of specific services (Commission de Police du Quebec, (No Year):19). A significant difference in the GVR is the presence of RCMP contract policing, a phenomenon that does not exist in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. While these two jurisdictions have provincial police services, only in Ontario does the provincial police service, the OPP, engage in contract policing at the municipal level.

Significantly, provincial governments have been the primary driver of regionalization in those jurisdictions where it has occurred. As the Mayor of Milton, Ontario stated: "If the province hadn't forced us, we wouldn't have done it." Interviews with municipal mayors, municipal and regional councillors, police board members, police executives, sworn members, the private sector, provincial Police Services, and community residents relating to the performance of the regional police services resulted in the following feedback discussed below.

Policing Issues and Regionalization

The following discussion draws upon materials gathered in interviews with respondents in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Recruiting and Retention - A major benefit of regional policing is the elimination of competition among the various police services for recruits and in-service officers. In the GVR, the competition is ferocious. Competing police services may promise in-service officers specialty unit opportunities, while larger police services highlight the greater opportunities for a variety of policing positions that smaller departments cannot offer. Although competition exists across Canada for new recruits and especially in-service officers, in the words of a Niagara Regional Police Service Inspector, "A regional police force is more attractive to recruits."

Growth and Crime - The 26-year mayor of Milton, Ontario noted: "The small police departments didn't have the resources. Regionalization brought expertise, at a cost, but it was spread over a large tax base. The smaller departments couldn't deal with the growth of specialized and sophisticated crimes."

A councillor for the City of Kitchener, Ontario observed that regionalizing police services was consistent with efforts to improve other areas of the public services sector: "The development of higher standards is a trend in all areas: policing, water treatment, transit; and smaller communities don't have the capacity to meet these."

Patrol and Investigative Deployment

"Policing in Delta [B.C.] will still exist. There will be more resources to draw from."
Mayor, Hamilton, Ontario

Regionalization appears to have a significant impact on investigative response, an Ottawa Police Service officer stated: “Communications have improved dramatically. From a policing perspective, there is huge improvement in the investigations. Especially with drugs, robberies and break and enters, where groups go from one border to the next”.

The Chief of Durham Regional Police Service identified a number of benefits of being a regional police service, including being able to mobilize and move resources around the region depending upon the need. He indicated the ability to move up to 70 officers into an area. This level of resourcing would not be available in most municipal departments.

A Niagara Regional Police Service Inspector noted, “There is an increase in operational readiness; NRPS can mobilize up to 200 officers (one third of the authorized strength) at a time; there aren’t those capacities in a small organization.”

Cost Issues

*Saving money is not a good pitch to make. Cost is not an issue that can be made.
The advantage is a higher level of service.*
Councillor, City of Kitchener, Ontario

Don’t tie regionalization to cost-savings. There will be other types of efficiencies and a regional police service can offer better customer service.
Deputy Chief, Niagara Regional Police Service

In discussing the cost issues surrounding the delivery of policing services, a Toronto city councillor and member of the Toronto Police Services Board stated:

We can’t afford to waste people’s badges. We need to develop core capacities – how to make communities the priority and that the best and brightest are out there. Amalgamation requires that focus. We have to provide service for the taxpayer.

*“Citizens don’t know what the true costs of policing are.
Low call volume-labour intensive policing is very expensive.”*
Inspector, Niagara Regional Police Service

Although it appears that regionalization may not save money, there are other efficiencies to be gained, as well as the potential for improved police effectiveness in preventing crime and responding to criminal activity. As an Inspector in the Niagara Regional Police Service noted: “Regionalization will not save money. The operating budget will go up. The benefits are the economies of scale: more efficient recruiting, purchasing, and more flexible deployment.” The Mayor of Milton, Ontario stated: “It’s not cheaper, but it is better. It is not any cheaper for the taxpayer.”

The mayor of Hamilton, Ontario observed: “It is better to have a centralized approach to allocating resources. That makes it possible to move resources around to where they are needed.”

The budget for the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, however, showed that there was a cost benefit associated with the regionalization. The statistics show that Ottawa-Carleton Region called for a total budget of \$128.8 million dollars for 2001. The amalgamation of police services for Ottawa-Carleton produced a savings of more than \$5 million (Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, 2000:2). Following regionalization in Halifax, there was a significant drop in policing costs (McDavid, 2002:13).

