

**STAKEHOLDER PREFERENCES AND THE REGIONALIZATION OF POLICING
SERVICES IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA**

By

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the requirements for the degree of

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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CHAPTER ONE - STUDY BACKGROUND

The Problem/Opportunity

In the recent past, a number of municipalities throughout North America have regionalized, amalgamated, integrated, or at least researched and implemented ways of sharing resources with other municipalities. This has been done in an effort to become more effective, efficient or to better realize economies of scale with respect to the provision of services. In other words, it may be cheaper for municipal governments to share resources and therefore save taxpayer money. While some municipalities have done so on their own, several provincial governments such as Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia, have conducted reviews that have ended in changes to municipal government, which were either provincially imposed or strongly recommended to them. In recent times particular attention has been aimed at the amalgamation of policing services for a variety of reasons that are both internal and external.

The reasons for these changes are varied and numerous but as Bass (2000) states, "several scholars have found that external pressure is often the impetus for police reform" (para. 1). The literature points out many reasons why, in the provinces listed above, these changes have occurred. Many of the same external pressures were documented as the reasons for change within these provinces; however it is still early in the evolution of regionalization to determine if these significant changes have been successful.

The geographic area on which this study focuses is southern Alberta and for our purposes this area represents a 100 km circumference of the city of Lethbridge, Alberta. It is presently

policed by four separate and very distinct police services which include the municipal police agencies of the Taber Police Service, Lethbridge Regional Police Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) who police the communities of Magrath, Cardston, Picture Butte, Raymond, Milk River, Coalhurst, Fort MacLeod, Pincher Creek including the rural districts; and finally, the Blood Tribal Police who are responsible for the provision of policing services to the community of Stand Off and the Blood Reserve.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1980) defines a 'region' as, "a sphere of activity, a broad homogeneous geographical area" (p. 965). While the agencies that police Southern Alberta are quite different in a number of ways they do provide the same services through a number of very similar programs. It can be said that many if not all police in Alberta, and in particular the South, share common attitudes, beliefs, culture and social structures. The term regionalism can be defined as consciousness of and loyalty to a distinct region with a homogeneous population or the development of a political or social system based on one or more such areas. (Webster's, 1980, p. 965) Regionalization then, can occur if the respective municipal governments, or in this case the police services of southern Alberta, consolidate into one identity.

The Research Question

With all of the factors that are pressuring communities to make serious decisions regarding their policing provider, the question I would like to research is as follows; what are the stakeholder preferences regarding police regionalization in southern Alberta?

For the individual community the impacts and opportunities that arise out of a decision to regionalize policing services might be significant. As the Governor's Center for Local Government (1998) states,

In most instances, the nature and quality of police service in the community are a reflection of the knowledge of elected officials and the capability and professionalism of the police chief. Police Service in any community is exactly what those key people chose it to be. (p.7)

With this said, it is in the best interest of the key decision makers to be informed on this topic and this paper might prove to be a significant source of information.

Another opportunity for discussion within this research paper is the humanistic factor of dealing with significant change within organizations. Police members have identified the human resource issues involved and have recognized the problems associated with organizational transformation. In the past, during recent police amalgamations, police officers have not been involved as integral partners in the decision-making; some police employees have felt left out of creating a shared vision. This is particularly difficult on a group of employees who very much connect their personal identity with their profession, as police officers so often do.

The last two paragraphs speak directly to the people who are directly involved in providing policing services, the police officers themselves, the people responsible for controlling

police services and the end users of policing functions. Moving away from the humanistic issues we can see that there are several other key areas of opportunity that this research may offer.

A significant opportunity for the region of southern Alberta is the ability to review research from other areas of Canada in an attempt to determine if regionalization is economically viable and or worthwhile for southern Alberta.

In terms of economy, the Government of Nova Scotia White Paper (1997) states,

Regionalization has recently become attractive to governments and the police as a response to the costs of meeting ongoing and increasing demand for new and sometimes better police services. Regional policing is usually proposed 1) as a way of saving money or being more cost effective and 2) a way of improving local police services without incurring new expenditures. (Structure of Police Services Section, para. 6)

Another factor that affects police organizations is police control or governance. This research paper provides an excellent opportunity to ask key stakeholders their opinions on this issue. Regionalization creates an unusual power dynamic when implemented. Currently, the communities with their own police services have police commissions that oversee police services, including setting police policy and guidelines as well as controlling budgets. The communities, which contract with the RCMP, have less control of policing functions. The RCMP is directed by the federally mandated policies and procedures from Ottawa. Seagrave (1997) states, "this point has been made by Hann et al. (1985) who show how [RCMP] detachment

commanders see their accountability to be owed to superiors within the force rather than to local government municipalities" (p. 86). This literature suggests that this is a very important issue in policing that needs to be taken into account when debating whether or not to implement regionalization.

Several other opportunities may arise out of this research including studying police effectiveness and efficiency. It is also important to know whether standardization of police services across southern Alberta is important to the region. These are important issues and any regional model would have to address these issues before and during implementation.

As mentioned earlier, regionalism implies that there are perhaps characteristics or traits that exist amongst the region in which they live. Some state that community police services should uphold the shared attitudes, beliefs, culture and social structure of a group of people. It can be argued that southern Alberta has its own unique traits that should be enshrined in its institutions. This research will provide the opportunity to investigate this issue at some length.

As observed above, there are many factors that drive or contribute to the process of change within police organizations. As with many amalgamations in the private sector, the goal of saving money can become a significant driving factor behind organizational transitions. This is also the case in policing.

The cost of policing is dramatically increasing and the ability for small communities to pay for policing is becoming burdensome. The Government of Nova Scotia commissioned a White Paper (1997) that states,

Proponents [of regionalization] argue that consolidating police services provides long run cost saving for a municipality produced by the economies of scale. This is done by eliminating duplication of certain functions, by centralizing things such as communications, records and training costs, by reducing the number of ranks, overtime costs, fewer buildings, cars, it lowers capital expenditures and provides greater purchasing power. (Structure of Police Services Section, para. 8)

Others indicate however, that cost is not the most significant reason to regionalize and that constituent preference should be the most significant factor in deciding whether communities should regionalize policing services. (Finney, 1999, Gyimah-Brempong, 1987) Other factors aside, it is important to note the constituents, or stakeholders, preferred certain policing functions over others and therefore were the driving force behind certain political decisions.

The M.L.A. Policing Review (Alberta Justice Solicitor General, 2002) conducted by the Alberta government focused on equitable policing, leadership and public oversight. (p.3) Public oversight is the legislative process that regulates policing services in Alberta. In the case of municipal policing in Alberta, the Law Enforcement Review Board is the group of government appointed persons who adjudicate complaints against police and or police services. The review suggested that there is inequity within Alberta when it comes to the taxpayer paying for police services. In April 2004, the Alberta government changed the funding formula in Alberta by increasing the minimum community population for which the Province will provide funding. The old figure was set at 2500 people whereas the new figure raises the bar to 5000 people. In effect, the Alberta Government ignored the M.L.A. committee suggestions and maintained the

inequity amongst Alberta taxpayers therefore in this case the views of the stakeholders were ignored. What does this say about representation or leadership? The M.L.A. review, in the end, had little ability to foster and or promote significant change. The M.L.A. review had a narrowly focused mandate and fell short of the more encompassing reports completed in other provinces, such as the Oppal Report (1994) conducted in British Columbia. The Alberta M.L.A review called upon the government to make policing equitable and the government did not. Furthermore, the review fell short in that communities of Alberta are left making important decisions without having important information provided to them grounded in scientific research.

Currently in Alberta, communities with a population over 2500 are required to enter into an RCMP contract or provide their own policing through a municipal contract. Communities with a population under 2500 receive policing through the provincial RCMP. Presently in Alberta the RCMP, as the provincial police service, provide funding for specialty policing sections such as, K-9, tactical, air services, major crimes. The smaller communities have reaped the benefits of this relationship for some time. The RCMP is currently reviewing this arrangement and they may choose to start billing communities for such specialized services. In the end, the smaller communities may be forced to search for the most cost efficient service provider for specialty services, thereby supporting some of the cost efficiency aspects of the regional model. In all cases, this extra cost would be borne by the taxpayer and as a result, by the sharing of resources, economies of scale may be realized which may assist the smaller municipalities.

There are other external factors affecting police services, one of which is standardization of policing within the province. In the past, provincial policing standards were not in place and it was up to the individual community to determine adequate policing levels. Currently, the Province of Alberta, through the Solicitor General, determines the definition of what is adequate and effective and a committee has been struck to review and implement policing standards. This change is expected to cause strain on smaller communities and although it creates an environment within Alberta for positive change, it is significant to note the Province of Nova Scotia developed standards that when put into effect, created too great a pressure on the smaller police services and caused several to amalgamate or fold.

Technology is another factor contributing to the need for this research. Police technology assists in fighting and detecting crime, however the cost of this technology is very high. Already in Alberta, communities are partnering together to purchase equipment that as individual services they could not afford alone. As the technology becomes more advanced the costs will rise and this will create extra hardships on the smaller municipalities.

Criminals are more transient than they ever have been before and there is added benefit for police services to have a shared response to crime. Smaller municipalities do not have specialized units dedicated to these specialized forms of investigation. The community police officer in the small town becomes very adept at providing a range of policing services and is an excellent resource for the community. On a regional level however, the community police officer does not have the time or the training to combat organized crime operating from a-far but yet affecting their community.

Another driving factor is the area of police training:

In this age of ceaseless litigation, the actions of one poorly trained or misguided law enforcement officer can result in liability to the governing body for the action, or inaction, of one of its employees. Many towns, cities, and counties are targets of liability lawsuits toward police behaviour because attorneys assume they can pay significant judgments.

