

Civilian Governance and Social Responsibility:
Safety, Community, and Sustainability
CONFERENCE REPORT 2008



Canadian Association of Police Boards
Toronto, Ontario
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Official Opening and Call to Order

CONFERENCE MODERATOR

Andrew Graham
Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies
Queen's University

OPENING SPEAKERS

Rick Bartolucci
Minister of Community Safety and Correctional
Services
Ontario

William Blair
Chief of Police
Toronto Police Service

Greg Dionne
President
Canadian Association of Police Boards

Hamlin Grange
President and Co-founder
DiversiPro

Pam McConnell
City Councillor
On Behalf of Toronto Mayor Miller

Dave MacKenzie, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice

Alok Mukherjee
Chair
Toronto Police Services Board

Greg Dionne welcomed the participants on behalf of the Canadian Association of Police Boards (CAPB) and said he looked forward to a great conference. Dave MacKenzie said the federal government fully supports the work of the police force and is committed to enhancing police services by providing officers with the tools they need. Cooperation among the boards is important for keeping Canadians safe, and the Government of Canada appreciates the work that police officers do every day.

Rick Bartolucci said the police board is an integral and equal partner in fostering a safer, stronger Ontario. One example of the successful partnership between the police services boards, the Association of Police Chiefs, and the provincial government is the Reduced Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) program. During this conference, 170 Members of Provincial Parliament would announce increased funding to the RIDE program in their jurisdictions, Bartolucci said.

Speaking on behalf of Mayor Miller and the City Council, Pam McConnell welcomed the participants to Toronto "a city that is really about the people who live here." Toronto is considered

one of Canada's greenest and most creative cities, with both challenges and opportunities for local government and policing, she said. Although Toronto is a large city, it is composed of small towns and neighbourhoods, where public safety is not just a matter of enforcing the law or reducing crime, but also investing in people. The city hopes to share with conference participants a joint approach to public safety, involving education, social services, government, and policing. The environment and climate change are important and serious issues for Toronto, and it has looked at several initiatives for reducing emissions. McConnell said, "It's all about doing the right thing, and you're here because of your commitment to doing the right thing."

William Blair said the CAPB conference is an important component in maintaining community safety and public trust in policing services in Canada. "I urge you to take full advantage of what we have to offer and give us an opportunity to learn from you," Blair said. "We all do the same job, regardless of our size: we police neighbourhoods and we keep people safe."

Alok Mukherjee said the Toronto Police Services Board hosted the first CAPB conference and was pleased to host it again, as the CAPB completes almost two decades in operation.

Hamlin Grange introduced Andrew Graham, the conference moderator, who has completed various studies on strategic planning, modern police governance, and integrated police management.

Graham called the conference themes of civil governance and social responsibility “very ambitious,” and commended the organizers for

reflecting on them. Twenty years ago, the police services and boards said nothing was working; today, they still have issues and challenges, but major changes have taken place in the way policing works.

“We have some interesting challenges going into the future, but they shouldn’t be seen as full of danger, because they’re also full of possibilities,” Graham said.

Opening Plenary: “CIVILIAN POLICE GOVERNANCE: Facing a Changing Urban Landscape”

MODERATOR

Andrew Graham
Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies
Queen’s University

SPEAKER

Glen Murray
Former Mayor of Winnipeg
CEO & President, Canadian Urban Institute

Andrew Graham introduced Glen Murray, who said a friend of his, Richard Florida, describes the economy’s shift away from manufacturing towards innovation, design, culture, arts, and science. In this new economy, Murray said, communities play a very important role in attracting and maintaining a talented workforce. Communities that celebrate the diversity of humanity—especially in Canada, where half the citizens in major cities are foreign born—will thrive best.

Murray said when he was younger, he always thought of the police and fire services as the “good guys” in uniform. But as a gay teenager, his view of the police changed—in those days, he said, the police were notorious for raiding bars and beating up members of the gay community. Murray said

police officers victimized members of the gay community as often as they helped them.

When he was on City Council, many of Murray’s colleagues still believed the police were the “good guys”; he said he was amazed at the number of gays and lesbians who applied to the police force and were never hired. “Having said that, I am not a police basher,” he said. Being a police officer is the highest level of citizenship, because of the risks involved. “Although most of us aren’t asked to put our lives in danger, we still have the obligation to express our citizenship by doing things to contribute to a higher quality of life.”

Today, mass consumerism is rampant, and society has “some of the most selfish notions of human character,” Murray said. “While we lose our sense of citizenship to become consumers, we hand over the responsibility of keeping our neighbourhoods safe to the police.”

Many think the gross domestic product (GDP) is an important indicator of a healthy community and country. However, crime, violence, and disasters actually lead to greater spending, Murray said. For example, Manitoba’s biggest economic boom happened during the year of the Red River flood.

If Canada is to rise to the challenge of a shifting economy, communities must be made safe long before people settle into them. Safety is essential for attracting people, and people are what make a community or city generate revenue. He said the fastest-growing cities have features not found anywhere else; they have distinct, authentic value.

Not being able to walk to places within a community is also an obstacle and creates health and environmental problems. “If you are using a litre of gas to get a litre of milk, you have a problem,” Murray said.

Part of the challenge is that traditional policing has been highly responsive, rather than focusing on preventing criminal activity. Murray said older police officers have also indicated to him that they had to be disconnected from and neutral regarding their communities, because they believed any close relationships would prevent them from intervening effectively.

Three steps lead to crime reduction: diagnosing the problems; fostering closer relationships to facilitate crime reduction; and self-defence. Murray said when he was a city councillor in Winnipeg, a young police officer’s new approach created a great deal of controversy.

The officer brought in other players in the community, such as the zoning supervisor and health authorities, and told citizens the police would help them crime-proof their neighbourhood. The young officer started asking people about their neighbourhoods and learned that neighbourhood safety is closely linked to perception and appearances. Issues like broken windows, criminals controlling public spaces, and disorderly behaviour are all signals that nobody cares about an area.

Out of this officer’s efforts arose housing, community, and sports initiatives, Murray said. Crime rates dropped and housing values went up, restoring wealth in the community. In this situation, rather than being a response, policing became a foundation.

Murray said many First Nations people moved to Winnipeg because their communities lacked a viable economy, and the mass migration of people changed the complexion of that city. Kids were involved in running drugs because it paid well and, as they came from failed communities, that kind of membership and status created “a powerful economy,” Murray said. Policing alone could not solve this problem, because housing and other aspects of the community played such an integral role.

Murray said he remembers hearing on the radio that two women in a Métis community were murdered after calling the police five times. “We have background racism in our society and we systematically treat people differently based on who they are,” he said. “We really have to start confronting how we treat each other.”

The City of Winnipeg made an agreement with the province to build apartments with five or six bedrooms to accommodate large families, and also created culture-based community centres. People are attached to places, Murray said. “We have to start looking at policing as a way to make places safer.”

Murray said issues related to an aging population must also be addressed. “We have to think about what our legacy is,” he said. “How do we create active, healthy, safe communities? How do we, the generation that has received the greatest inheritance, leave something even greater behind?”

Discussion

A participant said the federal government has given his city funding to improve the community, but the funding is only for a few years, while it takes close to 10 years to make any significant changes. He asked Murray how to ensure that communities that are not priority neighbourhoods do not feel left out. Murray said neighbourhoods exist that do not have any crime, and “the idea is not to treat all areas the same.”

THANKS SO MUCH TO THE TORONTO POLICE SERVICES BOARD STAFF, ALL THE
VOLUNTEERS; AND WE OWE A VERY SPECIAL DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO
SERGEANT TODD HILLHOUSE FOR GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.