The Mayors

The mayor is still the middleman.
Mayor (26 years), Milton, Ontario

Historically, mayors have been a primary obstacle to the creation of regionalized police services. The mayor of Milton, Ontario observed: “The major issue for the mayors will be giving up control. It is hard to give it up for the unknown. We didn’t know how much more it was going to cost. But we had to ask the question, ‘Is bigger better?’ ‘Is smaller smarter?’” Interestingly, this mayor recalled that more than one mayor was happy to give up the “no call too small” policy.

Collective Agreements

In almost every case of regionalization in Ontario, the new collective agreements for the regional service were a result of the highest combination of benefits and wages from the amalgamated services. An Ottawa police member noted: “There should really be a consolidated collective agreement prior to amalgamation.” All agreed that consolidating collective agreements could be one of the significant, unanticipated costs of the process. In the event of a GVR regionalization, the issue of consolidating collective agreements among the independent municipal agencies would likely not be a factor; the current agreements’ wages and benefits are highly similar because of the sequence of negotiations and because the GVRD (now Metro Vancouver) represents the various municipalities in negotiations with the police unions.

The Community

*I don’t think people really care about the uniform a
police officer is wearing when they need help.*
Halifax Regional Police Superintendent

The public just wants a police officer when they call one.
Ottawa Police Service officer

*Any referendum to return to the pre-regionalization way of providing
police services would be defeated.*
Mayor, Milton, Ontario

*The challenge is to find a balance between local control and input
while getting the benefits of regional policing.*
Staff member, Ontario Police Services

The hesitancy of community residents to have their local police service amalgamate into a larger regional police service is often cited as a primary reason for maintaining the current arrangements for police service delivery. This counter-argument, however, has not been supported by public opinion survey data. A recent (November 10, 2007) Angus Reid survey found, for example, that 65 percent of residents surveyed in the GVR support creating a regional police service. This is a significant finding that should inform discussions of a regional police service going forward. It appears that public concern with the effectiveness of the police in responding to crime and violence in the region outweighs concerns related to the creation of a larger police service and the loss of “no call too small” policing.

It appears that there may be somewhat of a disconnect between the political leadership at the municipal level and the sentiments of community residents. While a number of mayors in the GVR have expressed outright opposition to regionalization or are on the record as supporting current policing arrangements, community residents appear interested in exploring alternatives that would increase the effectiveness of the police in preventing and responding to crime.

Reflecting on the experience of regionalization in the Waterloo region, a Kitchener, Ontario city Councillor observed: “If you have established community contact and that is something that you work at all of the time and every day, then there are no downsides [to regionalization].” A member of the Hamilton Police Service Board noted the importance of maintaining contact with communities once a regional police service had been established: “Don’t ignore any areas; make communities feel that their issues are important. Don’t walk away from small communities.”

It also appears that there is somewhat of a disconnect between the political leadership at the municipal level and the sentiments of community residents: while a number of mayors in the GVR have expressed outright opposition to regionalization or are on the record as supporting current policing arrangements, community residents appear interested in exploring alternatives that would increase the effectiveness of the police in preventing and responding to crime.

The concern of community residents over a reduction of service-delivery levels with the creation of a regional police service were addressed by a Halifax Regional Police Superintendent:

[Regionalization] was an issue for the public because there was a perceived loss of identity for the community of Dartmouth, so there was a lot of discussion over that; that everything would go to Halifax. For Bedford, they had a high level of policing, no call too small, and they were willing to pay more for it. So they were worried that once we amalgamated they’d get one car because everyone else would be pulled into Halifax. There are still references to the assertion that they had 13 officers on the street and they have less now. That’s been countered with ‘Yes, you may only have 12 now, but you have 16 across the bridge, and access to all these other units’.... There are those who say it’s worse, that we’ve lost the small town feeling, but with one police, one radio, it’s nice to know if we need them we’ve got 50 resources coming ‘like that’”.

With respect to levels of service, a Kitchener, Ontario City Councillor observed: “If the community wants access and the police to continue to respond to minor crimes, then they need to know the costs of this and the level of staffing that is required.”