(Tully, 2002, Why then Regionalize Section, para. 5)

It is imperative that police personnel in Alberta receive the proper basic and ongoing training and the smaller police agencies do not have the facilities or the specialists to conduct this training. This issue of training compounded with the transience of criminals, the increase in the level of technology and impending provincial standardization will have a significant impact on police agencies in the near future.

As can be seen from the aforementioned discussion, the opportunity for this research is real and timely. The leader within each of us would say the time to ask the difficult questions is now. My vision is that this research may examine the perceptions and preferences of southern Alberta stakeholders and that the impetus for positive change within the region of southern Alberta may be the end result.

The Organization

In order to understand the effects that this research may have on the community of Taber,

and other municipalities, it is important to understand the system by which the organization of the Town of Taber is established and therefore by extension the Taber Police Service functions as an entity.

The Town of Taber is a community situated 52 kilometers east of Lethbridge, Alberta and 100 kilometers north of the Montana Alberta border. Taber has a population of approximately 7800 people and almost exclusively the taxpayers of the community pay for policing. Taber has been in existence since 1905 and the economy is mostly driven by agriculture, natural resources and industry.

In 1904 the first police officer commenced his duties in Taber and since that time the community has maintained its own police force, which today is named the Taber Police Service. Like most small communities, policing consumes a significant portion of the tax base and thus policing costs are often a strain on the municipality.

Although it is the responsibility of the Alberta Government to ensure adequate and effective policing, the citizens of the community bear most of the cost burden. However, the province is able to still mandate policing standards and therefore control over policing services. This is the case in 2004, the Alberta Government has outlined policing standards that need to be met, but they haven't provided police services, (especially police service the size of the Taber Police Service), with the money required to meet the standards. This external factor alone will cause pressures on the Town of Taber and require a significant rethinking of policing services by our local politicians and community. The funding inequity that was created by the Province of

Alberta has created financial pressures that are not the same for each community. Although some communities welcome the funding change, others are left with considerable expenditures, which their neighbours do not have.

The Taber Police Service is an organization, which is governed by the Taber Municipal Police Commission. The Police Act (1988) states that a police commission shall,

Oversee the police service and for that purpose shall do the following:

- A) allocate funds that are provided by the council;
- B) establish policies providing for the efficient and effective policing;
- C) issue instructions, as necessary, to the chief of police in respect to the policies referred to in clause (b);
- D) ensure that sufficient persons are employed for the police service for the purpose of carrying out the functions of the police service.

(p.22)

The Taber Police Service building also houses the regional 911-dispatch center and is responsible for dispatching fire and ambulances to the Town of Taber and Municipal District of Taber. There are twelve sworn police officers, four Auxiliary Police officers, five fulltime and two part time Communication Operators, a complement of guards for guarding prisoners and a large volunteer complement. The police service is lead by a chief of police who is hired by the police commission. An Inspector is in charge of day-to-day operations and a sergeant and nine constables conduct general policing duties. The budget for the police service is approximately \$1,400,000 dollars.

CHAPTER TWO – INFORMATION REVIEW

Review of Organizational Documents

As the philosophy of community policing indicates, the community is an integral part of policing services and this sentiment is echoed in the Taber Police Service mission statement, which states that the Taber Police Service shall inform, involve and protect the citizens of Taber. Stakeholders are the individuals who reside within our communities and are the end users of policing services and this research provides an opportunity for stakeholder input to be considered. Once this research is complete, the hypothesis is that the stakeholders of Taber, Alberta will be in a better position to make informed decisions as they discuss and debate future policing options, one of which is the regionalization of policing services.

The Taber Police Service does not have a culture that has created many organizational documents however, there are several pieces of Provincial Legislation that govern and control policing services within Alberta. The Police Act of the Province of Alberta (1988) is the legislation responsible for maintaining the adequate and effective levels of policing services within the Province. Section 4(1) of the Police Act states that communities with a population below 2500 people do not have to pay for policing. This funding schedule will change in 2004, as the Solicitor general for the Province of Alberta has recently announced that the threshold size of a community that does not have to pay for policing in Alberta will soon be 5000 people. At the time this paper was written, this change had not been instituted through legislation, but may be in practice. The change will have very little affect on the outcomes of this research as the

problems still exist, the only difference will be the numbers are now greater. Section 4(2) states that a municipality may, for the purposes of providing policing services do any of the following;

Engage the provincial police

Enter into the provisions of the Act, which permit a municipal police service

Establish a regional police service

Establish a municipal police service (p. 6)

This scenario also applies to communities with populations between 2500 and 5000 people.

Section 4(5) of the Police Act (1988) indicates that a community with a population greater than 5000 people may be policed by entering into an agreement for the provision of municipal policing services, establish a regional police service or establish a municipal police service under the Act.

Pursuant to Section 8 of the Police Act (1988), the director of law enforcement must maintain the adequacy and effectiveness of policing, both municipally and provincially. His or her duties also include monitoring crime prevention, developing and promoting police practices, setting police standards and training, and assisting in the coordination of police services, and consult with police chiefs, police commissions.

Section 21 of the Police Act (1988) permits the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta to enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to provide provincial policing services. Furthermore, a municipality may enter into an agreement with the RCMP to provide policing. Section 24 also permits the forming of

regional police commissions and the creation of regional police services. Section 27 of the Police Act permits the creation of a municipal police commission for communities who wish to create their own municipal police service.

In review of the Police Act (1988), it is very apparent that the Government of Alberta has provided, through legislation, several different policing options, but has maintained through each model controls that maintain adequate and effective policing for all Albertans.

Review of Supporting Literature

Regionalism

In order to investigate the possibility of police regionalization, it is important to understand the literature surrounding regionalism, specifically in relation to policing services. To commence this discussion a broader view of regionalism and regionalization will first be examined.

The dictionary definition of 'regionalism' can be described as consciousness of and loyalty to a distinct region with a homogeneous population or the development of a political or social system based on one or more such areas. (Webster's, 1980, p. 965) From a more academic focus, McKinney, Fitch, and Harmon (2002) indicate that there is a "complexity theory" from which emerges regionalism, "it is an organic, inner-directed response to human needs and interests" (Why Regionalism in the West Section, para. 2). Furthermore, "regionalism recognizes the value of integrating social, economic, and environmental concerns; multiple interests and viewpoints; and different ways of learning" (Why Regionalism in the West Section, para. 2).

Regionalism is not a new concept in Canada, in fact, Bickerton (2001) states,

Regionalism expresses itself in every aspect of Canadian life: in our politics, in the structure of the economy, in our associative life, and in Canadian culture. It is entrenched in our political institutions, in party and electoral politics, in federal-provincial relations, in government policy, and in the composition and structure of the federal government itself. It also is represented in Canada's constitution, wherein the special rights and needs of certain regional communities are recognized and validated. (Identity and Region Section, para. 5)

To be more specific, regionalization is the formal process of sharing cultural beliefs, values and institutions, between people, within a specific geographic area. Regionalism may be created because of shared attitudes among groups of individuals who inhabit certain areas of Canada, and therefore the concept of regionalism legitimately reinforces their communities' identity through common formal structures. One can extrapolate further by saying, "regionalism is proving to be an effective way to sustain communities and landscapes. (McKinney, Fitch, and Harmon, 2002, Why Regionalism in the West Section, para. 5)

There are many different sizes of regions within the country of Canada. Some would argue that Canada is divided into East and West; some state that the provincial borders within Canada define our regions. To further muddy the water, others argue that the municipalities in which they live constitute their designated regions. Whatever the region, it is clear that people

attribute allegiance to a given area. With that allegiance comes the humanistic need for self-determination and governance. The Provincial governments within the constitution of Canada have given and decentralized many powers to the municipal forms of government. Ontario has often been seen as the forerunner of many political initiatives that seem to later take hold in other areas of Canada. In 1995, the newly elected Conservative Government of Ontario, urged the municipal governments to change the way they did business and pressured them into eventually being left with little option but to reform (LeSage and Garcia, 2003, Restructuring in Non-Metropolitan Areas of Ontario Section, para. 2.) This pressure leads to the changes that we have seen such as the amalgamation of several former Toronto suburbs in the greater City of Toronto. In Alberta, LeSage and Garcia (2003) indicate that in the 1950's the municipal county was created when the municipal function of government and the school board functions were amalgamated. There were some benefits that emerged out of the Alberta consolidation of services. These included, "selected economies in administration resulting from the integration and coordination of school and municipal support services and less tension around the level and control of school requisition on the municipal property tax" (Functional Reforms Section, para. 10). In this specific case, the municipalities and school boards that consolidated could only do so if they were coterminous or shared a municipal boundary. This form of amalgamation stayed in place for decades until other external and internal factors created the need for change. LeSage and Garcia (2003) go onto state that, "by the mid-1990s, however, the Alberta provincial government decided to detach the education function from municipal county governments and assign it to the newly created larger single-purpose regional education authorities" (Functional Reforms Section, para. 10). This is an example of the provincial government creating reform within Alberta with communities having little input.

There may be forces other than provincial governments that can bring about municipal reform. There are some factors that are also outside of the control of the local governments that exist to serve their constituents; these include Court of Appeal decisions and external provincially mandated police standards. These factors can be introduced as a result of historical issues or as stated above the social culture, economic and or technological issues of the day. As Bickerton (2001) states, “regions must be understood as a space where the historical work of human actors and actions takes place, the product of a complex interaction between external and internal factors” (Identity and Region Section, para. 5).

I would now like to examine from a broad perspective, why certain groups of people would choose to regionalize services. The following is cited from a paper written by McKinney, Fitch, and Harmon, entitled *Regionalism in the West: An Inventory and Assessment* (2002). The authors state that there are six objectives in forming a regional initiative. These are, knowledge building, community building, share resources, advisory, advocacy and govern.

