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**August 24, 2008**

**Steven Chabot  
President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police**

## **Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) Committee Annual Report 2007/08**

### **Message/Executive Summary:**

The POLIS Committee has extensive representation from the largest police agencies across Canada as well as members from Public Safety Canada and Justice Canada. It is strongly supported by and enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and has a formal linkage to the national Justice Information Council (JIC) through representation on the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Liaison Officers Committee (LOC).

The POLIS Committee contributes value through the opportunity to develop, improve and deliver accurate statistical and analytical information to the Canadian public, police and government to better understand our environment with respect to offending, victimization and policing, and to thereby facilitate strategic decision making, policy development and resource allocation.

### **Meetings Held:\***

October 25-26, 2007, Ottawa - National UCR Data Quality Workshop (POLIS members attended the Workshop, which replaced the fall semi-annual meeting)

March 17-18, 2008, Toronto – semi-annual meeting

August 23, 2008, Montréal - in conjunction with the CACP Conference

\*The minutes of all meetings are available in English and French and are posted on the CACP website.

### **Committee Partners / Sponsors:**

The POLIS Committee would not be viable without the continuous support (logistical, administrative and financial) of CCJS's Policing Program, led by Mr. John Turner, as well as the many police agencies who contribute the time and resources for their members to participate. POLIS is further strengthened by the active membership and participation of senior representatives from Justice Canada and Public Safety Canada.

## **Committee Vision / Mission / Mandate/Objectives / Strategic Priorities**

**Vision:** Quality data for quality policing

**Mission:** POLIS supports progressive change in policing, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and other partners, through the development and communication of meaningful public safety information.

### **Mandate/Objectives:**

- Represent the police community in ensuring that emerging police issues, priorities and concerns are addressed by CCJS surveys and products;
- Facilitate the development of partnerships among governments and criminal justice agencies to further the integration of justice information systems;
- Collaborate with CCJS and police organizations in the development of standard police performance indicators;
- Promote improved police management and decision making by identifying, developing and communicating best practices in the collection, analysis and application of statistical information;
- Ensure that, in the development of new and ongoing surveys of crime and police resources, data can be provided by the police community in a standardized and cost-effective manner, minimizing respondent burden and costs;
- Promote innovation in information systems, collection techniques and other matters that improve the production and utility of police information;
- Review CCJS reports before public release to ensure that appropriate context surrounding issues and trends is included to explain differences in local and regional comparisons, as well as to explain changes in trends.

### **Strategic Priorities 2007 – 2009:**

- Enhancing the comparability of crime statistics by:
  - mitigating and understanding levels of unreported and under-counted crime;
  - continuing to examine UCR data quality and comparability issues;
  - implementing a new Crime Severity Index;
  - addressing the differences between police-reported data and victimization data;
  - enhancing communications between CCJS and police services in terms of concepts and standardization.
- Geo-coding
- High-tech Crime, including cyber crime and money laundering
- Sexual exploitation and the use of the Internet

## **Summary of Major Activities and Initiatives:**

### **1. National UCR Data Quality Workshop**

This major two-day Workshop was held in Ottawa in October 2007 and involved representatives from 34 different police services, major RMS vendors, as well as POLIS committee members and CCJS staff.

**Background:** It is a significant issue when CCJS releases crime and police personnel/expenditure data from different police agencies. These reports inevitably lead to cross-jurisdiction comparisons and can have serious impacts for individual agencies.

Contributing police agencies need to understand the importance of consistency not only within their own organization, but across the breadth of Canada, whether the subject matter is the number of reported incidents, clearance rates, or the cost of providing policing. A presentation at the March 2006 POLIS meeting highlighted some UCR data comparability issues among large police services for certain minor offences, including counterfeiting, bail violations, fail to appear and disturbing the peace.

POLIS members recommended that a Data Quality Working Group be struck to embark on a project over the next year to examine the “top 10” offences having the most comparability issues among the largest forces. This involved CCJS staff contacting police services directly and asking about local policies, guidelines and practices that might explain some of the differences in rates for these offences.

**Current Status:** The POLIS Working Group hosted a UCR Managers National Data Quality Workshop in Ottawa in October 2007 in place of the regular fall POLIS meeting. The workshop focused on issues of UCR data quality and comparability, which links with the key POLIS strategic issue of “enhancing the comparability of crime statistics and promoting accurate inter-jurisdictional comparisons.”

Some of the major topics that were discussed included:

- calls for service moving from CAD to RMS
- calls for service being classified as “no-report” occurrences to CCJS
- how to score CC/drug incidents being cleared as municipal by-laws
- distinguishing between various youth clearance options under the YCJA
- consistency of scoring “administration of justice” offences
- reporting of incidents involving multiple violations, one of which is a traffic violation

A series of recommendations were put forth, including the creation of a smaller ongoing Data Managers Working Group, to deal with emerging UCR data quality issues and information sharing. It was also recommended that the POLIS committee put together a strategic communication to CACP on the importance of collecting accurate crime statistics for all police services.

