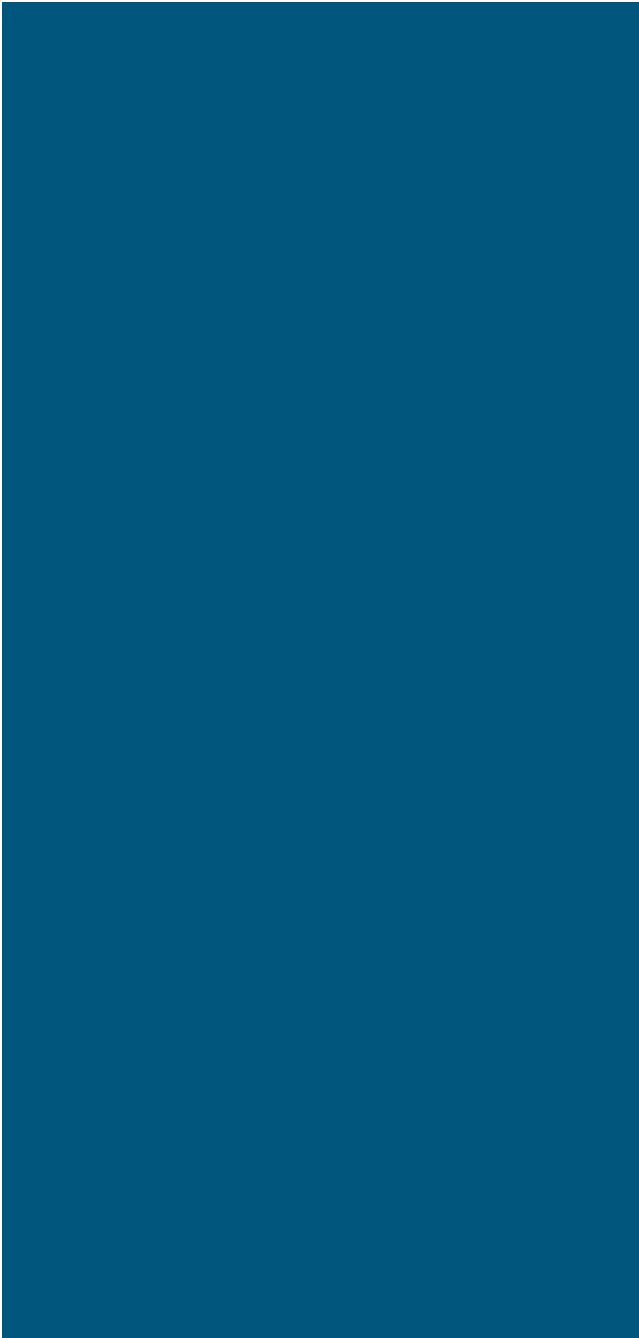


Policing Insight Statement Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Policing Insight Statement Report presents findings from the Inspectorate of Policing's (IoP's) first province-wide survey of municipal police services and police service boards administered in 2024.

The responses provide a clear picture of current practices and areas for improvement across Ontario's policing landscape. This report highlights common themes, strengths, and opportunities to enhance service delivery and governance.

The survey found that police services and police service boards are facing growing operational, financial, and governance pressures. Key challenges include meeting demands that are growing in volume and complexity with limited staffing and funding, transitioning to the requirements of the new Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA), and meeting public expectations on important aspects of police service delivery including response times.

While these challenges are significant and exist across the province, there were also many reported initiatives that address these challenges in impactful and innovative ways.

Together these findings help inform the IoP's priorities and guide its work to address key sector challenges, advance leading practices, and support improved performance in community safety.



2024 Policing Insight Statement

Survey Objectives

In 2024, the IoP administered a survey to Ontario’s policing sector that allows chiefs of police and police service boards to provide information on leading practices and emerging issues impacting policing in their communities.

This survey provides a unique opportunity to gain information and perspectives from those directly engaged in delivering and governing local policing services. The results of the Policing Insight Statement provides the IoP with valuable insights into the realities, gaps, and challenges facing Ontario policing. These findings help inform the IoP’s priorities and guide its work to address key sector challenges, advance leading practices, and support improved performance in community safety.

Survey Details	
Participation Criteria	43 municipal police services 43 police service boards
Response Rate	40 municipal police services (93%) 38 police service boards (88%)

Police services and boards were asked open-ended questions that explored the following insight areas of focus:



Adequate & Effective Policing

Identify methods used to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of police service delivery and governance, in accordance with the requirements of O. Reg. 392/23: Adequate and Effective Policing (General), a regulation made under the CSPA.



Police Response Times

Identify trends, processes and challenges related to response times and how this information informs decision-making.



Internal & External Challenges

Identify the unique and common issues currently being experienced by the sector from their local perspectives.



Impactful Initiatives

Identify and highlight impactful initiatives from police services and boards between 2022-2024.

INSIGHT AREA

Adequate & Effective Policing

Police services and boards were asked for descriptions of the information and approaches used to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of police service delivery and governance, in accordance with the requirements of O. Reg. 392/23: Adequate and Effective Policing (General), a regulation made under the CSPA. This regulation creates legal obligations for the delivery and governance of police services and boards, grounded in the principle that communities should receive high-quality services that are responsive and accountable.

Responses revealed a range of approaches used by police service boards to evaluate performance, from community engagement and data analytics to strategic planning and policy review (Table 1). Taken together, these methods reflect a commitment to supporting public safety, fostering trust, and meeting both legislative standards and community expectations.