- Knowledge building is designed to promote a deeper sense of the social, economic, and ecological characteristics of a particular region. Some initiatives are also designed to develop the capacity of citizens and officials within a region to work together on issues of common concern.
- Community building fosters an awareness and understanding of a particular region, some initiatives are expressly designed to stimulate conversation, mutual understanding, and a common sense of place within a particular region.

- Share resources includes both information between people and the sharing of resources is designed to improve coordination of programs and services among agencies and organizations within a region.
- Advisory provides input and advice in the spirit of solving particular problems.
- Advocacy promotes a distinctive agenda within a particular region.
- Govern or governance is to make, administer, and enforce policy within a designated region. (McKinney, Fitch, and Harmon, 2002, Purpose Section, para.1-7)

These objectives, in the broad sense, provide the building blocks for regionalization initiatives. At the end of the day, the objectives provide the reader with a community problem-solving model that incorporates the region within the problem solving models approach.

Police Regionalization.

There have been numerous police regionalization initiatives throughout Canada, most recently in southern Alberta whereby the communities of Lethbridge and Coaldale amalgamated their police services to become the Lethbridge Regional Police Service. It remains to be seen whether or not the amalgamation of these forces will be a success. Prior to this initiative, the Town of Redcliff, Alberta in 1992 attempted to contract their policing services to the City of Medicine Hat, however this agreement failed to last.

Other Canadian police regionalization initiatives were mentioned by Oppal (1994, pp. D8, D15) whereby he conducted an exhaustive review of policing in British Columbia, which included a review of previous regional policing initiatives in Canada. The Province of Ontario has been dealing with regionalization of policing services since 1957. During the 1970's a major change occurred regarding policing where it was determined that one police force should operate in any of the ten regions of Ontario. Oppal states that, "the rationale for this seems to have been the reduction of duplication, overlap and fragmented responsibility" (p. D9). The formation of regional governments appears to have been the reason why policing services changed in Ontario and the police services followed suit. This was also the case in Quebec and Manitoba, whereby Quebec has regionalized policing services from 300 agencies at one time to 157 in 1996. (p. D10) Manitoba also regionalized policing services in the past with the amalgamation of 13 municipal forces. (p. D10)

Murphy (1994) indicates that in 1960, Nova Scotia regionalized policing services in the New Glasgow area but the attempt at regional policing failed. Furthermore regionalization was recommended in Nova Scotia most recently by the Green Report in 1981 (p.3) and in 1995 the Cape Breton Regional Police was formed.

Oppal (1994) suggests that in British Columbia, the RCMP have "quasi-regionalized" policing services in several communities by sharing facilities between detachments. (p. D15) Most recently, the cities of Matsqui and Abbotsford amalgamated policing services followed by the cities of Esquimalt and Victoria in January 2003. Oppal indicates that there have been 7 studies that have investigated regional policing in British Columbia. (p. D19) Police

regionalization in British Columbia seems to have been examined at length and time will tell whether any future initiatives will take place.

With most change initiatives, there is an impetus that creates the environment for change. Police regionalization is no different. Murphy (2003) states that, “regionalization of public services is premised on a fiscal and political logic that fewer separate public services create an economy of scale that ultimately reduces overall operation and administrative costs” (p.10). Murphy (1994) in earlier research stated that, “regionalization is usually proposed as a way of saving money or being more cost effective and a way of improving local police services without incurring new expenditures” (p.3). Oppal (1994) cites a study of police amalgamation in Oregon conducted in 1992 and suggest that the following are issues that favor police regionalization:

- Reduction of policing costs;
- Duplication and inefficiencies in delivery of policing services;
- Perceived corruption and unequal administration of justice;
- Population shifts requiring changes in levels of policing in or around urban centres [sic];
and
- Amalgamation of municipal government to increase efficiencies and reduce costs.

(p. D3)

Several other areas were identified by Oppal (1994) to be reasons for the regionalization of policing services, these include, cooperative law enforcement, capacity to deliver specialized services, law enforcement equity and personal development. (pp. D3-D4) Murphy (2003)

provides an excellent summation on the benefits of regionalization, “a regionalized policing environment promises a more rational, managed and resource-efficient model of police service” (p.10).

Along with benefits there are also those that indicate that there may be barriers to regionalization. Politics (Murphy 2003, Oppal, 1994) is the first issue that causes concern when police regionalization is discussed. Furthermore that, “it is important to examine some of the possible disadvantages of regionalized policing, including loss of local control, loss of policing resources, loss of local police identity and loss of community based-policing” (Oppal, 1994, p. D4). Murphy (2003) states that, “not only are the cost savings and improved efficiencies of the regional policing model yet to be demonstrated, the amalgamation of small local police services runs counter to the policing logic of community policing” (p.10). There is also the humanistic factors that are associated with change, primarily the issues surrounding whether or not employees of police services are in favor of regionalization or not.

I have not found any study that has examined the reasons why Canadian police regionalization initiatives of the past, have or have not been successful. For many the verdict is still out as it is still early in the evolution of police amalgamations to determine a cause and effect relationship. Regionalization should not be seen as a panacea for policing problems, each community must consider its own unique factors and decide whether or not change is necessary. One purpose of this paper is to see if there enough shared internal and external factors to consider change in the region of southern, Alberta.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders who are the end users of policing services are also the individuals who, through our democratic system of government, make decisions regarding municipal police governance in Alberta. In order to better understand the relationship of stakeholders to policing in southern Alberta, a review of stakeholder theory must be examined.

The literature surrounding stakeholder theory has both broad and narrow definitions of what is a stakeholder. Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p.46). Alkhafaji defines stakeholders as "groups to whom the corporation is responsible" (as cited by Mitchell and Agle 1997, Who is a stakeholder and what is at stake section, para. 3). The Stanford Research Institute (1963) defined stakeholders as those groups "on which the organization is dependent for its continued survival" (as cited by Mitchell and Agle 1997, Who is a stakeholder and what is at stake section, para. 4). Clarkson (1995) states "a primary stakeholder group is one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive" (Defining Stakeholders and Stakeholder Groups Section, para. 3). Although an argument can be made that any one person or group could be considered a stakeholder in the broadest sense, there are obviously people and groups of people who have a higher vested interest in organizations than others.

Mellahi and Wood (2003) state that the,

Stakeholder literature is largely underpinned by the resource dependence theory proposed by Pfeffer and Salancik. This theory indicates that, organizations must attend to the

demands of those in it's environment that provide resources necessary and important for it's continued survival...organizations will respond more to the demands of those organizations or groups in the environment that control critical resources. (p. 185)

In the case of policing, the citizens of the community are the individuals who control the critical resources, in other words funding of policing services, and are therefore stakeholders within the above definitions. As stakeholders, the community has a vested interest in policing and should become more involved with policing decisions. This is particularly the case when rapid change is occurring and important policing decisions are about to be made. Watson, Osborne-Brown and Longhurst (2002) state that,

The demands of today's society put pressure on organizations to develop new methods of working and communicating with stakeholders. The requirement for organizations [*sic*] to openly communicate on both social and ethical accounting is increasingly emerging as a standard practice as a means for organisations [*sic*] to offer greater transparency to stakeholders. (para. 2)

This sentiment is echoed by Anderson (2000) where he states, "community leaders (city councillors, mayors and citizens) involved in making funding decisions about police... must gain perspective on the necessity to plan...in order to address the complexity of issues that are coming toward us in the future" (p.46). Not only is this plan essential in the vision of what policing will look like in the future, the plan must be one in which all stakeholders involved have a say.

There is a down side to not involving stakeholders in the organization, “If any primary stakeholder group, such as customers or suppliers, becomes dissatisfied and withdraws from the corporate system, in whole or in part, the corporation will be seriously damaged or unable to continue” (Clarkson, 1995, Defining Stakeholders and Stakeholder Groups section, para. 4). Furthermore, “it is commonly argued that managers should take stakeholders seriously in order to be socially responsible”(Mellahi and Wood, 2003, p. 187). Not involving the stakeholders in decision making can also create a policing model that may not be what is best for all of the stakeholders involved. The police executive may unintentionally create what Harvey (1998) refers to as an “Abaline Paradox” or, “an action in contradiction to the data they have for dealing with problems and, as a result compound their problems rather than solving them” (p.20).

Stakeholder theory has developed as an inclusive management process that takes into consideration the stakeholders preferences regarding organizational issues. Savage, Nix, Whitehead and Blair (1991) conclude that, “as management realities change, fresh perspectives for understanding and developing organizational strategies are needed. Organizational stakeholders are a significant force affecting organizations” (p.61). As the stakeholders demand more with less, different methods of achieving desired results will have to be determined. The reality is that there is a “demand that organizations better understand stakeholders, developing new strategies for communications that reach beyond the "show and tell" approach” (Watson, Osborne-Brown and Longhurst, 2002, para. 4).

As stakeholder theory pertains to this study, the decisions made with regards to regional policing should be driven from stakeholders. The police leaders of southern Alberta have the

collective responsibility to incorporate the stakeholders preferences into the communities regional vision of what policing will become. If the police leaders do not take into account the stakeholders preferences, then the effort that has been taken to pursue this research will be all for not.

Community Policing

The region of southern Alberta shares a common policing philosophy known as community based policing. In order to understand the relationship between the community and police services, an examination of the philosophy of community based policing should be examined.