## 2. Development of a National Crime Severity Index

**Background:** In September 2004, POLIS examined the wide differences in the rates of relatively less-serious, high-volume offences for all of the police services represented on the committee. POLIS determined that it would address this issue over the next few years with an aim to develop "best practices" and communicate these to the entire CACP. POLIS also decided to explore with CCJS the potential development of a national "Crime Index" that would reduce the impact of high-volume offences (which are prone to non-reporting) on overall crime rates, providing a more meaningful portrayal of crime to Canadians.

In March 2005, POLIS received a presentation from Mr. John Turner on CCJS work on the possible development of a national "Crime Index." A number of different options were examined. In most of the options, the offences driving the "Crime Index" turned out to be the more serious ones, such as robbery, break-ins and motor vehicle theft. POLIS thought that pursuing this initiative would be worthwhile and undertook to form a Working Group, consisting of representatives from the police community, federal/provincial justice ministries, the academic community, CCJS and Statistics Canada methodologists, to refine the "Index". From 2005-2007, the Crime Index Working Group (which includes nine POLIS members), led by Mr. John Turner, held a number of tele-conference meetings to guide the development of the Index and work out all conceptual and methodological issues.

**Current Status:** The Working Group has resolved all of the significant methodological issues. POLIS is aware that any proposed national "Crime Severity Index" would have to have extensive support from the CACP in order to be successfully implemented. As such, the POLIS Chair and vice-Chair presented to the CACP Board of Directors in February 2008 to seek endorsement for the implementation of the new Index in 2009. The Board were in full support of this new measurement of crime.

Two presentations have also been given by CCJS to the Justice Information Council, comprised of all federal/provincial/territorial Deputy Ministers responsible for justice, one in January 2008 and one in June 2008. At the June meeting, Deputies recommended that a similar presentation on the Index be given at the next Justice Ministers meeting in September 2008.

The focus of the implementation of the Index is now shifting to communications. CCJS is planning to travel across the country in fall 2008 to present the Index to provincial Associations of Chiefs of Police. They will also correspond with all Chiefs of Police formally by mail in the fall as well.

In April 2009, a Working Paper will be released informing the media and public about the new Crime Severity Index and how it compares to the historical crime rate. The Index will then become part of the annual crime statistics release, beginning the summer of 2009.

### **3. Aboriginal identity UCR2 data collection – Pilot Study in Saskatchewan**

**Background:** At its fall 2001 meeting, the POLIS Committee passed a motion to recommend to the federal/provincial/territorial justice Liaison Officers Committee (LOC) the discontinuation of the Aboriginal data variable from the UCR2 survey. This recommendation was made due to inconsistent applications and varied usage by police jurisdictions across Canada, resulting in problems with accuracy, completeness and comparability. Areas of particular concern were the use of visual identification as a method to identify an Aboriginal person, as well as the practical constraints faced by front-line officers asking race-based questions of the victim and/or offender during the course of an arrest or investigation. Another critical concern was whether jurisdictional privacy or freedom of information legislation placed any restrictions on the collection of race-based statistics.

Following the POLIS motion, the LOC (the POLIS Chair sits on this committee) established a Working Group on Aboriginal Data Needs. Consultations conducted with jurisdictions in 2003 indicated that the collection of Aboriginal/race data or the transmission of these data to Statistics Canada is not explicitly prohibited by federal/provincial/territorial privacy or freedom of information legislation. As well, on definitional issues, the Working Group recommended that “self-identification” be the preferred method for collecting data on Aboriginal persons in the justice system, and that, in recognition of the problems faced by police in collecting Aboriginal data, visual identification is also considered to be acceptable where self-identification is not practical.

POLIS is of the view that the decision for police to collect aboriginal identifying information must be made by government, and direction from government is needed to enable police to collect it. Additionally, the POLIS committee has recommended that determining the support of Aboriginal people for police collection of these data is an important step that should precede any governmental direction in this regard.

As such, at the March 2004 committee meeting, POLIS requested that the Deputy Ministers responsible for justice (Justice Information Council - JIC) formally endorse the importance of police collecting quality information on the involvement of Aboriginals in crime, as well as to consider undertaking consultations with Aboriginal organizations.

In June 2005, the JIC provided a clear affirmation of their support for the collection of Aboriginal identity data by police and approved a plan to address concerns regarding police-reported data collection on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis, beginning with a “pilot” project in Saskatchewan. This project will include consultations with Aboriginal groups in Saskatchewan as well as all police services in the province to arrive at a best-practices document.

**Current Status:** The required funding for this “pilot” study has now been secured from Justice Canada and a consultant was hired in February 2008. All consultations and a final report with recommendations are to be completed by March 2009.

#### **4. Enhancing Communications between CCJS and Police Services**

**Current status:** In terms of the understanding of UCR concepts and standardization among all police services, a number of initiatives have taken place or are underway. The national Data Managers UCR Data Quality Workshop in October 2007 represented a significant achievement in bringing together CCJS staff and records managers from across the country to identify and address major data quality issues and concerns.