Community Input

An Ottawa Police Service officer observed: “The communities do not have less input. They are very active with the Department, and there is a close working relationship with the Councillors (Ward System), that is better than it has ever been before. The policing issues we deal with now are more a matter of ‘how we do business’, and are not related to the amalgamation.”

The mayor of Milton, Ontario noted that, prior to regionalization, his town had 15-17 officers to police a community of approximately 18,000 to 20,000 persons. The community is now 70,000 and growing rapidly. With respect to the benefits of a small, local police service, he observed: “Hominess can be good and bad. Citizens can be too close to the police and the police can be too close to the community. There can be a lot of pressures on a police officer in a small town.”

The mayor noted that community input was important within the regional policing framework: “Community buy-in is important...Community consultation committees were set up. There is a dedicated police officer who attends these meetings and there are one or two elected people on it. These committees are a conduit between the community and the regional council.”

The mayor further observed that: “It is important for communities to separate out their wants and needs and that they be able to demonstrate their needs.”

The Chief of Waterloo Regional Police Service highlighted the importance of structuring the new regional police service so as to ensure continuity of the relationship between the police and the community:

When regionalization occurred, we lost community policing and lost touch with the communities. The communities lost the personal touch, the officers that they knew. This was due to the large number of transfers that occurred when the regional police service was created. We didn’t want anyone connected with their former station. Movement was a problem.

Similarly, a Halton Regional Police Service officer stated:

Community identity and issues must be kept. The organization is regional but the police must remain committed to the needs of individual communities. It is necessary to reassure the community that they will either maintain, or gain, in the service that will be provided to them. That the communities’ will not all be policed the same but that there will be community-focused districts.

Police Accountability to the Community

The experience in Ontario is that police accountability to the community is not lessened with the creation of a regional police service. The mayor of Milton, Ontario stated: “I can call the Inspector at any time and they will come to council. We can discuss where we have been and where we are going. The Inspector for the District generally comes to council twice a year.”

Similarly, the mayor of Wilmott, Ontario (pop. 17,000, which originally had its own small town police force), who is also a member of the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board, noted that “It’s been 10-15 years since we have heard a complaint about regional policing.”

A staff member from Ontario Police Services noted: “Mayors must have communication and a working relationship with local commanders; public consultation is part of the business plan. In Hamilton, there is a Division Community Advisory Group.” A member of the Niagara Regional Police Service Board noted “It is also important to consider how you constitute the Board. “There must be equal representation on the Board by population.” A member of the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board stated that there were mechanisms in place to address any concerns that mayors and communities might have that the regional police are not meeting their needs:

The mechanisms are in place to deal with any concerns. The mayor can go to the Division Commander. If that doesn’t work, he can take it to the Regional Police Service Commission. We have never had these requests. Regionalization works well in a small municipality.

It is important to ensure that mayors and municipalities are kept apprised of policing issues and developments. The mayor of Hamilton, Ontario recalled:

When I was in the suburbs, our lament was that we never saw the police...and that they had taken away our police station. It was not necessarily an informed lament. As mayor, I am more informed about the operations of the police and the financial situation.

The mayor further noted, “[t]he regional police are very attuned to the community. The Business Plan (of the police) is based on lots of community input. The Plan represents the diversity of the region, which is changing.”

Planning

Respondents in Ontario noted the importance of planning should a jurisdiction decide to proceed with a regional police service. An Ottawa police officer recalled, “For the first two years we were on three completely different systems. This included radio networks, the CAD system and the records system. It was a nightmare. I don’t think they were prepared enough for all of the issues”.

The Chair of the Hamilton Regional Police Board recalled, “[i]t was two years from the time of the amalgamation in 1973 until the vision was realized. There were issues with regard to facilities, cars, and crests. There was a lot of prep time. Even two years was too short a time period.”

Lessons Learned

Respondents in Ontario, including police personnel, police services staff, and representatives from regional police boards and the municipal government level, identified a number of “lessons learned” with respect to the creation of a new regional police service.

The experience of regionalization in Ontario suggests that:

- Regionalizing police services does not result in a loss of community control over police services.
- The primary opposition to regionalizing police services has come from the political level, rather than from the police or the community.