OUR KEY INSIGHTS

The IoP’s analysis revealed some variation in the approaches, rigour and sophistication of the evaluative approaches and processes employed by police services and boards, highlighting an opportunity for further work when it comes to how policing and police governance performance is measured and assessed.

Table 1. Approaches Used by Police Services and Boards to Assess Adequate and Effective Policing

	Community Engagement & Feedback	Builds relationships to identify concerns and support service delivery.
	Reports & Data Analytics	Measures and monitors various key performance indicators (KPIs) and effectiveness of initiatives and programs.
	Board Reviews	Ensures adequacy through review of reports and timely communications.
	Partnerships with Local Organizations	Supports public safety through collaboration with community partners.
	Strategic Plans	Enhances transparency and reports on progress of objectives, KPIs, and targets.
	Review of Internal Processes & Policies	Ensures compliance and accountability and identifies areas of improvement.

INSIGHT AREA

Internal & External Challenges

Police services and boards were asked to identify the most challenging internal (occurring within the organization) and external (occurring outside the organization) issues that they were experiencing and which impacted policing and its governance. Identifying these issues raises awareness of common and unique challenges faced by the policing sector across Ontario. These insights also support the IoP’s planning, prioritization, research, and investigation of key sector issues that enables the identification of leading practices to promote continuous improvement.

A thematic analysis of responses revealed the top five internal and external challenges identified by police services and police service boards. While these challenges were described in detail in the Inspector General’s 2024 and 2025 Annual Report State of Policing sections, Table 2 provides a more detailed breakdown of how issues were ranked and categorized among survey respondents. Figure 1 on page 6 visualizes the intersecting challenges reported by police services and boards, as well as unique concerns.

Table 2. Top Five Internal and External Challenges Reported by Municipal Police Services and Boards

	Top 5 Internal Challenges	Top 5 External Challenges
 Services	1. Staffing, Recruitment & Retention (83%)	1. Calls Related to Mental Health, Addiction & Homelessness (65%)
	2. Short & Long-Term Sickness Absences (50%)	2. Community Partnerships with Health & Social Services (35%)
	3. Financial & Budgetary Constraints (38%)	3. Funding & Financial Models (35%)
	4. Officer Mental Health & Wellness (35%)	4. Resource Constraints & Increasing Cost of Policing (33%)
	5. Increased Workload & Operational Demands (35%)	5. Court Backlog & Workload, Need for Bail Reform (30%)
 Boards	1. Financial & Budgetary Constraints (55%)	1. Calls Related to Mental Health, Addiction & Homelessness (61%)
	2. CSPA Transition (47%)	2. Public Expectations (47%)
	3. Board Member Turnover & Satisfaction (42%)	3. Policing Costs (39%)
	4. Staffing of Service & Board (32%)	4. Increased Demand & Resource Constraints (32%)
	5. Board Member Training & Development (26%)	5. Community Partnerships with Health & Social Services (29%)

Municipal Police Services

Internal Challenges: Staffing, recruitment and retention emerged as the top internal challenge, identified by 83% of police services (33). Services most often attributed this challenge to a limited pool of qualified applicants and to difficulties retaining personnel who leave for other police organizations offering more competitive salaries, benefits, or locations.

Recruitment and retention were also linked to other related internal staffing challenges, including the significant impact of short- and long-term absences, identified by half of all responding police services, and a decline in officer mental health and wellness identified by 35% of police services (14).

These absences, along with growing operational demands and calls for service, have significantly increased officer workload, which was also noted as a challenge by 35% of police services (14).

Financial and budgetary constraints were also identified as a key internal challenge by 38% of police services (15). Respondents reported that limited funding has created downstream pressures, including difficulty maintaining aging infrastructure and modernizing facilities to support operational needs such as communications systems, digital evidence management, and equipment upgrades.

OUR KEY INSIGHTS

By identifying the sector's top internal and external challenges, the IoP can better focus its advisory and oversight activities, set strategic research priorities, and choose impactful themes for future inspections.

External Challenges: A majority of responding police services—65% (26)—reported that calls involving persons experiencing mental health crises, addictions, opioid use, homelessness, and encampments pose their most urgent external challenge. When combined with internal staffing difficulties, these calls have intensified resource pressures and contributed to rising policing costs, a concern noted by 33% of municipal police services (13).

Thirty-five percent of police services (14) identified significant challenges related to sustainable funding, particularly related to provincial grants for alternative response units and more generally managing budget requirements. These challenges were reported by police services with under 350 members.

Although police services continue to make efforts to enhance alternative service options for treating vulnerable populations, police are still often the default response to persons experiencing complex health and social issues. As a result, 35% of police services (14) identified an urgent need for increased support from and collaboration with other social, health and community-related services. Respondents also emphasized that cross-sector collaboration would help to alleviate the burden often disproportionately placed on police to respond to “non-core” policing functions.

Nearly a third of responding police services (30%, 12) identified various aspects of the judicial system as a challenge. Specifically, they stressed the need for reform to the current bail system to address high numbers of repeat offenders, and improvements in the digital evidence management process to alleviate case backlogs.

Municipal Police Service Boards

Internal Challenges: Police service boards identified a range of internal challenges affecting their capacity to provide effective governance and oversight. Financial and budgetary constraints were identified by 55% of police service boards (21) as the most significant internal challenge, which have made it increasingly difficult to maintain current service levels with existing resources.