The practice of community policing as a policing model in Canada is a relatively new phenomenon. Murphy (1993a) states that, "the recent emergence of community policing as the new police reform agenda of the 1980's has been associated with a number of distinct social, political, and economic factors" (p. 14). Cooke-Scott (1998, pp. 122-123) alludes to the fact that the "Professional Policing" paradigm was the philosophy of Canadian police forces prior to the general acceptance of the "Community Policing" paradigm in Canada. As far as the origins of community based policing the literature points to the Canadian parliamentary system of governance as founded in England and as so were the founding principals of the Canadian policing. (Cooke-Scott, 1998, Chacko and Nanoo, 1993) Murphy (1993a) indicates, "in a relatively short time, community policing has replaced professional crime control policing as the dominant ideology and organizational model of progressive policing in Canada." (p.13). The

basis for the early philosophy surrounding the concept of community based policing can be connected to Sir Robert Peel's thoughts on the issue. "Peel's ideas stressed accountability through public acceptance, responsibility through an "impartial service to law", and responsiveness through the focus on the public's "acceptance" and "cooperation" as necessary elements in effective policing" (Cooke-Scott, 1998, p. 123). Oppal (1994) described community based policing as being "fundamentally different from the incident driven model of policing. It is a proactive and problem-oriented, and emphasizes the role of police as partners with the community with regard to public safety and security" (p. C2).

There are many definitions of community based policing and the research that has been conducted in the field can fill volumes. One of the issues surrounding community based policing is the actual inability to specifically define the issue. (Trojanowicz, Kappeler and Gaines, 2002, p. 2) Fielding (2002) states that,

Our research has told us that everything in the social world is relevant to community policing it is not surprising that if we want to make changes with predictable (or testable) results then we can choose from as many factors as the police institution has facets.

(p.154)

With that said, Murphy (1993b, p.3-4) outlined several definitions of community based policing that he cited from recent academic and police literature,

Community policing might best be described as a philosophical position which holds the goals of policing, the conditions which it addresses, the service it delivers, the means used to deliver them and the assessment of it's adequacy

should be formulated and developed in recognition of the distinctive experience, needs and norms of local community as well as the dictates of law and prudent procedural regulations...

[Community Policing is] a philosophy, managing style and organizational strategy that promotes proactive problem solving and police community partnerships to address the cause of crime and fears, as well as other issues...

[Community Policing] is an ongoing commitment by the police and the community to work in partnership to increase safety in the community and embrace the quality of life, with the courage that community policing places emphasis on the ongoing police community partnership in problem solving...

A recent conference on problem oriented policing used this definition, Community Policing is a philosophy, management style, and organizational strategy that promotes pro-active problem solving and police-community partnerships to address the cause of crime, violence, drug abuse and fear, as well as other community issues...

[Community Policing] is a philosophy of police service delivery which recognizes that the maintenance of order, the prevention of crime and the

resolution of crime and order problems are shared concerns and responsibilities of the community and the police...

Working in partnership, the community and the police participate jointly in decision-making related to: The identification and analyses of crime and order problems; the determination of policing priorities and needs; and, the development and implementation of strategies for dealing with crime and order problems identified. (Murphy, 1993b, p.3-4)

Griffiths, Parent and Whitelaw (2002) state that, "community policing is a philosophy, management style, and organizational strategy centered on police-community partnerships and problem solving to address problems of crime and social disorder in communities" (p. 38).

All of these definitions above allude to a workplace ideology defined as community policing, the end result being that although not necessarily definable in its entirety, the philosophy of community policing is well entrenched in the policing world in Canada.

In attempting to understand community policing and the application of community policing principals, the philosophical framework, operational component and the objectives of community policing should be discussed. Griffiths, Parent and Whitelaw (2002) cited Oppal (1994) and outlined the following,

Within the frame work of community policing:

- citizens are actively responsible for policing their own neighbourhoods and communities;
- the community is a source of operational information, crime-control knowledge, and strategic operations for the police; the police are more directly accountable to the community;
- police have a more proactive and preventative role in the community that goes beyond traditional law enforcement;
- the cultural and gender composition of a police agency reflects the community that it serves; and
- the organizational structure of the police agency facilitates broad consultation of strategic and policing issues

The objectives of community policing are:

- greater police legitimacy and public acceptance: more responsive, less authoritarian, and more inclusive;
- increased police accountability: more open communication, consultation, and collaboration with the community;
- more efficient use of police resources: new styles of police management, working relationships with the community, and use of community resources;
- increased police effectiveness through innovative strategies: problem-oriented policing, preventative and proactive strategies;

- decreased fear of crime and enhances public safety: foot patrols, community police stations, and increased police presence and visibility;
- increased job satisfaction and improved officer productivity: broadening operational responsibilities, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing autonomy of line officers;
- a reduction in the number of public complaints against the police.

In terms of operations, community policing is:

- customer oriented;
- responsive to community needs;
- open to input from citizens;
- visible in the community;
- available on the streets;
- knowledgeable and interested in the neighbourhoods and their problems;
- proactive in it's approach; and
- accountable for it's actions.

(Oppal 1994, as cited by Griffiths, Parent and Whitelaw 2002, p.42)

Each of the police agencies that are mentioned within this study publicly indicates that they practice community policing as the current policing philosophy. It will be interesting to determine if in fact this research finds that the objectives, practices and philosophies of

community policing emerge, in the opinions of the stakeholders, as being the policing philosophy of southern Alberta.

Police Leadership

As alluded to earlier in this discussion, there are many changes that will affect policing in the years to come. In order to better cope with these changes, police leaders should have the requisite knowledge and education to effectively lead their organizations. This understanding is echoed by Justice Oppal (1994) who recommends that, “the need for advanced education, in the case of chief of police a university degree, is obvious in a career that demands skills ranging from problem solving, communication, diversity training, social work, problem analyses, to understanding criminal law”(pp. E56-57). As the social, economic, political and cultural pressures increase and compound, the leadership abilities of police executives will be taxed even greater than they currently are. Murphy (2002) states that,

Given current market-oriented political and public pressures to provide strong leadership and deliver organizational change, it is understandable that many police managers and executives have begun to go beyond conventional military and public service traditions...most police executives report that they regularly read private sector management books, many seek or have business degrees, have taken private sector executive training and encourage their staff to do so. (p.13)

The new police executive will require the leadership tools necessary to lead organizations through transitional change, including transformational leadership. (Bass

1985) People don't like change; in fact some people fear it. (Senge, 1999, pp. 241-244)

The fear of change is especially prevalent, it would appear, in the police organizational structure that traditionally does not easily facilitate such change. Police leaders can ease the fears of change, especially that which is caused by organizational transition, by adopting a transformational style of leadership. Densten (1999) states that,

Transformational leadership behaviours alter the higher order needs of followers by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and values. Such behaviours are important to the leaders of senior police officers because they can directly influence rank-and-file officers and any process of change. (Background Section, para. 4)

If the goal is to promote or foster an environment within the police organization that facilitates change, leaders must take steps to rid their organizations of the fear that exists. To be successful, the leader will necessarily possess the ability, as does any transformational leader, to scan the horizon for any future issues that may create problems for organizational change. This position on transformational leadership has been put forth by Bass (1990) who states that, "In order to succeed, the firm needs to have the flexibility to forecast and meet new demands and changes as they occur and only transformational leadership can enable the firm to do so" (Implication for Organizational Structure Section, para. 2).

In order for any successful change to occur, the leader within an organization should have a clear vision as to the future of his or her organization. Leaders can arrive at a vision in one of two ways, either unilaterally or with input from others. It is, however, difficult to impose your

vision onto others and to do so goes against the grain of transformational leadership. In fact, Kouzes and Posner (1995) state that, "a vision is inclusive of the constituents aspirations; it's an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good" (p. 124). Kouzes and Posner have recognized that input from stakeholders is paramount in determining if those initiatives implemented will have the desired impact on their lives.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) seem to believe it is so important that, "The first task in enlisting others is to identify our constituents and find out what their common aspirations are" (p. 129). In addition, Yukl (2002) states that, "To develop an appealing vision, it is essential to have a good understanding of the organization, it's culture and the underlying needs and values of employees and other stakeholders" (p. 164). The intention of this paper is to ask the constituents of southern Alberta what they want in regards to a policing model so that we can enable a shared vision that will assist community leaders in making important policing decisions in the future.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

There is a dearth of police research in Canada (Murphy, 1999) this is particularly the case in the field of police regionalization in Canada. McDavid (2003) echoes this sentiment whereby he states,

There has been only one systematic study of the amalgamation of police departments in Canada. It was of the Halifax amalgamation, which was legislated by the Nova Scotia government in 1996 and combined three police departments serving about 200,000 persons. (p. A7)

In fact, my research has not found a comparable study in Alberta that has investigated police regionalization based on stakeholder preference.

Fortunately, police regionalization has been studied in the United States, especially in the states of California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. (Finney, 1999, 1991, Governors Center For Local Government Services, 1998, Gyimah-Brempong, 1987, Krimmel, 1997) Although, issues are similar they are not identical especially in the area of who pays for services between the two countries.

In order to determine the stakeholder preference with regards to regionalization in southern Alberta, a postmodernist methodological approach will be undertaken. In this case, the stakeholders will be people who have vested interests in the outcomes of the research. This

phenomenological approach to understanding this issue is described by Palys (1997) where he maintains that,

Any effort to understand human behaviour must take into account that humans are cognitive beings who actively perceive and make sense of the world around them, have the capacity to abstract from their experience, ascribe meaning to their behaviour and the world around them and are affected by those meanings. (p. 16)

In order to understand the perception of a specific group of people, qualitative research designs lend themselves to these investigations, “they emphasize the process, perception and their meanings, and how these emerge and change” (Palys, 1997, p.22).

In keeping with qualitative research methods, the data gathering process is very important.

Qualitative researchers view the data gathering process itself as informative, maintaining that one must be open to any new directions that may emerge in the context of the interview because of the unique perspective of the participant. (Palys, 1997, p.155)

By conducting an iterative process (Palys, 1997, p. 298) within my action research design, I hope to encounter issues that I will be able to further explore with chosen stakeholders of southern Alberta. Action research is described by Glanz (1998) as a “type of applied research...that is conducted by practitioners to improve practices” (p.20). From an action

research perspective, this dialectic or cyclical approach compounds and can provide deep, rich, meaningful results. Furthermore, “both the general increase in significance of qualitative social research in the Social Sciences as well as theoretical developments has led to a significant expansion of questions and of the methodological spectrum of qualitative social research” (Meuser and Löscher, 2002, Section 3, para. 2).