- Regionalization has the potential to significantly improve the deployment of patrol and investigative resources.
- There is no movement toward decentralizing police services and returning to pre-regional policing arrangements.
- Concerns among municipalities that there would be a decrease in service levels and a reduced capacity for input into policing have not been realized.
- Regionalization is supported by municipal mayors and community residents and there is no indication that either stakeholder group would wish to return to pre-regionalization arrangements for the delivery of policing services.

The Halifax “Blended” Policing Model

*In the integration, I think you have to decide to use one set of policies and procedures
or the others, because blending takes too much time and energy.*

Superintendent, Halifax Regional Police

Police services in Halifax, Dartmouth, and Bedford Nova Scotia were amalgamated into the Halifax Regional Police in 1996. Subsequently, a “blended” model was developed involving the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and the RCMP, which was involved in municipal contract policing in the areas surrounding the city.

Information on the experience of “blending” the RCMP and the HRP was provided in an interview with a Halifax Regional Police Superintendent. This experience is instructive, as one option for police services in the GVR is a “integrated” police service that would involve RCMP officers working alongside municipal police officers. For a variety of reasons, as documented in the comments of the Halifax Regional Police Superintendent, this model has proven to be less than effective and highlights the challenges, and limitations, of attempting to blend the RCMP and municipal police services into a regional police service.

The regionalization of policing services in Halifax was a provincially-driven initiative. Initially, there was good support from the RCMP and the HRP; however, difficulties were encountered in securing data from the RCMP and the data systems between the two police services were incompatible. One issue is span of control of the Police Board, since the RCMP are accountable to Ottawa and to federal legislation.

Although the officers are on a common radio channel, there is no integration of patrol in the HRP; rather, there are defined, and separate, patrol areas. There is however, integration in specialty units.

Difficulties with the “Blended” RCMP/Municipal Model

Numerous difficulties were encountered in attempting to “integrate” RCMP and municipal policies and procedures into a regional police service. Several of these were identified by a Halifax Regional Police Superintendent who was involved in the initiative to create the new “regional” police service:

In the investigative units, there were issues around what the standards and qualifications would be, municipal officers not meeting federal standards, etc. Communication centres and records management were big ticket items because to work together we needed to have common RMS....On the RMS/CAD issue, there was agreement that there should be one system. HRP wanted everyone on the new system.

The RCMP wanted us on theirs, but their system didn't have an integrated CAD system and didn't meet our needs...At the end of it they decided to come on and they're the only ones in Canada outside BC on Versaterm.

A review of the policing arrangements in Halifax (Perivale and Taylor, 2002) found that the HRP and the RCMP were "operating with different cultures, different pressures and different approaches to local policing...The presence of two agencies working in one jurisdiction also results in an element of competition."

Benefits of the "Blended" RCMP/Municipal Model

The benefits associated with the blended RCMP/Municipal model relate to regionalization in general, and not to the merging of the two diverse agencies. A Halifax Regional Police Superintendent stated, "We are more effective amalgamated than if we'd stayed apart." He also noted that there are more opportunities for police officers to move throughout the service, and take on different roles and challenges.

The experience with the "blended" model of regionalizing police services in Halifax suggest that adoption of this model for police service delivery requires close collaboration and cooperation between the municipal police services and the RCMP and that strategic planning assumes a very important role in this endeavour.

Implementation and Integration: Considerations for the GVR

Integration for the sake of integration doesn't wash. You need to look at what you want to achieve. If it's just to say politically that you're integrated, there's too much energy spent and you're better off keeping your agencies separate, or else amalgamate them and make them one agency.
Superintendent, Halifax Regional Police

Make sure you define WHY you're doing what you're going to do and decide what you want in the future, then decide how to get there. Don't do integration because it's the buzz word. Look at what you want to accomplish, then decide what's the best way to get there.
Superintendent, Halifax Regional Police

The experience of regionalizing police services in other Canadian jurisdictions suggests a number of key considerations that must be weighed by parties involved in a similar exercise in the GVR.

1) The Ontario experience suggests that the provincial government must assume the lead in initiating discussions and considering options for providing police services to the GVR.