Nearly half of responding boards (47%, 18) identified transitioning to the CSPA, including the need to update policies, as the second most pressing challenge. Respondents noted that the transition has increased costs to meet legislative and operational requirements, including hiring new staff.

Challenges related to board membership, such as turnover, compensation, and member satisfaction, were the third most frequently cited internal issue by 42% police service boards (16), as well as challenges associated with board member training and professional development cited by 26% of boards (10). Additional challenges included inadequate staffing within both the service and the board, including a lack of professional support staff, as identified by 32% of boards (12).

Figure 1. Common and Distinct Internal and External Challenges Reported by Municipal Police Services and Police Service Boards





External Challenges: Similar to police services, more than half of responding police service boards (61%, 23) identified a significant increase in calls related to mental health, addictions, and homelessness as the most urgent external challenge. As a result, 47% of municipal police service boards (18) also reported an increase in public expectations regarding the respective police service's ability to respond effectively to these situations as a significant external challenge, along with 39% of boards (15) reporting increasing costs of policing to respond and investigate these types of complex calls.

Managing and responding to rising calls for service, particularly those involving persons in crisis, was identified by 32% of boards (12) as placing increased operational demands and resource pressures on both the service and board. Also consistent with police services, 29% of police service boards (11) indicated a need for stronger community partnerships with social and health service providers to support responding to “non-core” policing functions.

What We Heard:

There is a lack of understanding from the public on police service board roles and responsibilities.

INSIGHT AREA

Police Response Times

Police services, police service boards, and communities across the province have increasingly identified emergency response times as a critical issue and a key measure of police performance. The importance of this issue is also reflected in complaints submitted to the IoP related to the delivery of adequate and effective policing.

In response, and consistent with our mandate to address pressing sector-wide challenges, the IoP is conducting detailed research on police response time practices across Ontario. This area of the Policing Insight Statement survey focused on trends and challenges affecting response times in policing jurisdictions across Ontario, including issues concerning standards, measurement and performance analysis.

Municipal Police Services

Trends

A subset of police services responded to questions on observed trends in response time (65%, 26) and overall call volume (55%, 22). The data shows that across services of all sizes – small, medium, and large – and varying geographic regions, the most commonly reported trend is an increase in both response time (i.e., the length of time for police to respond to a 9-1-1 call) and the overall volume of calls for service (Table 3). **As evidenced by these findings, rising response times are not isolated to specific jurisdictions but reflect a broader, province-wide reality.**

Table 3. Trends in Response Time and Calls for Service Reported by Municipal Police Services

	Responses Received*	Increase	Decrease	No Change
Response Time	26	14 (54%)	3 (12%)	9 (35%)
Call for Service	22	19 (86%)	1 (5%)	2 (9%)

*Notes: Although 40 police services responded to the survey, not all services reported trends in response time or calls for service.

Percentages for response time trends sum over 100% due to rounding.

What We Heard:

Lack of standardization in response time definitions and metrics limits comparability across services.

What We Heard:

The Inspector General should consider establishing a standard definition of 'police response time'.

What We Heard:

An absence of provincial standards makes it difficult to determine the reliability and consistency of response time.

Municipal Police Service Boards

Information Sharing & Decision-Making

Police service boards were asked about the type of information they received from police services regarding response times, and how that information is considered in decision-making processes.

Currently, boards receive a range of response time data from police services, including:

- Average or median response time, often specified by priority level.
- Queue, dispatch, and travel times for calls for service.
- General statistics on calls for service and responses.

Across responses, boards reported using this information to support several key functions, including operational budget planning, strategic planning, and staffing and resource allocation. However, what still remains unclear is how boards are more concretely leveraging this information to measure police service performance or identify where further governance interventions may be required.

OUR KEY INSIGHTS

These insights are consistent with findings from the IoP's ongoing province-wide research on response time. They also enhance our understanding of the key challenges and emerging trends affecting response times, which will help inform the IoP's approach to an inspection on this topic.

INSIGHT AREA

Impactful Initiatives

Police services and boards were asked to identify impactful initiatives implemented between 2022-2024 and to share how these initiatives have positively influenced police service delivery and governance. Below are the most common initiatives reported by theme*, some of which were also featured in the Inspector General's 2024 Annual Report.

OUR KEY INSIGHTS

The initiatives shared by services and boards highlight innovation and commitment to public safety. Highlighting these practices also ensures that innovative and proactive service delivery and governance are recognized and promoted across Ontario.

The IoP will showcase these leading practices through sector-wide communications and advisory materials to encourage knowledge sharing and a more consistent approach, while acknowledging the importance of localizing broader practices.

GOVERNANCE & BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST

Effective police governance is fundamental to building public trust and shaping how police services and boards are operated, overseen, and held accountable to the communities they serve.

Police services and boards reported several unique initiatives aimed at strengthening accountability and transparency. Many boards including **Cobourg**, **Kingston** and **Port Hope** noted updating policies and strategic plans to align with the new CSPA. By responding to community needs, these initiatives strengthen trust and shared responsibility with police services and boards.



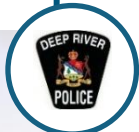
In October 2024, the **Woodstock Police Service Board** launched a self-evaluation process to assess their governance practices, highlight strengths and areas for improvement, support effective training, ensure compliance with legislative responsibilities, and reinforce public trust through accountability.

