

C. Community-Based Policing

In light of the increase in crime levels in this country, it is not surprising that a number of witnesses expressed the view that traditional policing methods work imperfectly. And the point was made that increases in police resources, both human and financial, can not keep up with increases in crime rates.

A recent Statistics Canada report reveals that the number of police officers in Canada has doubled since the 1960s, while *Criminal Code* offences reported to the police were five times greater. Total operating expenditures for police services, which account for the largest proportion of justice expenditures, were \$5.3 billion in 1991.³⁵ Lorrain Audy, President of the Quebec Association of Police and Fire Chiefs and Director of the Hull Police Force, expressed his view of increased police workloads and limited resources:

We have hit a plateau. Public security costs can't keep on increasing. The crime rate won't decrease if we increase the number of police officers. (78:9)

The public and the police have tended to regard community safety and security as the primary responsibility of the police, according to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP). In their brief, the CACP stated:

Thoughtful students of police administration, as well as most observers of the crime phenomenon who view the problem systematically, realize that the police have been assigned a disproportionate amount of responsibility for both the present level of crime and the efforts to cope with it in the future. (p. 3)

With few exceptions, police forces tend to view their mandate as one of law enforcement and, in enforcing the law, they operate at an arm's length from the community. Generally, police are visible in the community only after a criminal event has occurred. Witnesses who addressed the Committee on the role of the police in crime prevention acknowledged the importance and necessity of reactive police work. What they challenged was the predominant focus on law enforcement to the exclusion of other means of dealing with crime problems. They pointed to the need to establish a balance between prevention and traditional repression.

The Committee was told that prior to the introduction of patrol cars, police officers had direct contact with the population they served. They knew the community, the local residents, merchants, youth, and others at risk of offending. And they knew the problems the community was experiencing. Chief Greg Cohoon, Chair of the Crime Prevention Committee of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, told the Committee that in the early stages of policing in Canada, the police were proactive: they examined the problems in the community, in partnership with the public, and dealt with them before they became crime problems. (72:4)

Witnesses noted the need for preventive and community-based approaches to policing that put emphasis on an increased police presence among citizens and the development of partnerships with organizations at the community level to develop local crime prevention initiatives.

³⁵ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Police Personnel and Expenditures in Canada—1991*, Vol. 12, No. 20, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, Ottawa, October 1992.