

# Provincial Auditor's 2012 Report

Key municipal interest in OPP recommendations.

Yesterday the Auditor General of Ontario released his Annual Report which contains a number of recommendations based on his value for money audits of various provincial government program/ service areas. One of the observations is that “good decisions require good information.” The report contains several areas of interest to municipalities, in particular, the thorough examination of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

## **OPP:**

The OPP provides 322 municipalities with policing services at an annual cost to municipal property taxpayers of \$362 million. The report highlights escalating policing costs at the same time that crime rates have generally not grown. Also, it notes that Ontario has the highest per capita policing costs (OPP and municipal own forces) in the country at \$294 compared to the national average of \$268 (2008 data). The thrust of the recommendations is for the OPP to find greater efficiencies in its operations, and in fact the report reiterates recommendations from previous audits of the OPP in 2005 that have not been acted on or completed including those related to staff deployment and controlling costs.

AMO is requesting an urgent meeting with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Commissioner of the OPP to discuss how recommendations will be prioritized and acted upon in a timely manner. AMO has been representing municipalities at the Future of Policing Advisory Committee (FPAC) and its working groups. While FPAC is a useful venue to discuss many issues of relevance to all police forces in Ontario, including policing standards, AMO is seeking a specific opportunity to discuss issues raised in the Auditor General's report.

In an era of the Drummond Report, provincial deficits, and a stretched property tax dollar – finding greater efficiencies in OPP operations is critical for the municipalities that rely on its police services.

Below are key excerpts from the OPP Chapter in the Report:

- **Rising cost of service with decreasing crime:** “Over the last five years, the average number of calls for service the OPP has responded to or initiated has remained relatively stable. By contrast, OPP expenditures net of recoveries from municipalities have increased by 27% over the same period. ... Many of the other larger police forces across Canada have had similar expenditure increases, notwithstanding the long-term trend of declining rates of crime and serious motor vehicle accidents.”
- **Need to update staff deployment model:** “It has been more than 10 years since the [staff deployment] model was used to assess the deployment of some 1,550 ...officers to detachments that provide other front-line policing. ...Accordingly, officers face significantly different workloads depending on where they are assigned. We found that officers in some detachments handled an average of 54% to 137% more calls than officers in other detachments.”
- **Unmeasured response times:** “The OPP also does not analyze either its officers’ availability to immediately respond to a call or the time it takes for officers to respond to a call, both key factors in determining the deployment of officers to detachments across Ontario.”
- **Shift scheduling:** “Current shift arrangements result in overstaffing during slow early-morning hours compared to the busy afternoon hours. ...We calculate that on Sundays, there was about 20% overstaffing of officers, based on the average number of citizen-generated calls for service. ...Adjusting the current 24-hour fixed schedule...would either result in savings in the range of \$5-10 million a year or lead to improved service to the public and officer safety.”
- **Use of civilians:** “The OPP could assign more corporate-services duties and other non-policing work to lower-paid civilian staff to free up officers’ time for policing duties and to save money. The overall savings if community service duties were transferring to civilians would be about \$2.6 million a year. ...Transferring all court duties to civilians would save another \$2.8 million annually.”
- **Overtime:** “Overtime costs have increased by 60% to \$53 million for 2011/12.”
- **Cost to municipalities and billing methodology:** “The overall cost of OPP services for municipalities from 2007 to 2011 increased an average of 29% for

those with contracts and 19% for those without, or up to three times the annual inflation rate. ...The way the OPP charges municipalities for its services was complex and onerous for both the force and municipalities. ...The cost per officer to municipalities for both direct and other support and operating costs increased from approximately \$122,200 in 2007 to \$144,000 in 2011, or 18%.”

- **Level of service:** “All municipal officials with whom we spoke said they were very satisfied with the OPP services they received.”
- **Other financial related matters:**

The report notes that municipalities should expect changes to the Provincial Service Usage (PSU) credits which make up for the time officers in detachments spend performing provincial policing duties or working outside a detachment area. On average over the past five years, municipalities have received \$23 million in such credits. It is suggested that this be reviewed in concert with the Policing Service Grant component of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund.

The report also includes OPP commentary confirming that it is considering a per capita costing methodology and will presenting such a proposal to the Ministry in late 2012. If implemented province-wide, such a change would significantly shift the policing cost burden across municipalities. It would also have different implications for contract and non-contract policed communities and the service enhancements for which some municipalities pay a premium to the OPP.

A per capita costing methodology is not a substitute for dealing with unsustainable increases in policing costs. For AMO, we see a need to achieve the greater efficiency identified by the Auditor General, including those matters dating back to 2005, before any consideration is given to a new per capita costing methodology.

### **Long Term Care and Metrolinx:**

The Auditor General also made recommendations in two other areas of interest to municipal governments. He highlighted Presto card challenges which affect municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Regarding long term care placement, the Auditor General notes that the median wait time for a bed has tripled since 2005 and he noted the impacts this has on the broader health care system. System wide impacts have been a concern to municipal governments.