* The themes and examples are not exhaustive, as some initiatives may not have been reported, and individual services or boards may be represented across multiple themes.

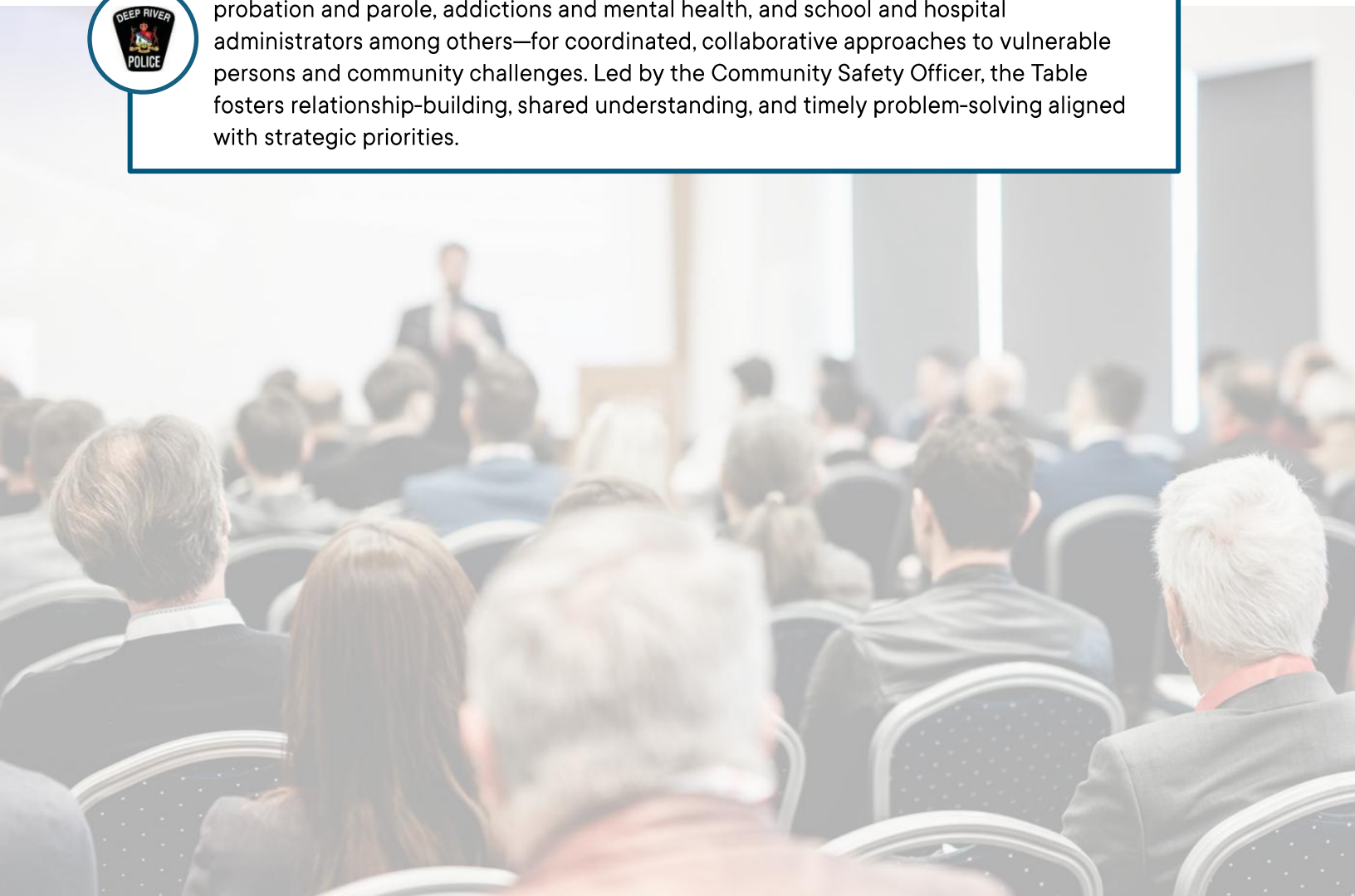
GOVERNANCE & BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST



As part of their Race- and Identity-Based Data Collection Strategy, **Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS)** held 6 local community engagement sessions to develop mutual understanding, trust, and partnership between WRPS and community groups. This gave community members of all diversities and identities an opportunity to speak candidly about their lived experiences and challenges and to identify opportunities for the WRPS to improve programs and services. This dialogue has continued, expanding to other topics such as combatting hate.



Prompted by their Board, the **Deep River Police Service** launched a locally-based Situation Table that brings together key community partners—including family services, probation and parole, addictions and mental health, and school and hospital administrators among others—for coordinated, collaborative approaches to vulnerable persons and community challenges. Led by the Community Safety Officer, the Table fosters relationship-building, shared understanding, and timely problem-solving aligned with strategic priorities.



ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTIONS & HOMELESSNESS

Mental health crises, addiction, and homelessness are deeply interconnected issues that often lead to complex interactions between officers and the individuals affected. A prominent theme identified by most services and boards involves police officers responding to individuals experiencing these challenges. These situations are inherently complex and require significant support from emergency, social and health-related services.

