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August 2009

Steven Chabot

President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

**Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) Committee
Annual Report 2008/09**

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) of Statistics Canada. As well, it has a formal linkage to Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Deputy Ministers responsible for justice through the Justice Information Council (JIC), and through representation on the operational arm of JIC, the FPT Liaison Officers Committee.

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.

Over the past year, the POLIS committee was instrumental in working with Statistics Canada to ensure that all Chiefs were properly informed of the release of the new Crime Severity Index in April 2009. As well, POLIS was also involved in an evaluation of organized crime data collection options, a study on firearms admitted to police custody, the collection of Aboriginal identity data by police, and the definition of police personnel counts.

Meetings Held:*

Sept. 15 & 16, 2009, St. John's – semi-annual meeting

Feb. 25 & 26, 2009, Ottawa – semi-annual meeting

August 8, 2009, Charlottetown - 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. Creation 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 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 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 develop the "Index". From 2005-2007, the Crime Index Working Group (which included nine POLIS members) held a number of tele-conference meetings to guide the development of the Index and work out all conceptual and methodological issues.

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. The Board were in full support of this new measurement of crime.

Current status: By fall 2008, all development of the Index was complete and the focus turned to communications with the police community as well as federal and provincial justice ministries. CCJS staff traveled across the country and presented on the new Crime Index to all Provincial Associations of Chiefs of Police.

In addition, POLIS worked very closely with CCJS to help develop communications tools for Chiefs. In March 2009, each police service received a package containing their own Crime Severity Index numbers as well as Q's & A's on the Index. In April 2009, Statistics Canada released a report introducing the new Index, based on 2007 crime statistics. The release was well-received by both the police community and the media. Beginning July 2009, with the release of 2008 crime data, the Index will now be integrated into the annual crime statistics release along with the traditional "crime rate.

Canada is leading the way internationally in the measurement of police-reported crime statistics with the implementation of this new tool. There is a great deal of interest in other countries in this model of "weighting" offences according to their seriousness as determined by actual court sentences.

2. 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 FPT 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 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 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. Funding for this “pilot” study was secured from Justice Canada in 2007-08 and a contractor was hired in February 2008 to consult with Aboriginal groups in Saskatchewan to determine their support for the collection of these data by police, and to consult with police to determine best-practices in the collection of this information

Current status: The contractor has now completed his report with recommendations as to how to proceed. Discussions are continuing in the province about the RCMP’s participation in the collection of this information.

3. Organized crime data collection:

Background: The issue of how to collect data from police on crimes committed by organized crime groups in their jurisdiction was discussed in detail a number of years ago by the POLIS committee. Due to a perceived respondent burden, it was recommended by POLIS not to send surveys directly to Intelligence Units, but instead, add this field to a new version of the UCR2 survey (version 2.2). It was acknowledged at the time that there would be challenges in going this route.

The UCR2.2 survey was implemented in the field with a limited number of police services in 2005 and the first data on organized crime were released to the public in 2007. There were only 2 police services reporting data that first year, with one of them refusing to sign-off its organized crime numbers for release.

Current Status: At the February 2009 POLIS committee meeting, the 2006 and preliminary 2007 organized crime numbers were discussed. Members felt strongly that the figures coming through the UCR survey on organized crime represented a serious under-count of the volume of organized crime activity taking place in Canada.

As such, the committee recommended that no new data (2007) on organized crime be released publicly for a one-year period while the committee has an opportunity to further examine this issue. A POLIS sub-committee has been created, headed by the representative from the RCMP, to liaise with major police services over the next year to:

- identify the causes of the severe under-reporting of the organized crime variable in the UCR2 survey;
- identify potential solutions or best practices designed to improve reporting;
- ascertain and address concerns that police agencies may have in relation to collecting/reporting these data (e.g. issues of security or maintaining the integrity of their investigations); and,
- identify other, potentially more relevant and reliable, sources and indicators of the impact of organized crime in Canada.

It was also mentioned that, if funding could be found, a Workshop on collecting organized crime data would be very worthwhile to be held at some point during the next year. The sub-committee will report back to POLIS at the February 2010 meeting, whereby a recommendation will be made to continue collecting through the UCR survey or to find an alternative source of data.

As well, a preliminary meeting has been scheduled for late June 2009 with representatives from CCJS, POLIS, CISC and the CACP Organized Crime Committee to begin examining other potential data sources for the collection of meaningful data on organized criminal activity in Canada.

4. Firearms admitted into police custody

Current status: POLIS is assisting Justice Canada in a research study on “the origins of firearms admitted into law enforcement custody”. One of the goals of this study is to try and verify the claim that the majority of guns used in crimes in Canada originate from the U.S. The research will also assist in addressing other issues including: characteristics about firearms coming to the attention of police; circumstances under which they came into police custody; and, traceability elements.