Regionalization in British Columbia will never happen unless the province directs it... The province of British Columbia has to be committed and say that regionalization is going to happen. The province legislates and the municipalities make it work. It will never happen if it is left to the municipalities."
Member, Waterloo Regional Police Service Board

It is significant that in Ontario, where regionalization is most extensively developed, a key role was assumed by the provincial government which indicated that regionalization was to occur. A similar role was assumed by the provincial government in Nova Scotia with respect to the creation of the Halifax Regional Police. This requires the provincial government to facilitate a discussion of regionalization premised on the best practices police literature and on a determination of which model of police service delivery will be the most effective and efficient.

2. If the decision is to create a new regional police service, then this new service must have its own identity. A common theme from police and government personnel in Ontario was that a new regional police service must have its own identity. This requires that all vestiges of the individual police services, e.g., uniforms and patrol car markings, be replaced. A Superintendent from the Halifax Regional Police expressed the view that all of the major changes should be made at the outset, rather than being phased in over time:

We really just changed shirts at first and it was only after a while we got into standardized procedures across the board. In hindsight, it may have been better to have the pain up front rather than leaving them. People thought it might just go away, but here we are 10 years later.

An Ottawa Police Service member recalled, “It has been ten years now and we all just joke about it today. It is fine today, unlike what happened in Niagara. There has been talk of guys there wearing their old department uniforms ten years after regionalization.”

Ontario police personnel identified the importance of ensuring that regionalization did not occur just “on paper” and that the specific policing cultures associated with each municipal police service involved in the amalgamation did not remain intact. In Canada, the model has been to create homogeneity in the new police service by creating a new crest, uniforms, and other identifiers. This has been the practice in the U.S. as well (McDavid, 2002:5).

The determination of policing boundaries is an important factor in creating the identity of the new regional police service. The policing districts in Waterloo Regional Police Service, for example, do not coincide with the municipality boundaries; this was done intentionally to prevent isolation. The city boundaries were not kept, and the policing districts were identified based on call load.

3. In any new arrangements for the delivery of police services, including creating a new regional police service, attention must be given to specific practices that are in place in the various police services. As an Ottawa Police Service officer noted, “One of the problems was with badge numbers. Rather than re-issue new badge numbers, they had everyone keep their existing number and put a different prefix on it, depending on which agency you were from. Gloucester members put a ‘10’ in front of their old number and Nepean put a ‘20’. It creates more problems than necessary. In policing, we identify one another by badge numbers – seniority, experience, etc. This method of adding a prefix forever identifies people with their old police department.”

4. The adoption of any new model for police service delivery in the GVR must recognize that there are different policing “cultures” that exist in the police services in the GVR. As a Halifax Regional Police Superintendent noted with respect to Dartmouth, Bedford, and Halifax police services,

There were three very different cultures. Halifax was a command/control agency; you didn't do anything without checking with a supervisor. Dartmouth was freer. Bedford was a very high level of service agency. Just bringing together the three cultures and having common operating procedures was a challenge. That took a few years to try to decide which procedures to adopt.

5. In any new model of policing service, core capacities must be established in order to ensure the effective delivery of police services. To realize the full potential of a regional police model or a new regional police service and to effectively address the challenges and shortcomings that surround the current arrangements for the delivery of policing services in the GVR, it is imperative that core capacities be developed. Best practice standards for all facets of administration, policy, and practice should be included in the provincial police act, or embodied in a new set of police standards. Several provinces, including Alberta and Ontario, use police standards to ensure a consistently high level of service delivery. This will ensure that the disparities that currently exist across the GVR, e.g., Delta Police Department (with approximately 145 police members) has three full-time use-of-force trainers, while the VPD (with an authorized strength of 1,231 police members, not including over 80 secondments) has one and half full-time use of force trainers.

Several respondents in Ontario indicated the importance of maintaining a focus on community policing and of structuring the delivery of policing services to enhance police-community relations. A member of the Halton Regional Police Service described how that police service attempted to accomplish this:

You have to maintain the community focus and this can be accomplished by creating districts and hav[ing] officers dedicated to that district. Instead of patrol zones we have communities. Each district has its own investigative unit, youth officer/social worker and senior crime investigator. There is also a street crime unit in each district on a two-year, competitive rotation. All of the district police stations are open 24 hours a day. There is a Staff Sgt. on duty, 2 patrol Sgts, and a complement of patrol officers. We also use mobile community stations - temporary buildings that can be moved around. We had a problem-premises apartment building and put a temporary station there for six months with a team of officers working to resolve the issues.