However, police services and boards have highlighted that in the absence of effective, long term, and holistic mental health solutions, law enforcement often becomes the default response, even when it may not be the most suitable one. Responding to these matters places significant strain on police service members and stretches limited resources. These strains are manifesting in staffing issues, call volume increases, and fiscal realities. Addressing how police services respond to these challenges is a priority for the IoP in an effort to promote modern and accountable policing that meets these complex needs and reduces strain on police resources.

Most services noted implementing alternative response initiatives that deploy units comprised of both police officers and qualified social and health service professionals to address the growing number of complex calls involving persons in mental health crisis, experiencing homelessness and/or battling addictions (**Gananoque, Owen Sound, Toronto**). Police services including **Hanover** and **Woodstock** have partnered with local community services like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), offering compassionate care and referrals to support services for the most vulnerable in their communities, while significantly diverting emergency rooms visits and reducing the number of mental health apprehensions.



The **Barrie Police Service** successfully piloted their CARE team (Community Alternative Response and Engagement), which dispatches paramedics and CMHA crisis workers to social disorder calls where weapons are not present. This is an evidence-based approach, modeled after measured and effective programs in the United States. These responses allow a more comprehensive and client-focused approach to complex critical cases and assist the most vulnerable members of our communities to make sure the right care is provided by the right service in a timely way.

Data shows that CARE was able to dedicate nearly 1,000 frontline hours to individuals in crisis in the City of Barrie since October 2024. It has successfully diverted 230+ calls for service away from police and found that nearly 60% of clients served were not previously connected with mental health supports.

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTIONS & HOMELESSNESS



Halton Regional Police Service launched the Complex Service Navigator (CSN) role to support risk mitigation and reduce reliance on emergency services for individuals experiencing mental health or social challenges. The CSN provides intensive, mobile crisis intervention and case management, building strong relationships with high-needs individuals who have had multiple interactions with Halton Regional Police. Additionally, the CSN serves as a liaison between the courts, Crown counsel, and defense counsel, contributing to improved judicial outcomes and reduced police contact. Due to its success, a second CSN position has been approved for 2025.



**Halton Regional Police Service
Complex Service Navigators**

While many individual police services have implemented their own model of alternative response for calls involving mental health, addictions and homelessness, the sustainability of these alternatives has been identified as an area of concern. Many police services have noted that a lack of consistent, long-term funding can jeopardize the existence of these programs, because often, they rely on government grant funding for their operation.

OFFICER & STAFF WELLNESS & RESOURCE STRAIN

Strengthening Police Services Through Wellness Initiatives

Police services are facing significant challenges related to officer and staff wellness, with increased short- and long-term absences due to stress and psychological injury causing strain to available staffing resources. This issue is particularly acute for smaller services with fewer frontline officers, further affecting the morale and wellness of remaining members.

Wellness-related staffing shortages also limit a police service's ability to do more than just the necessary, reactive work including: the ability to be proactive and preventative in their community, offer specialized services for complex needs, and engage more deeply with the residents and organizations they serve. Facing these realities, police services have implemented various strategies and approaches that promote health and wellness among their membership and effectively reintegrate officers into the workplace after short -and long-term absences.

One of these approaches include **Barrie Police Service's** mental health incentive that encourages members to make use of their psychological benefits to earn eight hours of lieu time once benefits have been accessed.

The **Chatham-Kent Police Service** has already experienced the benefits of a dedicated Health and Wellness Coordinator that helps develop, implement, and evaluate a variety of wellness strategies. They have seen a reduction in sick days used, improved performance, morale, and job satisfaction, risk reduction and cost savings. The focus on officer wellness has also created a more accepting and understanding organization surrounding the stigma of mental health.

The promising outcomes of these initiatives demonstrate that when targeted efforts are put in place to support officer and staff wellness, clear improvements are realized by service members impacted by wellness challenges, and their organizations as a whole. When police services have a healthier workplace culture, they experience greater operational stability and are better equipped to manage broader wellness-related pressures.



The **West Grey Police Service Board** implemented a Mental Health Policy requiring all officers and civilian members to attend at least one session with a licensed mental health professional each year. This initiative ensures that all staff receive professional support to manage the stresses and challenges of the job and reduces organizational stigma surrounding mental health support access.

OFFICER AND STAFF WELLNESS & RESOURCE STRAIN

Staffing Strategies to Reduce Workload Pressures

Police services are experiencing a misalignment between increased demands for service and baseline staff resources, resulting in negative impacts on member wellness. Many boards and services noted initiatives aimed at reducing workload pressures through increased hiring of additional frontline officers (**Sault Ste. Marie, Smiths Falls**), special constables (**Brantford, Brockville**), and administrative support staff to help boards transition to the CSPA (**Belleville, Ottawa, Owen Sound**). **Durham, LaSalle, London, Peterborough, Thunder Bay and Windsor** noted hiring new leadership including chiefs and deputy chiefs at their respective organizations.



Cornwall Police Service's Community Safety Officer positions are staffed by officers returning to the workplace following short- and long-term absences. This operational area delivers two important benefits: providing meaningful work to officers reintegrating into the workplace, and diverting low priority calls for service away from the frontlines and alleviating the burden on the community patrol division.



By prioritizing hiring of sworn and civilian members to meet growing operational demands, the **Ottawa Police Service's** staff stabilization strategy has led to improved morale and reduced workload for existing members. Launched in March 2024, Ottawa's expanded District Special Constable Program has taken on a range of duties – from helping with mental health hospital escorts to managing road closures and crime scene security – and responded to 940 calls for service in 10 months, saving more than 2,540 hours of frontline duty that can be reallocated elsewhere.