The study is supported by the Canadian Firearms Program (CFP) and will assist in establishing some benchmark figures on firearms in the custody of law enforcement and in making future enhancements and modifications to their national database. A data collection tool is currently being developed and data collection is expected to begin in the early summer months. A major portion of the September 2009 POLIS committee meeting will be devoted a discussion on the collection and analysis of information in this area.

5. Definition of police personnel counts

Background: Each year CCJS collects data from police services on police personnel and expenditures. These data are then released in the annual Police Resources in Canada Report in late fall. This report is used extensively by both police services and police boards/city councils, particularly in budget discussions.

Two measures of police personnel data are collected: (i) “actual” point-in-time (May 15) counts by rank, gender and major function for both police and civilians; and, (ii) an “authorized” total police officer count.

As per the recommendation of POLIS a number of years ago, the annual report has historically focused on trends and police service comparisons using the “actual” counts. However, some police services feel quite strongly that the focus should be on “authorized” police strength instead. There has been a long-standing debate as to which is a more meaningful and comparable indicator.

Current status: In response to these concerns being raised, CCJS incorporated the “authorized” strength into the standard publications tables in last year’s report, in addition to the standard “actual” counts. Further, the committee voiced its support for the focus of the analysis of police personnel data to continue to be based on using “actual” counts. It was also recommended that the committee put forward a formal endorsement of this approach to CACP that CCJS could use when questioned by police services about the rationale being used.

6. CCJS budget

Background: The CCJS is currently experiencing a budget shortfall which could, if not resolved, result in the elimination of various surveys, products or projects in the coming year, including possibly the above-mentioned Police Administration survey and annual report. To address this situation, a strategic review of CCJS has been undertaken by its partners (including POLIS) to determine the level of commitment by its partners; the short, medium, and longer-term priorities of a core justice statistical program; and, the appropriate level of resources for the core statistical program.

Current status: As a partner to the work of CCJS, POLIS provided the following input into the strategic review:

- the importance of the policing-related CCJS surveys to the police community
- that the Police Administration survey, in particular, is relatively low cost, but critical for police to do their business effectively, especially in a time of “evidence-based” decision making
- that crime statistics actually determine to some degree how police deploy resources - a loss of data equals a loss of the ability to reduce crime
- that in every meeting with city council, key ratios such as population/officer, per capita costs, crime rate and clearance rates are utilized in comparison with other municipal police services

Based on feedback from all of its partners, a Business Plan is currently being developed to go to Treasury Board which will provide various funding options for increasing the budget of CCJS to be able to meet the information requirements of the entire justice community.

7. Enhancing Communications between CCJS and Police Services

Background: 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, initiated by POLIS, represented a significant achievement in bringing together CCJS staff and records managers from across the country to 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; and, for CCJS to continue their regional training workshops.

Current status: The first UCR Data Managers Working Group tele-conference call was held in December 2008. CCJS is also investigating the possibility of using their secure Extranet site, available to all police services, to offer on-line training modules, create a UCR scoring web-forum, as well as provide enhanced information on data concepts, definitions and scoring rules.

8. CCJS Products for 2009-10

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 2009-10 include:

- annual reports on crime, homicide, police personnel and expenditures and hate-motivated crime
- trends in assaults against police officers as well as level 2 and 3 assaults
- trends in, and characteristics of, robbery incidents
- trends in the use of knives in violent crimes

Activities / Meetings Planned for 2009/10:

September 21 & 22, 2009, Calgary – semi-annual meeting

Feb/March 2010, Ottawa – semi-annual meeting

August 2010 – CACP conference

POLIS committee members as of June 2009:

Beaulne	Mario	Sup't	RCMP
Bourassa	Rick	Inspector	Regina Police
Fugère	Paul	M.	Sûreté du Québec
Gehl	Darlene	Ms.	Victoria Police
Jolliffe	Eric	Deputy Chief	York Regional Police
Kelly	Roger	Staff Sgt.	Ontario Provincial Police
Kijewski	Kristine	Director	Toronto Police
Latimer	Jeff	Mr.	Justice Canada
MacDonald	Brad	Inspector	Edmonton Police
Malone	Brian	Mr.	Saint John Police
Moore	Bill	Sup't	Halifax Regional Police
Mugford	Julie	Ms.	Public Safety Canada
O'Sullivan*	Sue	Deputy Chief	Ottawa Police
Perry	Debi	Ms.	Calgary Police
Petit	Eric	Sup't	Vancouver Police
Plunkett	Rodney	Major	Military Police
Richard	Guy	M.	Montréal Police
Scott	Corrine	Sup't	Winnipeg Police
Singleton	Ab	Inspector	St. John's, RNC
Smith	Gary	Chief	Windsor Police
Torigian	Matt	Chief	Waterloo Regional Police
Turner**	John	Mr.	Statistics Canada

* Chair

** Vice-Chair