6. Any discussions of a new model of police service delivery, including the creation of a new regional police service, must include all stakeholders, including police officers. As a member of the executive of the Halton Regional Police Service Police Association noted, "It all depends on how you label it and how you market it. You have to tell your story. We hired a corporate communications person to market the idea of becoming a regional police service." This view was echoed by the President of the Halton Regional Police Association: "It is important to let everyone know what the rules are upfront."

Similarly, an officer with the Ottawa Police Service Officer's Association stated, "Do your homework twice over... Use focus groups to flesh out the issues. Have your association and department sit together on the committees. We had great communication with our members as amalgamation moved forward."

The Chief of Waterloo Regional Police Service identified the importance of communicating with patrol officers about all facets of the regionalization process: "The biggest issue for patrol officers was the unknown. 'Is it going to be better for us? For my career? Where am I going to end up?'"

7. There must be a strategic plan for adopting the new model of police service delivery in the GVR and transitioning from the current structure. This multi-faceted plan would include:

- A media and public education strategy;
- A political strategy;
- Provisions for recruitment and training;
- Provisions to ensure that a “best practices” police service is created, with the capacity for ensuring that resources are deployed as effectively and efficiently as possible. This includes leading edge analytical capacity for monitoring the performance of the police service and its officers as well as for analyzing crime trends, the effectiveness of patrol and investigative units, and of crime prevention efforts;
- The provision for “report-backs” to the regional police services board; and,
- Operational procedures to ensure that police officers are familiar with the communities they police and that there is ongoing communication and consultation with local residents and municipal councils.

A member of the Durham Regional Police Board observed, “The biggest obstacle to regionalization will be the lack of an explanation for doing regionalization. There is the need to have the facts at hand. Twenty-eight years in, people are still asking why they have regional government.” This Board member went on to stress that, “There is a need for communication and liaison; need to ensure that the public has information; there are two to three solid reasons for doing regionalization; there are police reasons and community reasons...there will be economies and efficiencies to be gained; attract world class people; it will not save money.”

A number of the respondents in Ontario, including police and regional government representatives, indicated that it was important that the regionalization of police services be implemented within a regional plan and that an incremental approach be taken. The Deputy Chief of Niagara Regional Police Service recalled, “There was no planning for amalgamation and no consideration of what form it would take. Policies still have a municipal flavour. There has not been significant buy-in to regionalization in terms of what form it would take; so, the focus remained local.”

A number of the respondents mentioned that “turf and egos” were two primary obstacles to regionalization (Deputy Chief of Niagara Regional Police Service). Similarly, the mayor of Milton, Ontario noted that “Egos were the toughest thing to deal with.”

8. There must be strong police leadership in the transition to the new model of police service delivery.

The front line people weren't the problem. It was the police leadership.
Chief, Waterloo Regional Police Service

A strong leadership base needs to occur before any regionalization initiatives will be successfully executed. There must be effective leadership not only at the municipal level, but also at the provincial and federal levels of government. (Graham, 1994:84). Strong leadership is also mandatory for a successful amalgamation, as members need someone to look to for guidance. Leaders need to match their skill with those needs of the local community. When there is a separation between these two areas, amalgamation might be a more difficult transition for members, than if they were looking towards a leader with the same ideals as theirs (O'Donoghue, 1999:10).

9. To ensure that the concerns and priorities of individual communities are acknowledged and addressed it is important to establish community consultation committees.

The success of any regionalization is to focus on the neighbourhood.
Chief, Waterloo Regional Police Service

10. One objective of creating a new model of policing with a regional focus should be to reduce the reliance on integrated teams and secondments. As the Chief of Waterloo Regional Police noted, “Joint forces need to be time-limited and project oriented.”

11. Ensuring effective police service delivery. There are mechanisms that can be put in place to ensure that regionalization does not result in a decline in the levels of service delivery across the region. In Ontario, for example, the Adequacy Standards set out a structure for police service delivery and performance benchmarks.