Ottawa Police Service Special Constable



RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES

Police services and boards identified several common staffing challenges, particularly in recruiting and retaining adequate personnel levels to meet increasingly complex demands. Leadership and succession challenges persist due to a growing influx of new recruits and a limited number of experienced officers to support supervision, mentorship, and training.

Like police services, boards themselves face high rates of member turnover that leave critical gaps in skills, institutional knowledge, and momentum, impacting the effectiveness and efficiency of a board's governance functions. Additionally, both services and boards emphasize the importance of ensuring their members are representative of the diverse communities they serve. They recognize the need for inclusive policing approaches to better reflect and address the growing diversity within their communities. Taking action on this front, police services have developed approaches for increasing inclusive policing within their communities.



The **Ottawa Police Service** Recruitment Strategy focuses on increasing member diversity by actively engaging with underrepresented communities through targeted outreach and recruitment initiatives. It includes mentorship programs and support networks to assist candidates from diverse backgrounds throughout the application process, as well as application fee waivers and financial assistance for training and educational programs to ensure that qualified applicants are not deterred by economic constraints. By prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion, the strategy aims to build a police force that mirrors the multicultural makeup of Ottawa, thereby enhancing its ability to serve the community effectively.



Peel Regional Police (PRP) launched two unique recruitment strategies to address challenges related to staffing and diversity:

- **Experienced Officer (EO) Incentive Program:** Developed in collaboration with the PRP Police Service Board and the Peel Regional Police Association, this program offers a financial reward to members who refer experienced police officers that are successfully hired by PRP, which costs significantly less and saves approximately 37 weeks of training time compared to a new recruit. PRP has successfully hired 11 EOs over the past two recruit classes, resulting in immediate cost savings and improved efficiency of staffing.
- **30x30:** In October 2024, PRP was the first service in Ontario (and sixth in Canada) to take the 30x30 Initiative Pledge, which is part of an international movement to increase the representation of women in police recruitment classes to 30% by 2030, and to create a culture that intentionally supports the success of qualified women officers throughout their careers. Other outreach events like the FIT Bootcamp Mentorship Program for Women, Ladies' Night Information sessions, and the Women in Policing Symposium reflect PRP's commitment to ensuring visibility and support of female members.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

Most police services and boards noted initiatives that aimed to promote community safety through various proactive crime prevention activities and targeted engagement of specific populations. **Gananoque, Greater Sudbury, St. Thomas** and **West Grey** identified youth outreach initiatives, all of which strive to create safe spaces for at-risk youth and provide them with resources and role models that help steer them towards positive choices and away from victimization or criminal engagement.

Saugeen Shores Police Service and **Cornwall Police Services Board** have established dedicated community support funds to provide immediate emergency aid such as food, lodging, and transportation to vulnerable individuals, while also supporting programs that promote safety, youth engagement, and community well-being.



St. Thomas Police Service (STPS)'s CRU-SADER Youth Engagement Initiative focuses on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable youth, including children at risk of victimization or engaging in criminality. This strategy sees the STPS and CMHA Mobile Outreach Support Team work closely with social workers to engage vulnerable youth in non-traditional programming in environments outside of a school setting. By working together with parents, this initiative also addresses trending issues with community-based solutions to build positive relationships and prevent criminality among at-risk youth.



Artwork modernizing the STPS Superheroes CRU and SADER



Sarnia Police Service partnered with Lambton College to introduce the Community Crime Unit that pairs students with officers on the investigation of low priority crimes, providing a unique opportunity to explore and gain hands-on experience in a career in policing. This innovative collaboration delivers a service to the citizens and business owners in Sarnia that promotes community safety, law enforcement and crime prevention. It also frees up police resources to focus on violent crimes and emergencies.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

Peel Regional Police Service co-hosted an Auto Theft Summit that brought together leaders from across Ontario's policing and intelligence sectors and representatives from automotive, insurance and government agencies.

Together they developed recommendations aimed at strengthening enforcement at impacted ports of entry and targeted legislation and sanctions to curb organized crime. As a result, Projects Tallahassee and Odyssey were launched in collaboration with other police services, which led to a 22.6% reduction in auto thefts in Peel Region compared to 2023.



Peterborough Police Service launched two initiatives in response to community concerns: Community F.I.R.S.T addresses high volume, low dollar-value crime with strategic deployment of personnel, while Safer Public Spaces applies a 'no tolerance' approach to open-air illicit drug use.

The Service visualizes results of both initiatives with dashboards, including the number of overdoses and applications of Naloxone to provide strategic oversight, with demonstrated positive outcomes.

The success of the Community F.I.R.S.T Unit is evidenced by 464 arrests and over \$64,000 in recovered property, while the Safer Public Spaces initiative was attributed to an increase in drug-related criminal investigations (213 in 2024).



**Peterborough Police Service
Community F.I.R.S.T. Unit**

REPEAT OFFENDERS & JUDICIAL PROCESSES

Court backlogs and the presence of repeat offenders in the legal system have been identified as significant challenges for Ontario's police services. Specific concerns that were reported include:

- The current bail system is seen to criminalize individuals with complex health and social issues, but ineffectively address criminality and recidivism, especially among perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) and auto theft.
- Significant court backlogs and disclosure requirements that increase officer time spent in and preparing for court, reducing frontline capacity and increasing overtime costs. One police service also highlighted the negative impact on victims who must continually relive their experiences by preparing for and attending court proceedings that are often delayed.