Among the many Workshop recommendations were those to create an ongoing Data Managers Working Group to deal with emerging UCR data quality issues and information sharing, for CCJS to work closely with police services to provide multi-level training which would target different groups within the service requiring more specific information; and, for CCJS to continue their regional training workshops, which bring together key UCR personnel from a number of police services in a geographic area.

CCJS is also investigating the possibility of using their secure Extranet site, available to all police services, to offer on-line training modules as well as enhanced information on data concepts, definitions and scoring rules.

#### **5. Mental Health Study**

**Background:** At the fall 2006 meeting, POLIS strongly recommended that CCJS undertake a special study on mental illness and its impact on police and the entire justice system. This study was later approved and CCJS staff consulted with POLIS members on a variety of issues for this study at the March 2007 committee meeting. The following issues were raised as major concerns for the police:

- Need for a clear definition of “mental illness” before any meaningful statistics can be gathered
- Chronic mentally ill, homeless and drug addicted offenders in downtown areas of major cities
- Wait times for police in dealing with mentally ill offenders
- That police are now responsible for transporting mentally ill offenders to hospital in certain communities instead of by ambulance
- How to de-classify someone who has been labelled as “mentally ill” – these classifications can have a long-term effect on individuals for things like “background checks” – related is the issue of records retention
- More mentally ill persons are being released from institutions and police are often left to deal with them – no follow-up on mentally ill persons released
- Community sentencing without sufficient resources to supervise

**Current status:** A feasibility study on collecting data on mentally ill offenders in the justice system is scheduled to be completed by CCJS by December 2008. This report will make recommendations on how to collect this information in all justice sectors.

## **6. Fraud Study to address under-reporting**

**Background:** POLIS has worked for some time to address the problem of accurately capturing fraud data and analyzing trends. POLIS has been working with the **CACP Private Sector Liaison Committee** as well as other stakeholders to improve reporting in this area. In September 2004, POLIS recommended changes to the fraud variable to be incorporated in the next major update of the UCR2 survey. Aware that the UCR police-reported survey vastly undercounts the real number of frauds occurring in Canada, CCJS initiated studies to directly measure both business and consumer fraud.

### ***Current Status:***

**Business fraud** – A business fraud survey was developed, tested and distributed by CCJS to about 7,000 businesses in March 2008, asking them to provide information on the number of fraud incidents experienced over the previous 12 months by type, method, dollar loss, whether the incident was reported to police, and any prevention and detection measures employed since. A report is expected to be released in 2009.

**Consumer fraud** – CCJS conducted consultations with various organizations in fall 2007 to identify consumer fraud information needs and develop relevant research questions. Following this, a draft questionnaire was developed and focus group testing was done in February 2008. A report will be prepared with recommendations for survey content, sample size and costing for a national consumer fraud survey. CCJS currently awaits funding for this survey to be implemented.

## **7. Geo-coding reports**

POLIS has encouraged the analysis of UCR data at the neighbourhood level. In 2007-08, CCJS released geo-coding reports for the following cities: Thunder Bay, Halifax, Edmonton, Montréal and Saskatoon. Each report had a particular focus to the analysis.

## **8. CCJS Products for 2008-09**

Each fall, CCJS begins its planning process for products to be done in the next fiscal year and POLIS members are asked to put forward any suggestions they may have for topics. Policing-related topics that are scheduled for release in 2008-09 include:

- annual reports on crime, homicide and police personnel and expenditures
- youth crime
- hate-motivated crime
- sexual assault
- sex crimes and the Internet
- motor vehicle theft
- trends in drug crimes
- trends in forcible confinement and kidnapping
- police and private security



## Activities / Meetings Planned for 2008/09:

September 15-16, 2008, St. John's, Newfoundland – semi-annual meeting  
Feb/March 2009, (date and location to be determined) – semi-annual meeting  
August 2009 – CACP conference

### **POLIS Committee Members**

As of July 2008

<u>Last name</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Beaulne	Mario	Sup't	RCMP
Bell	Robert	Major	Military Police
Blair	Bill	Chief	Toronto Police
Bourassa	Rick	Inspector	Regina Police
Fugère	Paul	M.	Sûreté du Québec
Gehl	Darlene	Ms.	Victoria Police
Jolliffe	Eric	Deputy Chief	York Regional Police
Latimer	Jeff	Mr.	Justice Canada
Laverty	Sue	Sup't	Ontario Provincial Police
Lefaive	Pamela	Ms.	Public Safety Canada
MacKay	Ken	Sup't	Edmonton Police
Malone	Brian	Mr.	Saint John Police
Moore	Bill	Sup't	Halifax Regional Police
O'Connor	Brian	Inspector	Toronto Police
O'Sullivan*	Sue	Deputy Chief	Ottawa Police
Perry	Debi	Ms.	Calgary Police
Richard	Guy	M.	Montréal Police
Schnitzer	Steve	Sup't	Vancouver Police
Scott	Corrine	Sup't	Winnipeg Police
Singleton	Ab	Inspector	St. John's, RNC
Smith	Gary	Chief	Windsor Police
Torigian	Matt	Deputy Chief	Waterloo Regional Police
Turner**	John	Mr.	CCJS

\* Chair

\*\* vice-Chair