Action research is a “methodological process of inquiry” (Stringer, 1999, p.6,) and is an important methodology for this research. It is based on the assumption that “all stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the problem under study, should be involved in the process of investigation” (Stringer, 1999, p.10). This methodology also is inherent in the principal of community policing whereby

Police must view the public as well as other government and social services organizations as a ‘part of’ as opposed to ‘apart from’ their efforts. This change in conventional thinking advocates efficiency with effectiveness, quality over quantity, and collaborative problem solving and creative solutions to crime and disorder. (Peak and Glensor, 1999, p.19)

The synergy that exists between community policing and action research will benefit the important community based research that is being conducted within this study.

Data Gathering Tools

For the purposes of this research, a sample of stakeholders in southern Alberta will be requested to participate in face-to-face interviews. It is my contention that the people interviewed should have a basic understanding of the police universe including the political and economical aspects of policing. Chief Administrative Officers (CAO's), commonly known as town and county managers within the region of southern Alberta will provide the heterogeneous sample this study requires. As individuals hired by elected officials, CAO's are involved in local government and greatly assist key decision makers, including councils and commissions. Strictly by the position they hold, I make a central assumption to this research, that they hold the requisite knowledge to provide informed data and that they are stakeholders. In an effort to obtain the largest controlled and most representative sample possible and an overall stakeholder preference, I interviewed one stakeholder, CAO, of each community in the region of southern Alberta.

I have chosen face-to-face interviews as the research instrument for this research. Face to face interviews are noted as being well suited for qualitative research methods as Palys (1997) describes, "The interaction of interviewer and respondent also offers benefits that can enhance the quality of the data collected" (p. 154). Palys further indicates that interviewers can clear up any issues surrounding clarity of issues, the respondent doesn't have to be literate, skilled interviewers can build rapport with the respondent that can assist in issues surrounding anonymity and establish as well as increase contacts for future longitudinal studies.

There are other benefits associated with face-to-face interviews. These include the ability of the researcher to be involved in the process rather than having employees or students complete

telephone or survey type questionnaires. (Palys, 1997, p.156) Palys further argues that face-to-face interviews work very well in limited geographical settings. (p. 156) Stringer (1999) indicates that, "interviews enable participants to describe their situation. The interview process not only provides a record of their views and perspectives but also symbolically recognizes the legitimacy of their views" (p. 68). This research method would therefore be an excellent avenue in a regional study of the region of southern Alberta.

Study Conduct

To conduct the face-to-face interviews, a structured set of questions was utilized as a starting out point. The potential result being an open dialogue surrounding the issues mentioned throughout the interview process. I drove to the communities in an effort to engage the participants. Inroads were made with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), the Alberta Association of Police Governance (AAPG), and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police (AACP). All three groups representatives were interested in this research and I anticipated participation in the interviews.

The participants were notified about the study and formal times were arranged for meetings that lasted approximately 1 –2 hours. Interviews were recorded electronically and held in locations that were comfortable for the respondent. The information collected was analyzed at a later time.

As indicated earlier, there is very little theoretical information surrounding regionalization in Canada, therefore this research may be seen as being very timely.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Study Findings

There are 19 municipal districts within southern Alberta that were included in the geographic region of this study of which, 17 Chief Administrative Officers (CAO's) were interviewed. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours. The duration of the interviews was dependant on the knowledge of the CAO, his or her understanding of the issues, mere time constraints and general interest in the study. All interviews were conducted in the offices or homes of the CAO's and occurred between January 23, 2004, and February 18, 2004.

One notable event occurred within the time frame of this study, which could be construed to have had an influence on the findings of this study. This event was a major news release (Government of Alberta, 2004), regarding the funding of policing services that may or may not have had a bearing on the preferences of the stakeholders. On February 17, 2004 the Alberta Solicitor General stated that there would be a new policing funding formula for the communities of Alberta announced before the end of April. This press release occurred just after a very positive Speech from the Throne, which indicated that in Alberta, there would be more money provided for policing by the Alberta Government. There were three interviews conducted after this announcement was made. Two of the CAO's were aware of the release, the third was not. The two that indicated that they were aware stated that the decision would not affect their community or their preferences as they pertain to my study. The benefit of being able to conduct the interviews within a three-week time frame allowed for the fewest amount of variables or internal or external factors to present themselves and skew any of the results.

As alluded to earlier, this study had a very high response rate; in fact 90% of the regions CAOs agreed to be and were interviewed. This indicates that the themes that emerge as a result of this study have a very high degree of reliability as nearly all of the regional stakeholders' preferences were obtained. (Neuman, 1997)

The findings within this paper are written in such a way as to guarantee the anonymity promised the stakeholders being interviewed. The paraphrased responses of the stakeholders have been indented and italicized and when required, to remain in context, some discussions have been placed within brackets to assist in their clarification of some stakeholder preferences that may appear to be out of context. The findings are divided into 11 different sections and are written separately. The reader may find that some of the findings differ from question to question and in some case may even contradict each other. In one set of perceived circumstances the stakeholders may believe that regionalization may decrease service levels, but on the other hand, when asked a different question, the stakeholders may perceive that service levels may in fact increase. These discrepancies demonstrate the complexity of factors, both internal and external, that cloud the issues at hand and it's the fact that there are discrepancies within the findings that legitimizes this research.

The following table outlines the structure of policing currently in place within the region of southern Alberta. This table may shed insights for the reader into the regional dynamics at play.

Table 1.

Funding and police service agreement for each municipality in southern Alberta

Municipality	Policing Service Provider	Do They Pay	Contract, Provincial Police, RCMP Contract	Subsidized Federally
City of Lethbridge	Lethbridge Regional Police	Yes	Contract	No
Cardston County	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
County of Lethbridge	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
M.D. of Pincher Creek	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
M. D. of Taber	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
County of Warner	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
Town of Cardston	RCMP	No	RCMP Contract	Yes
Town of Coaldale	Lethbridge Regional Police	Yes	Contract	No
Municipality of the Crowsnest Pass	RCMP	Yes	RCMP Contract	Yes
Town of Fort Macleod	RCMP	No	RCMP Contract	Yes
Town of Granum	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes

Town of Magrath	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
Town of Milk River	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
Town of Picture Butte	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	Yes
Town of Raymond	RCMP	No	RCMP Contract	Yes
Town of Taber	Taber Police Service	Yes	Contract	No
Town of Vauxhall	RCMP	No	Provincial Police	No

The significant point that this chart raises is that there is inequity with regards to who pays for policing in southern Alberta and who does not. It is clear that the communities policed by the RCMP are receiving financial benefit by either contracting or accepting the RCMP as their police service. It should be noted that currently, the RCMP would not enter into any municipal policing contract in Alberta that is not a full cost recovery contract. Communities that wish to have their own police services do so without any designated provincial or federal policing monies. The province, in the past, provided a policing grant but it was eliminated over a decade ago. The system that is in place is inequitable and as pointed out by the Alberta M.L.A. Review, needs to be changed.

What Are The Stakeholder Perceptions Toward Community Policing?

Community Policing was viewed by the majority of the stakeholders as an important policing philosophy. Most of the conversations surrounding community policing revolved around the policing concept as a problem solving model or a method of policing.

Community policing is about involvement with a process, where we help the police maintain safe communities.

Community policing is a problem-solving tool, we [the community] have needs and issues, the other party [police] has the resources to help.

If you don't understand the problems of the community, it's hard to solve the problems of that community.

Community policing engages the public through consultation in the decision making process.

It's the only kind of policing, there has to be community policing, we are inextricably tied together, the police have to interact with the community.

Generally the conversations changed from policing philosophy to one of whether or not community policing is practiced in the communities of our region. There are several reasons why stakeholders may perceive that community policing is or is not being practiced by the different policing agencies of southern Alberta. The first is that the definition of community policing is not well known by people who are not, and sometimes who are, involved in policing as a profession. This sentiment is well made out in a Human Resources Development Canada (2001) publication on policing whereby it states, "there is general agreement on the *conceptual*

definition of community policing...however, there is little agreement on an operational definition of community policing”(p.32). This lack of an operational definition may create a problem whereby stakeholders are unable to measure the efficiency and efficacy of community policing as a practice. One stakeholder was very blunt, indicating very early that he/she was not familiar with what community policing was.

Secondly, although community policing as a philosophy has been adopted by most of the police forces across Canada, scarce resources have left the implementation of community policing in the rural communities behind larger centers. One CAO indicated that community policing would be a good idea if it were affordable. The Human Resources Development Canada (2001) study of policing indicates that community policing can be expensive to implement and often draws resources from traditional policing sectors or patrol functions. (pp. 32-33)

A third issue may lie directly on the shoulders of the leaders of policing organizations throughout the region of southern Alberta. Arguably, it is up to the police leaders to demonstrate and indicate where community-policing initiatives have been productive and utilized in day-to-day policing operations. It is only through effective means of communication that successes are shared and the stakeholders become aware of the benefits of community policing approaches.

Wasn't aware that community policing existed until the RCMP developed an initiative in the area.

Seems to be a fad at the time, the latest direction policing is going.

A lot of it depends on the commander of the police service.

A strong theme that emerged throughout the data was the dissatisfaction felt by the stakeholders in relation to the overall allegiances of some police services and police officers to their community and the philosophy of community policing. In most cases the CAO's who spoke of dissatisfaction were well aware of community policing practices, but believed that the reality is that community policing is not being implemented.

I don't think community policing happens.

The RCMP as a Federal agency does not have the allegiance to our community, they are a federal agency and they let us know it.

We have gone through numerous detachment commanders; the police are not linked to our community.

A real good story is given, but they don't want to be bothered.