Several Ontario police services have developed unique approaches in an effort to address these issues, and some of the criminal behaviours that underlie them. Police services of all sizes, such as **LaSalle, Windsor, and York Regional Police Services** have created bail compliance and warrant apprehension (BCWA) units comprised of both sworn and civilian members to track repeat offenders and ensure bail conditions are being followed. Due to the proactive efforts of the **Owen Sound Police Service BCWA**, as one example, the number of individuals charged for reoffending while out on bail in 2024 (156) was almost double the number of apprehended reoffenders in 2023 (80).



Brantford Police Service established a civilian Crown Disclosure Team to streamline processes for all required disclosure documents, ensuring that the Crown's Office receives comprehensive and complete disclosure packages prior to court appearances, reducing subsequent requests and improving efficiency of criminal justice proceedings and outcomes. This approach also reduces the amount of police officer time required on disclosure matters, ensuring that officers are able to prioritize the delivery of public safety services.



York Regional Police introduced the Bail Court Officer (BCO) position in 2024 to strengthen bail decisions and reduce repeat offending, by ensuring high-risk cases receive thorough review and advocacy. The BCO reviews serious and violent cases with a focus on ensuring the Bail Crown has immediate access to digital evidence, a summary of the evidence and a background on an accused, including any repetitive history. The BCO also provides guidance and training to frontline staff to educate them on the requirements and best practices for bail packages. From January to October 2025, the BCO has attended more than 1200 cases, of which more than 700 are considered serious violent crimes under Bill C-48. The enhanced information provided by the BCO has helped the courts make informed decisions and enhance public safety.

ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY & INTELLIGENCE-LED DECISION MAKING

A number of innovative technological approaches have seen recent implementation across a variety of policing functions, including body worn cameras (**Aylmer, Kawartha Lakes, South Simcoe, Stratford**), automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) (**North Bay, Strathroy-Caradoc**), virtual reality training simulators and secure virtual response for non-emergency calls (**Barrie**), E-Notes to increase efficiency of report writing (**Belleville**), and expanding closed-circuit camera systems to improve real-time operational decision-making (**Chatham-Kent, Guelph**).

Niagara Regional and **Sarnia** have leveraged data analytics to support intelligent, effective and strategic resource allocation and decision-making.



Hamilton Police Service introduced several new technologies, including in-car cameras, ALPRs, body worn cameras, and a new digital evidence management system. Together these investments bolster the integrity of digital evidence, support auto theft investigations and have helped recover 10 vehicles valued at approximately \$1 million over the course of 5 months.



Windsor Police Service Board established a Cybersecurity Committee and engaged a third-party consultant to focus on protecting the Board and Service from critical cybersecurity threats and ensure that the management, storage and transmission of confidential information is secure.



Leveraging integrated camera feeds from multiple sources, the **Guelph Police Service** has established a Community Safety Operations Centre (CSOC) to increase community safety in the downtown core. Using innovative software, the CSOC provides frontline officers with guidance on the appropriate response to calls generated within camera boundaries, including the dispatch of available units or diverting non-emergency calls for later follow-up and investigation. Since its inception, the CSOC has significantly reduced citizen wait times and delays in suspect identification, reflecting efficient issue resolution and streamlined communication.

Guelph Police Service's Community Safety Operations Centre



INDIGENOUS-FOCUSED INITIATIVES ACROSS ONTARIO'S POLICING SECTOR

The Policing Insight Statement survey also identified initiatives that foster meaningful engagement between Indigenous communities and the policing sector through co-created programs often led by Indigenous Elders and mentors. These efforts support at-risk youth by reconnecting them to their culture, amplify Indigenous voices in shaping policing policies and practices, and provide cultural learning and professional growth opportunities for officers in southern Ontario. Collectively, these programs represent positive steps toward truth and reconciliation through culturally responsive and community-led approaches.



The **Greater Sudbury Police Service** has expanded an Indigenous-focused initiative to support identified at-risk Indigenous youth. In collaboration with Sudbury Restorative Justice, youth are referred to the two-week Mooz Akinoonmaaget Maa Aki (Moose Hunt) program, which is facilitated by Elders, mentors, and police service members. By integrating Indigenous traditions with restorative justice practices, this program provides a supportive and culturally responsive environment for youth, reinforcing the police service's commitment to community-led programs and positive youth development.



Participants of the Greater Sudbury Police Service's Mooz Akinoonmaaget Maa Aki (Moose Hunt) program



The **Toronto Police Service Board** established an Indigenous Engagement Advisor position to develop, lead, and implement board engagement strategies with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis members of the diverse urban Indigenous community of Toronto, including youth, Elders, Knowledge Carriers, and Treaty and Territorial Rightsholders. Since the implementation of this role, members of the Indigenous community have been actively involved in both the Board's policy development and the shaping of its strategic plan. This engagement has ensured that Indigenous voices, experiences, and priorities are not only heard, but meaningfully reflected on issues ranging from systemic racism to mental health, youth well-being, and accountability. The involvement of the Indigenous Engagement Advisor continues to guide the Board in building relationships rooted in respect, reciprocity, and a shared commitment to reconciliation.

