

Ontario Needs Modern, Sustainable Policing

The rising cost of police services affects municipalities across Ontario, whether they have their own force or use the services of the OPP.

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For at least a decade, police spending has been growing at three times the rate of inflation. Some of the key factors influencing these costs include:

- interest arbitration, which often fails to reflect local capacity to pay in resolving contract disputes;
- the benchmarking of salary increases against one another;
- salaries that are growing at about twice the rate as salaries of the rest of the public sector; and,
- a growing pension burden.

While costs have been rising, crime rates have actually decreased and the nature of crime and threats to public safety in the 21st century have changed. As a result, Ontario's police services need to re-evaluate how they can ensure continued public safety while maintaining confidence in the system.

This need has been recognized repeatedly, such as by the Auditor General's 2005 and 2012 reviews of the OPP and by the Province's Future of Policing Advisory Committee, which was tasked with reviewing core and non-core policing services. But any real change to modernize policing has yet to be achieved.

AMO is taking action by forming the Policing Modernization Task Force, which will report to AMO's board on the following:

- municipal government recommendations on how to modernize policing services;
- similarities between its work and that of FPAC, and opportunities for possible reform; and,
- the profound risk of continued policing cost increases and the impact on other core municipal services that also contribute to public safety, such as road maintenance and drinking water.

The task force will include representatives from municipalities that use their own force, as well as those who are served by the OPP. It will also have representatives from Police Services Boards and as needed, those who sit on FPAC. Work will begin in September 2014.

Other key policing initiatives include:

OPP Billing Reform and Wage Increase: The OPP has proposed a new billing model for 2015 that shifts OPP costs across the municipal sector, with some communities facing substantial increases while others will see reductions. In 2014, an 8.55 per cent wage increase for the OPP also came into effect, costing municipalities an additional \$25 million. At the same time, provincial transfers through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund decreased by \$25 million in 2014. In 2015, OMPF cuts will be higher than expected at \$35 million, further magnifying the impact of OPP-related changes.

AMO created the OPP Billing Steering Committee in early 2014 to share municipal perspectives on this challenging issue with the Province. The Steering Committee did a thorough analysis of a number of different billing models. The Committee's key advice was:

- Given that there are a number of ways to determine the base costs of policing service, the OPP must be transparent and accountable in how these costs are determined and allocated to municipalities.
- Given the inherent limitations of all models, the Province must ensure mitigation funding over the long-term to support those communities facing sharp cost increases under the new formula.
- The unsustainable increase in police costs province-wide must be addressed. As a result, the committee recommended that AMO create the Policing Modernization Task Force.

Court Security Upload: The Province continues to honour the 2008 Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review agreement, which includes the upload of court security and prisoner transportation costs. In 2014, \$53.5 million was provided to municipalities to fund these services, rising to \$125 million by 2018.