12. Effective governance structures must be put into place. A member of the Durham Regional Police Board advised that there must be a strong police board that should not give in to the political demands of the various mayors and municipal councils.

Options for Police Service Delivery in the GVR

It is important to remember that crime rates in the GVR are already very high. Property crime, in particular, continues to be significantly higher than in most other Canadian cities. Metro Vancouver is the bank robbery capital of Canada. In the next 30 years, the population in the region is going to continue to grow, potentially by another 800,000 people. The complexity of the crime problems the region faces will also continue to increase. Organized criminals will continue to become more sophisticated in their operations and consequently more challenging and costly to interdict. Better transportation systems in the GVR will facilitate the movement of property criminals between communities. Technology and internet based financial crimes will be an increasing issue for police with troublesome cross-region and border enforcement issues. The current trends in case law flowing from Charter decisions are also adding to the complexity and cost of police investigations. Finally, police staffing and recruitment is projected to be a significant challenge in the next decade given the projected shortfall of young people entering the job market.

Given these significant challenges, the question is what structure should the delivery of police services have to ensure policing is best positioned to respond to these crime issues and keep our communities safe? There are a number of potential options to consider, including the following:

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo

Retain the current arrangements for the delivery of policing services, utilizing a mix of municipal police departments and RCMP detachments. This would include continuing the practice of establishing integrated units as the need arises.

The advantage to this approach is that there is no threat to the policing styles being used in various communities. Each community is free to establish its own level of police resourcing. In communities with municipal departments, the mayor is the chair of the Police Board and Council sets the budget for policing.

This option is certainly workable, in that policing is functioning with some degree of success in the GVR and police agencies do strive to work together to be successful, although that can be a dynamic affected by the personalities of those involved in that it requires police leaders to adopt a cooperative approach. That there is a common radio system in the region and a common records management system in the Province are tremendous steps towards reducing operational barriers to policing across jurisdictions.

There are a number of potentially significant disadvantages to continuing on with the current mix of agencies. There will continue to be a lack of a strategic direction or “one brain” providing direction and focus to the problems we face and the obstacles to success. Responding both to long term issues and dynamically to an emerging crisis is far more difficult when the response requires building consensus and agreement (or not) on how to respond.

Maintaining the status quo will keep in place the significant funding inequities that exist due to the Federal Government policies around funding RCMP contracts. Inequities also exist due to the differences in communities that have different mixes of “bedroom” versus business and entertainment core compositions.

Specifically, the current situation does not favour the Vancouver Police Department. There are over 80 VPD members seconded to integrated teams primarily under RCMP control. The VPD polices a city that requires exceptional resources due to the level of visitors for business and entertainment, as well as political activism. The VPD must respond to the Downtown Eastside, which draws in homeless, mentally ill and addicted people from all over the region ,province, and from across the country. However, the City must fund the appropriate policing response from the taxpayer base within the City.

Option 2: Amalgamate and Regionalize Police Services in the GVR

Design and implement a regional police service or services. It might make sense to put in place two or three regional police services to best respond to the geography and current/projected community growth in Metro Vancouver. Under this model, no current police service would remain in place as is. This could be described as the “clean slate” approach to developing a policing model for the region.

Most of the advantages have been discussed above. Funding would be equalized between communities. This would address the problem of multiple agencies trying to respond to one regional problem in a number of ways that may not always be complementary. There would be “one brain”. It would require the development of both a governance model and an equitable funding formula. Once in place, it would position police to be the most successful in reducing crime and responding to staffing and resourcing issues to keep the region safe.

Many communities are understandably concerned that if they give up their local municipal department or RCMP detachment, they will lose control. How would they ensure they maintain current service levels or accountability to the community? How do they ensure that the police will maintain the close bond and connection to the community that is the basis of community policing? It would be essential to create a regional force that gives each community a “chief” who is accountable to that community and who controls the resources needed to respond to the community’s needs. The difference is that the chief, whose actual rank will depend on the size of the community, will report to a regional police service chief. This is similar to how communities with the RCMP function now; however, the accountability for that regional police chief will remain in the community answering to the board appointed by the community as a whole. Secondly, to ensure each community maintains the service

level it wants, each community would put in place a service agreement where it pays for the level of policing desired (as long as the base level is set and maintained at a safe level). Transfer policies within the regional service would ensure community continuity for police officers within communities.