INDIGENOUS-FOCUSED INITIATIVES ACROSS ONTARIO'S POLICING SECTOR



Operation Northern Exposure 2024 was a 5-month outreach opportunity involving the **Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS)**, the **Halton Regional Police Service**, **Peel Regional Police** and **York Regional Police** and supported by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

Officers from southern Ontario were deployed for two-week periods to join NAPS officers in the northern communities of Kashechewan, Fort Albany, and Attawapiskat and learn about Indigenous culture, how to strengthen police-Indigenous relationships, and supporting truth and reconciliation efforts.

The partnership between police services allowed officers to build positive relationships with their NAPS counterparts as they created strong bonds with band leaders and residents, and learned more about policing in Indigenous communities. Listening to survivors, families, and elders taught officers how important it is to consider the history of each community when interacting with its members.



Operation Northern Exposure 2024

FINANCIAL & OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES TO MODERNIZE POLICING

As communities grow and policing becomes more complex, police services and boards continue to point to the rising costs of policing as a significant challenge. This is especially so for smaller police services that sometimes provide support to neighbouring jurisdictions.

In a range of policing operations, technology has proven to drive effectiveness and efficiency. Balancing fiscal responsibility and increasingly sophisticated operational demands also complicates efforts to modernize aging infrastructure and invest in much-needed technology, including mandatory upgrades to communications systems, the roll-out of body worn cameras, the use of virtual reality training approaches and expanding data and analytical capacity.

One innovative example of a police service tapping into emerging technology is a program founded by the **Belleville Police Service** called CAMSafe. More than one dozen municipal police services, including **Hanover, Ottawa** and **Waterloo**, have worked together with municipal and community partners to introduce this no-cost program where residents and business owners can register their personal security cameras and consent to provide police services with relevant footage that can assist with criminal investigations. The program is successfully advancing police service delivery while leveraging technology and community resources to minimize additional costs. CAMSafe has been adopted by the **Ontario Provincial Police** throughout its areas of jurisdiction and has received endorsement by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.



Cornwall Police Service's Digital Evidence Management Unit was established to modernize administrative processes that support front-line officers in their efforts to keep the community safe while minimizing costs. Comprised of three dedicated members, the Unit ensures the efficient operation and organization of a newly adopted digital evidence platform. By liaising with community stakeholders, leveraging modern technology, and continuously seeking innovative solutions, the Unit plays a key role in enhancing both the investigative process and court proceedings.



TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY & POLICING ACT

Several police service boards and some services expressed difficulties related to allocating resources (i.e., personnel, time, and budget) to understanding, developing, implementing, and tracking changes to policies and procedures in accordance with new requirements under the CSPA. Many boards, particularly smaller ones with fewer resources, expressed a need for full-time administrative support and enhancing analytical capacity to assist with this transition. These more short-term, operational needs can impact boards' ability to set and monitor the achievement of long-term strategic goals. Through its Police Service Advisors, the IoP is working closely with boards to provide advice, enhance understanding of new requirements under the CSPA, and support boards and services through this transition.

Municipal police service boards also commonly cited a lack of understanding of their governance roles and responsibilities by members of the public, local municipal and regional councils, as well as the police service itself. To remedy this, several boards noted plans to increase public engagement, outreach, and education through their website, by holding town halls and community events, and by administering community surveys.



Some police services and boards are demonstrating leadership in the development of thoughtful policies and processes that address new CSPA requirements and add value to the board's governance function. For example, the **Halton Regional Police Service Board** became the first in the province to adopt a policy for the Provision of Adequate and Effective Policing under the CSPA. This new policy focuses on community safety through assessing, establishing, verifying, funding, and modifying the police service's capabilities and responsiveness, as well as the strategic outcomes of policing functions. The Board's approach to ensuring the delivery of adequate and effective policing occurs through a lens that takes into consideration the unique circumstances of the local community, comparator communities, and best practices. The Policy will be regularly reviewed and updated, ensuring it remains relevant and achieves its governance aims.



The **Chatham-Kent Police Service and Board** have undertaken a comprehensive and strategic transition to align with new requirements of the CSPA, including updating policies and procedures, enhancing officer training to meet or exceed requirements, investing in new and enhanced safety equipment for responding officers, and increasing public education efforts to promote awareness and compliance. In addition, the Service has established key documents and processes to support its transition to the CSPA, which it has actively shared with the broader policing sector. This includes a Special Constable Request for Appointment form, and a new framework for performance evaluation of the Chief of Police by police service boards.



LOOKING AHEAD

The IoP will continue to advance its research and data collection approaches to remain in tune with the pulse of Ontario's policing sector and generate the insights needed to guide the IoP's oversight activities.

Some of the key aspects of the IoP's work that current and future data collection will inform include:

- The development of the Police Performance Measurement Framework (PPMF), the first of its kind in Canada
- Response time research and inspection planning
- Analytical dashboards that will enable data-driven planning and decision-making for Ontario's police services and boards, as well as identify trends and areas for the IoP to engage

Through continued collaboration and knowledge exchange with the policing sector, these activities will support continuous improvement in police service delivery and governance across the province.

Acknowledgements

The Inspectorate of Policing would like to thank all municipal police services and police service boards that participated in the 2024 Policing Insight Statement survey. Their contributions provided valuable insights into the current state of policing and governance in Ontario, helping shape future work and strengthen collective understanding across the sector.

The IoP would also like to thank the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and Police Governance Ontario (formerly the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards) for their ongoing support of the IoP's work.

Policing Insight Report

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