In most cases, the community input is ignored if it doesn't fit into the existent community programs.

Most cases, its lip service.

Involvement of the community in policing, I'm not sure if it occurs.

If it's practiced, it's a good thing.

You get the feeling we have input into policing, but we really don't.

Not very impressed with community policing.

Several rural communities were not impressed with the fact that community policing is stated to be utilized in their communities, but that in some cases, police officers who police their communities don't even reside within their municipal boundaries. There was a feeling or attitude that policing was something being done "to" some of the stakeholders rather than being done "with", them.

Police Officers need to be part of our community; it's a 24-hour thing.

It's important to have a policing presence in the community.

We have two officers that live within our community; it's a good thing.

Another important theme that emerged was in relation to the individualized specific cultures of some of the communities and the implementation of federally mandated programs that may not meet the policing needs of the specific community.

The community problems aren't being addressed; they are federal mandates that we may not require.

The police programs have to fit the community not the community fitting the police programs, there needs to be more community impetus in the philosophy of community policing.

To a degree there is community policing, but they seem to be federal programs that arrive here rather than community driven specific to our community culture.

Imposing policing on the community does not breed success, [you need] buy in.

Several CAO's commented on the fact that they were upset with the imposed mandates of certain police services being forced on their communities when in fact, they don't feel that they have a need for the imposed mandates. An example of this was mentioned by several CAO's when they spoke about the federal terrorism initiative of the RCMP and the fact that this was a strategic priority of their police service. The CAO's didn't understand the need for spending

local policing dollars on anti-terrorism when the specific policing needs of the communities were not being adequately addressed.

Another theme that emerged, which will be addressed later in this paper, is in relation to the stakeholders believing that if they didn't pay directly for policing services, then their community didn't necessarily deserve to be the benefactors of community policing.

Overall, community policing was seen as a philosophy that was well accepted by the stakeholders of the region of southern Alberta. However, implementation as a policing practice was suspect. The overall blame was not attributed to any individuals, more towards a systemic problem attributed to the lack of willingness of the police services to practice the philosophies of community policing and in essence to practice what they preach.

How are police service standards important to your community?

Police service standards as a topic generated much discussion that took many different tangents. Of importance to this research was the fact that none of the stakeholders mentioned the Policing Standards Committee that has been overseeing the development of Alberta policing standards since July of 1999. (Government of Alberta, 1999, Introduction Section) Although the Alberta Government indicates that stakeholders were consulted in the process, the CAO's of southern Alberta did not mention or refer to the committee or document.

In spite of this a theme that emerged from the data was in relation to the stakeholder's preference for police standardization throughout the province.

Community wants the assurance that the police force has the same standard as the community next door.

There is a need for policing services at a certain level, it maintains order.

The province sets the standards and therefore what they impose is good enough for our community.

Standards should be fair across the board; they should be the same in the community next door.

The standards should be provincial based. Not community, there should be a level of expectation of a police officer across the province not just within the boundary of our municipality.

This interesting theme coincided with the preference of stakeholders to understand the fact that different communities throughout the region may not require the same level of service standard, but when they received policing services then they expected it to be of high calibre. The stakeholders were also keen to point out that the communities in general don't understand the need for policing standards until the community calls for police response.

The community doesn't realize what they need until a problem arises.

The standards are situational; we don't need them all the time.

I don't think there is the same (rural vs. urban) expectation until a call is made.

Sometimes the need is situational to a certain extent.

The public should not have different expectations about police across the board.

It is critical that we have a fully standardized police service.

The issue of the financial cost of standardization was spoken to by several of the CAOs. There was a partial consensus that stakeholders preferred to have the service standards of a larger police service, when needed, without having to pay for the level of service on a full time basis. It was generally accepted that the smaller communities are unable to pay for certain services and therefore would have to rely on the larger regional communities for emergency support and expertise in time of need.

It comes down to the community's ability to pay, we can't expect to have the same levels of standards as the big city, we can't afford it.

Correlation between setting and paying for standards, if we were paying my answer for that question would be different.

The standards create a unit of measurement. Sometimes standards put us on a level that we can't economically reach.

Service standards should be driven by financial considerations rather than practical considerations. Would pay more for policing if it was at a higher standard.

An interesting theme that emerged from the data was the finding that as the communities became less dense in population, and therefore more rural, they believed their requirement for service levels and standardization decreased. Of importance was the fact that the rural stakeholders accepted this lack of policing services as a normal way of rural life. Several of the rural communities referred to their preference of having very little policing requirements and therefore police service standards weren't of great importance to them. An interesting issue raised by one specific stakeholder was in relation to the movement of previously urban populations to acreages in the rural settings. The stakeholder indicated that as people who have resided in urban settings move into the rural communities, their expectations of service levels don't decrease. In fact, they become very dissatisfied when a call for service is made, but they don't get the response they experienced in the urban setting. From all indicators, this problem

will escalate as more and more people move out of the cities and populate more rural municipalities.

I don't think our current community would require fully trained investigators.

For part of it, I think you could get away with someone who is less trained than a fully-fledged police officer. Something with a little more power than a bylaw officer.

They expect basic services and not much more.

Liability was a theme that emerged strongly from the interviews. The stakeholders believed that municipal governments have to meet policing standards, imposed or not, because the liabilities surrounding the basic human need for safety and security are paramount.

The liabilities surrounding the issue create a situation where the standards need to be met. The consequences are severe if something goes wrong.

The police service needs to have the ability to get the job done; it doesn't need to be cutting edge but enough to get the job done.

The standards imposed by government relate back to the level of service that an officer can provide, if you as a community is unable to provide that level of training than you risk all the liabilities associated with such a decision.

We end up managing risk if we don't have the standards that we follow.

Practicality in policing has been lost to the CYA (Cover Your Ass) mentality.

The liability within police services is important; the standards protect our community from liability.

For some stakeholders the issue of standards came down simply to the amount of physical police presence in their community and police response times.

There needs to be presence in the community.

Expectation of 24 hour policing and as close to immediate response as can be.

The number of police officers is important and their visibility.

There was some discussion in relation to the federal standards of policing not being in line with some of the stakeholder's preferences in this region. On the other hand, some stakeholder preferred to have the federally mandated standards.

The federal standards are not in congruency with our community standards and needs.

We sometimes get lip service and their accountability is somewhere else.

I'm suspicious of the motives of the police standards; the standard of police officers is down, they don't hire the cream, they hire for quotas and I'm concerned how quota hiring affects policing standards.

Imposed standards aren't important to us, we want a say in the standards.

We want community problems dealt with rather than some of the federal initiatives such as organized crime.

We like the federally mandated standards.

The RCMP has access to a wealth of expertise that we don't have and we don't pay for.

The general conversation surrounding policing standards covered a range of important issues. Sometimes what is not said is more important than what is. In this case, at no time did stakeholders refer to specialized policing services as being important to any specific community. None of the stakeholders referred at any time to victims of crime. The specific effect of standardization was not referred to in relation to crime fighting, nor did topics such as technology or infrastructure, as may have been expected, enter the conversations.

The preferences of the stakeholders in this study can be generalized to indicate that the need for safety is crucial to their communities, both economically and from the perspective of

safety. Economically, efficient police standards were supported and the preference is that the province should set the standard and furthermore regardless of the police service that conducts the policing, they must be standard compliant.

With regards to police regionalization what areas do you feel are important?

The stakeholders were asked generally about police regionalization in an attempt to obtain on a macro level, their preferences in relation to what should or should not drive the initial impetus for police regionalization in southern Alberta. The question was put to stakeholders after reviewing some of the regional initiatives that have occurred in Alberta and focused on asking the stakeholders to consider how these movements affected their communities.

There were two major themes and several minor themes that emerged from the interviews. The first preference was related to the possibility of achieving economies of scale from regionalism. Some of the stakeholders believed that there would be little economic advantage to regionalize services, while some believed that there would be mutually beneficial economies of scale that would be experienced. Although, the jury is still out and there is no verdict as to whether or not economies of scale would be met, the preference of the stakeholders was that if regionalization achieved economies of scale, then it might sway or influence their decision in accepting or not accepting police regionalization.

Small communities can't handle some of the larger funding issues; a murder would cost us a lot of money. If we had regional funding it would benefit us.

I believe that we will see a great increase in the economies of scale.

There has to be a reason (to regionalize) maybe there are economies of scale.

There could be economies of scale, in governance, leadership or money and resources.

The whole area of shared services and resources, economies of scale.

Associate, communicate, share, get together, we experience economies of scale.

Sharing resources, training, spreading the dollars on a broader base, maximize the level of service with an optimal amount of dollars.

Economies of scale, bigger is not always better.

The economic reason, using synergy of money to provide better services.

The CAO's stated that service levels were a very important issue with regards to regionalization of policing services. The stakeholders covered many service issues, but one important emergent theme was in relation to the service level remaining the same. There appears

to be a fear that stakeholders will experience the same decrease in service as they perceive has occurred from previous regionalization initiatives.

In my business, perceptions are everything: there can be a feeling of abandonment.

Protective services are dear to people, it would be hard to change. Will the service be diminished?

It is not a panacea.

This community has had bad experiences with the hospital and educational regionalization; they are upset about the loss of services caused by the decentralization.

Will there be an inequity to us.

Unhappiness of level of service from the rural municipalities for the level of service they are being provided by the provincial police.

Foresee problems rather than the advantages.

On the other hand, several CAO's felt that as stakeholders' service levels may increase.

Increase of services could occur as a result of regionalization.

Regionalization may improve quality of service, quantity of service and service availability.

I see the opportunities for the communities to increase service levels.

It could lead to greater efficiencies, more resources available.

Several of the stakeholders agreed that service levels, at minimum have to remain the same if any regionalization initiative was to take place, including that fact that service levels have to be fair across the board.

Service levels have to stay the same.