There are two very significant challenges to moving towards complete regionalization. One is simply the current demographics. The majority of police officers in the entire region (i.e., the CMA) belong to the RCMP, although the majority of police officers in Greater Vancouver (i.e., Vancouver and the immediately adjacent police agencies) belong to independent municipal police departments. How would a new regional police service find the staffing it needs in the first instance? Implementation would have to address this issue and would likely require a staged approach.

Secondly, amalgamation would have to address issues of governance challenge. How would the large number of civic governments be able to work towards developing an agreeable model? The GVRD system of services or South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority (formerly known as Translink) are examples of where this has been successfully done to take advantage of economies of scale and the need for integrated service. It would likely require strong leadership from the Provincial Government, along with key assurances that community needs for both accountability and service levels would be addressed.

Option 3: A Regional Police Service and Local Police Services

A hybrid option must also be considered. Could local police services be maintained that provide the patrol or uniform police response to each community and then create a police service that has a separate chief that provides all other services utilizing an integrated approach? There are numerous ways this could be configured. The principle behind the idea is that it acknowledges the GVR's history of a patchwork of police services with their various traditions and connections to the communities they serve. They would continue doing that, but the regional police service would be able to respond to those issues which are best addressed on a regional basis. Responding to gang violence and financial and organized crime are regional issues. Surveillance teams to deal with crime issues and emergency response teams are highly specialized and need economies of scale to be affordable to smaller communities. The GVR currently uses a patchwork of Provincial policing management, joint management teams and various memorandums of understanding to manage the integrated units that currently exist. The GVR has not analyzed what requires a regional response and then put together one governance model, one funding system and accountability system to deal with the various issues where integration has gone ahead.

Such a system would present a number of significant issues, including whether the RCMP would wish to participate. Each community would have their own Chief and patrol service and possibly other units, such as traffic or community policing officers. Each community would be required by formula to second experienced officers and provide funding to the regional police service. Police officers would move in and out of the regional service going back to their community when it was their turn to police the streets in uniform. As above, a funding formula and governance would be essential for the regional service. One issue that could remain would be the need for the various police agencies that would continue to exist to work cooperatively together. Staffing and resourcing issues would most likely continue to be ongoing issues between the agencies and some degree of competition for staffing resources might continue between them. This system would likely be more complex to manage on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

The current policing structure in the GVR presents numerous challenges which are likely to intensify in the coming years. In addition to the difficulties associated with policing cross-jurisdictional criminals and offences, there are also inherent disparities in service levels, funding formulas, and specialized expertise. The GVR is the last major metropolitan area in Canada that does not have some type of regional police service.

The current situation also presents the provincial and municipal governments and police services in the GVR with a unique opportunity for the development of collaboration and creative solutions to the challenges that exist. There is a opportunity to incorporate lessons learned from other agencies across the country that have already gone through the process, as well as to fashion a distinctive “Made in the GVR” policing structure. As discussed in this document, there are serious questions as to whether the status quo is a viable option for ensuring that the GVR is policed in an effective and efficient manner. The extent to which the various options that have been set out will address the outstanding concerns remains to be determined and a more detailed analysis of all of the issues raised in this report are required.

Police officers across the GVR are committed to making their communities safe and to apprehending those who would cause harm. The challenge is to provide a structure within which police officers can carry out their tasks in the most effective and efficient manner possible. It is questionable as to whether the existing disparate policing structures can provide the level of service that residents of every municipality have come to expect. The smaller communities need to be aware of the consequences of ‘no call too small’ policing, and larger communities must recognize the inherent economic and logistic difficulty with balancing the pressure to provide patrol resources, while continuing to share expertise and specialized knowledge with smaller agencies.

It is important that any deliberations on altering the status quo for police service delivery in the GVR consider the unique needs of each community in the region and that communities have a voice in any new structure that is developed. The fact that there are numerous competing interests and stakeholders within the current structure of the GVR necessitates that any discussions of regionalizing police services will require the leadership and direction of the provincial government, along with the cooperation and willingness of municipal governments to participate. Providing the best possible policing service in the interests of public safety must be the overarching driver for future discussions.

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