Uniform standards of response for each person or community.

Communication mustn't diminish as a result.

The public has to be convinced that service levels will not decrease.

Planning and coordinating to determine that the actual players are going to get an adequate level of service.

Another preference of stakeholders was the issue of control. Although governance is spoken to later in this study, several stakeholders spoke about control as a central area of concern.

Ratepayers feel that they will lose control, or serving the local need.

I read that the lack of control of policing is pushing some of the rural municipalities to reconsider policing options.

Perception is that you lose control, to the extent that you had control in the first place.

Representation at the macro level would be important. Accountable representation is important.

Our voice would need to be heard.

You lose autonomy or control of the services.

Although control was important, where and by whom the control was asserted was less important to the stakeholders. In other words, the centralization of administrative functions and responsibilities was seen as a benefit of regionalism; however the stakeholders needed the

assurance that centralization would not cause a lack of their own community's influence and control of policing services.

The governance of policing at a macro level will create benefits.

It centralizes and moves some services out of communities.

Any regionalization issue causes problems with centralization.

There may be some centralized administration of services.

You can do the same thing; you can decrease admin size by regionalizing.

On the macro level, regionalization of policing services came down to the preference of stakeholders to achieve economies of scale and to maintain some form of control of policing services. The perception of the CAOs was that the prior negative issues surrounding previous regionalization processes would be a stumbling block to any future regionalization initiative. However, if control and service levels would increase or stay the same, with the benefit of economic savings, then police regionalization would be their preference. One CAO made it clear when he stated, "if it's the right thing, people will do it".

What might you expect to be some advantages of police regionalization?

This next question posed during the interviews was geared to initiate a more specific discussion in relation to the advantages of police regionalization. Asking the stakeholders about the disadvantages of police regionalization followed. These questions enabled the stakeholders to concentrate on what their preferences may be and allowed the discussion to progress on a more positive vs. negative aspect.

The theme that emerged as the most dominant preference was the cost savings that could occur through regionalization. In most of the CAO's discussions, the saving of dollars was an advantage that was seen as a possible outcome of regionalization.

There may be a cost advantage.

Cheaper costs I would hope.

Economies of scale.

Better use of available funding.

Economy of scale.

Better use of money that's pooled allows new initiatives that wouldn't be able to be conducted on our own.

Economies of scale, I see as the only argument.

You've got to have a police service, whichever is cheaper would be a benefit.

Maybe less cost to our community, economic.

There may be economies of scale that could be taken advantage of.

A sentiment that was characterized by several stakeholders was the fact that they were unsure about costs savings associated to the regionalization of policing services.

I personally don't think regional policing will save money.

Bang for the buck, but I'm not convinced that it will be.

I'm not sure we would see any advantages.

Another area of concern was the issue of specialized services and the access of the smaller communities to those specialized services. The stakeholders understood that as individual communities, the costs of having specialized services were too great and that there

may be benefits to regionalize, in other words, share services in order to spread the costs of specialized services over a larger group of taxpayers.

There could be expertise that develops from regionalism.

You might get more specific police people, specialized services.

The smaller communities may get better access to services.

Some of the smaller communities that can't access specialized services would have direct access on a regional basis.

Achieve greater levels of specialization.

Better access to technical skills.

Response times to calls may increase.

There could be specialist positions that could occur, skill levels.

Another advantage identified by the stakeholders was in relation to the employees of police services and the advantages that they may experience with the regionalization of policing services.

It provides opportunity for people who have little chance of movement.

Job enrichment, increased productivity.

Stakeholders also viewed some advantages of regionalization in the area of crime fighting. Stakeholders commented that a regional police service might help in the understanding of crime patterns, the sharing of intelligence and effectiveness of policing services in general.

Communication with our whole region would increase common issues, problems etc., we could deal with them in a more efficient manner.

There may be a benefit in fighting crime.

Larger services can stay on top of larger dynamics, they can respond better to external pressures.

Access to intelligence, the ability to analyse that information, from a crime fighting perspective.

Some of the stakeholders commented that the centralization of administrative services in policing might be an advantage of regionalization. The duplication of those services may be

eliminated by regionalization. Only one stakeholder commented on the issue of training and staffing and the centralization of those services.

What might you expect to be some disadvantages of police regionalization?

In general the stakeholders perceived that there might be some disadvantages to the regionalization of policing services in southern Alberta. Although there was no evidence provided of possible disadvantages, most of the stakeholder's perceptions focused on the possible loss of community identity and control or input over policing functions. In general, these themes emerged from stakeholders knowing that what they feared they were going to lose from regionalization was something that they didn't already possess. For example, as described in question number 1, many stakeholders believed that they didn't have input into the policing services that they were currently receiving, however a perceived disadvantage was that they feared losing input as a result of regionalization. It was interesting that the stakeholders believed they could lose something they never possessed in the first place.

The lack of community input, it could become more bureaucratic.

Lose your identity.

Police officers with no community involvement.

Might not get input into policing, the value of input into your specific communities needs.

Different communities may require more police service than others; we may lose visibility or services. People like to see police; there is a comfort level.

The turf protection attitude causes me some concerns. Control is a big issue.

Lack of police contact with the community.

Community may feel isolated from the decision and policy makers that have the responsibility for the service.

Greater disadvantage would be the potential loss of interaction with the community.

Loss of autonomy.

Loss of influence in priorities, or a reduction.

Perceived loss of autonomy.

Police have to be seen, with regionalization we may not see them.

The feeling of separation between citizens and the police force.

The change of the identity.

If you live somewhere else and police here, it alienates the police service and the police members. The identity of the police officer could be gone.

Lose rapport with the detachment that is generally removed from your community.

Regionalization can displace community ownership of things sometimes held sacred.

Loss of control, the political perception of control.

A theme that emerged strongly from the interviews was the perception of stakeholders that service levels could decrease as a result of regionalization. This was particularly true in regards to response times to the smaller centres. The CAOs preferred to have the same response time or quicker response times to calls than they currently have.

Lack of response time.

Geographic area of southern Alberta and the way the counties are set up causes me some concern regarding response times.

Level of staffing may decrease, on paper it looks like you have larger staff but you may never see them.

Geographic area is so large, response times may be reduced.

Response times may be a factor; they may be reduced.

Distance, we have a huge geographic area with a small population.

Larger services can be slower to respond to needs that are felt at the street level.

Loss of service.

Several stakeholders did bring up the perception that economies of scale might not in fact result from regionalization and may not produce any cost saving to communities.

Could actually cost more and be less economically efficient.

Is it really cheaper, do you achieve economies of scale.

It could be more costly.

The preferences of stakeholders can be simply stated that the loss of control or input into policing would be a stumbling block in any regionalization initiative. The loss of services would also be an issue that would need to be greatly monitored by police leaders if regionalization was

to be examined any further. The economic issues were only touched upon and that, as a finding, was interesting as the basic perception for advantages of regionalization was the economies of scale that may be experienced. It is apparent that the disadvantages clearly had more to do with the how regional policing could be conducted rather than how much regional policing will cost.

What might you expect to be some of the major challenges in implementing regional policing?

The stakeholders were asked to think about themselves as being the person who was responsible for implementing a regional policing model in southern Alberta. They then were asked to explain what they expected to be some of the major challenges in implementing regional policing. There were many perceptions and preferences that were raised by the CAOs and there were some interesting themes that emerged from the interviews.

One main challenge that was identified by several of the stakeholders was the issue of ensuring that everyone was at the table. This was perceived to be a major challenge that would have to be overcome if regionalization was to work. The preference of the stakeholders was that early in the process of regionalization, the stakeholders from throughout the region would need to be included in any visionary process.

There are many different organizations that would have to be brought together; this would be a complex task. The communities have different norms etc. that would be difficult to bring to the same table.

Meeting and identifying stakeholders of the regional system would have to be done; they would have to be brought together.

People or stakeholders have input, it would have to be a cooperative vision at all levels.

The stakeholders are number one; getting buy in would be difficult.

Getting all of the partners at the table.

Coordination of getting everyone at the table.

Stakeholders need to be involved in the process from the beginning, they need to share the same values and have the same hopes wants and needs of the region. If not, this would be a disaster.

The expectations and visions of where they would like to see policing go would have to be discovered. There will have to be tradeoffs because everyone's expectations may not be met. We are talking about basic human needs here, we need to meet them. Policing is one of the fundamental reasons we are municipalities, for protection.

The CAOs also indicated that getting “buy-in” from the communities would be a major challenge. The idea of “buy-in” was different from the idea of being involved in the process. The stakeholders seemed to prefer to be able to have a list of benefits that could be explained to

the stakeholders. This would open the door to community conversations that could start the different municipalities talking to each other.

Getting buy-in from the citizens in the region.

Community buy-in or acceptance.

Getting buy-in from municipal councils.

Obtaining buy-in will be difficult.

The stakeholders are number one; getting buy in will be difficult.

Several of the CAO's spoke to the issue of community identity and how closely linked they felt the police services of their own community was enshrined in their sense of community identity.

The loss of identity is a big issue, lack of personal connection is important. It is an issue in the smaller communities.

Community identity, we have folks that don't like the regional issue because they feel we have lost our identity.

Jealousy, each community wants to keep their own piece of the pie.

Another perception that emerged from the interviews was the fear that larger centres would be the main benefactors of any regional initiative and that the smaller communities have possibly, too much to lose. This was evident as many of the CAOs spoke about service levels and police officer's personal commitment to communities being issues that were addressed at length. This was also brought out by the feared centralization of services that includes police infrastructure, such as police detachments.

Ensure that people are confident with coverage levels.

Are the resources there financially, personnel etc.

Keep constables living within the community.

Closing facilities in communities.

The bigger communities tend to be the benefactors of regionalism; this is very dramatic for smaller communities.

The loss of infrastructure within the community can cause problems.

You don't want to weaken the regions outlying communities; centralizing services can gut the outlying communities.

Ensuring members are residing in the community that they are going to serve.

People should live within the community they police that would be a challenge.

Ensuring that services don't decrease.

Funding itself was not seen as a major challenge of regionalization; the preference was that the stakeholders believed that the funding formula that would be used in any regional model should be fair. The issues surrounding governance were raised by some of the stakeholders but the perception of control of policing was not an overriding theme or perceived as a major challenge of implementation.

The financial levels would be important. Lobby governments to ensure that there should be enough funding.

Making sure that there is fairness out of it all.

Structure of the oversight, how do you do that, maintain current level of perceived influence.

Accountability, putting the commission or boards in place.

Explaining costs of expectations.

Method of supervision for policing in a regional force.

Money is always an issue and the facilities are important.

Of interest were the stakeholder's comments that related to the shared culture of southern Alberta. In some cases the stakeholders preferred to ensure that these specific community cultures are protected in any regional movement. On the other hand, some stakeholders perceived that there were more issues that southern Albertans shared with each other than not.

Cultural challenges, there is a real sense of pride in southern, Alberta. There is more that binds us than divides us.

Institutionally, our public institutions have to be a reflection of our environment. That includes policing.

Brining together the different cultures that exist within each of the departments.

Bridging the cultural differences, the values.

There is no common history and bringing those expectations together would be a very large issue.

One stakeholder believed that police regionalization would be overbearing and daunting to the point that it would be very difficult to implement. This specific CAO believed that for a regional police service to succeed it would need to be a forced initiative from the province.

If you had a provincial mandate it would work because there is a hammer.

Another stakeholder commented on the difficulties that could swamp any regional policing initiative, but on reflection perceived that the citizens of our region would make the right decision if it came down to it.

It would be an uphill battle all the way, if it is the right thing to do, people will do it, they don't need to be told.

Some CAOs spoke to the preference of people against change and that any change initiative would bring about resistance to that change from the community.

The fear of transformation.

Politics, anytime you have change it becomes and challenge.

Resistance to change.

Change could bring about issues and there would need to be contingency plans.

What aspects of police governance are important to your community?

The strongest emergent theme in relation to this question was the different perceptions that each stakeholder had on the issue of control or governance of policing. It was interesting that the CAOs varied greatly in their perceptions of what control is, what control costs and whether or not control was even needed. In the eyes of the CAOs, control meant governance, the question from them was, do they need to govern? There was also an expectation of the stakeholders that control costs money, therefore if the stakeholder's own community didn't pay for policing, or paid little for policing, it was their perception that they didn't deserve control, or at least didn't have the right to say, if they didn't pay. There seemed, in relation to this question, to be an attitude from the stakeholders that the issues of police funding and control were not issues that caused them great concern. Several stakeholders were of the preference that policing should be left up to the policing services and that all their community wanted to do was write the cheque for the service.

What control do you actually have, control is a myth. It's situational, when there is a problem yes, but when there is no issue, we are happy to cut a cheque.

We don't have any [governance] that has led to some frustration.

Our community believes that if we don't pay for it, then we give up our governance.

We don't have a say because we don't pay.

Most of the community couldn't tell you what governance is.

Because we are not involved, it's not an issue for us. The structure in place does it for us.

Community is happy to cut a cheque and not worry about it.

I think knowing that they are there is most of what we need.

Ultimately it is important but we have little need for governance.

The community doesn't want governance in relation to policing.

Our community is happy with allowing the policing to occur without much governance at all.

If you don't pay you shouldn't have a lot of say.

A theme that emerged from the stakeholders was the preference to govern policing services through the ability to have a voice in their police service. If governance was important to the community, then the governance had little to do with control, but more to do with strategic priorities, policy or objectives of the police service.

That we have input into the direction that we want policing to take on our community.

That the policies would meet the standards of the community. That the officers would see it important to participate in community activities.

The region would set the priorities for the police force.

The police are accountable to the community, through governance this occurs.

There is access to provide input to the police and they report back.

We don't want to be in control, we want to work together.

Feedback from the community allows you to provide direction.

The ability to set priorities for the police and for it to be respected.

Reasonable governance and not governance by control, excellent feedback loop will allow for the appropriate level of service within the community.

Local concerns need to be addressed, and for that there needs to be some form of governance.

Feeling that the community has the ability to effect change in service delivery.

There was a stakeholder preference that governance be from a regional board or as some stated, a commission. The individual community's representation on any future regional board was raised by some of the stakeholders as an important issue.

Representation on a board in the long run would be important.

Want to feel they have a voice and who is that through. We feel that we have a say at the table.

The governance committee needs to make decisions; they have to have the ability to control.

Something similar to a police commission.

Regional police force reporting to a regional government.

The control of the police service is important, but there should be a commission.

Of interest to this research was that fact that police governance didn't seem to be an important issue. Stakeholders appeared to be content with policing being something that occurred outside of the spectrum of municipal government. It appeared that the communities, which had their own police services, were used to the fact that they had a say in providing governance of policing services, normally through a police commission. Most were happy with that relationship and the dynamics that accompany that relationship. For other stakeholders, there was a perception that they didn't have a right to govern, that governance was something that was outside of their concern. The opinion was that by not paying for a service, that their right to govern somehow decreased. The stakeholders, for some reason, believed that if they didn't pay by direct taxation through the municipal government, then somehow their right to govern decreased. There was no mention of the nexus between monies obtained through provincial taxation and the right to govern. The argument that could have been raised was the idea that policing is either paid by municipal taxes or provincial taxes, nevertheless it is paid for by the public purse, therefore, whether directly or indirectly, the community pays for policing, and therefore should have a say.

This preference also contradicted the stakeholder's belief, as observed earlier, that community-policing practices utilized in the region of southern Alberta. Currently the communities stated they preferred and wanted community policing as a practice in their communities however, they stated during the discussion on governance that their communities

didn't want to govern or, because they don't pay, they shouldn't have a say. This paradox emerged as an issue that was very noticeable within the discussions. The data suggests that the definition of governance and the rationality of who pays for the permission to govern are issues that would need to be discussed if any further regionalization initiatives were to take place.

What issues surrounding police funding do you see as affecting your current provider of policing services?

Police funding is a topic of interest in Alberta, this is evident from the press release alluded to earlier in this paper dated February 17, 2004, issued by the Solicitor General of Alberta. Of the municipalities that were included within this research, three were policed by municipal contracted policing services, three communities had entered into contracts with the RCMP to provide policing at a federally reduced rate, and the remaining eleven communities did not have any contract for policing and were policed by provincial police, in their case the RCMP. The issue of funding was interesting because, depending on what policing model the community was utilizing, it was assumed the stakeholder's answers would be different.

For the most part, the communities that don't pay for policing were discouraged by the fact that a funding change could occur. Their preference was to keep the status quo. This wasn't surprising, as they don't pay anything now and would if any per capita funding formulas were developed. The communities who receive federally subsidized policing, through the RCMP indicated this same preference. They believed that the status quo was working for their communities. When pushed on the issue, the stakeholders took a business model approach to

funding issues indicating that basic economics would dictate what services they could afford.

The policing options would be weighed and then a community decision made.

The discount that we have is a great influence on our current provider of policing services.

The bottom line, it's financial, all of our decisions gravitate to our money and what we can pay.

We would go elsewhere if we could save money.

The minute we start paying, there will be an interest in looking at alternatives.

We are likely a community that would pay the bill rather than choose another option or change the current provider of policing services.

Politics, there would be some issues about funding changes; we wouldn't go silently into the night.

If the funding formula was to change we may see a change, but it would be the entire package.

Our county would want to look at who would be doing the policing if that was the case.

Policing services are a people business, why should we have to pay if we don't have the population.

I don't think it would change our current provider of policing services.

If we had to pay, it would be devastating to us, we could not sustain a police service or policing.

Some of the stakeholders commented on the funding formula that is currently in place in Alberta and the choices they had in relation to policing, already taking into consideration the pros and cons of regionalization. Some stakeholders provided thoughts on how they would like to see changes in the funding ratio.

There is disparity in the province, some pay and some don't. Everybody pays through tax provincially, but there is a double standard because municipal taxes in my community also pays for policing. There needs to be a funding formula developed to make it fair.

We have choice right now, we can form our own police, we can form a regional police service or we can go with the Mounties. Option 1: too much money, Option 2: Better direction of policing services, Option 3: Works with a lack of input.

We believe that the currently funding formula is unfair, it is not equitable.

Some communities don't pay for policing but collect money from fines. It's a moneymaker but for everyone else it is a big expense. What am I getting for that price?

The fee structure should be based on where the offences are committed not on population.

Other stakeholders indicated that they hadn't given this issue much thought as it hadn't been an issue that their community has been asked to face. Others recognized the plain economic facts about paying for services.

The reason why it hasn't come up yet is that it is free, why would we change.

You get what you pay for and we don't pay anything, so what does that tell you.

We don't get involved because we don't have to give them any money, if we had to pay, we would want to be much more involved.

Other stakeholders preferred to consider police funding as a much larger issue than just their own communities needs.

With provincial standards we were unable to meet the financial issue surrounding policing.

A lot will depend on what the province does.

We provide a service locally that is not local. We have to handle criminals that come from the rest of Canada that we have to pay for. The policing of our community is a larger issue than my community, but we get minimal funds for policing externally.

The province needs to give more money to the communities for policing.

Describe where police regionalization may benefit your community?

The last two questions asked the stakeholders to think specifically about, within their own communities, where police regionalization may or may not benefit their community. The stakeholders gave many different responses to the question of possible benefits. The issues were numerous and there was some consensus on some emergent themes. The first theme was in relation to service levels and the perception of stakeholders that policing services may increase through regionalization. This service increase also included specialized police services.

We would have 24-hour coverage.

Larger staff pool, better services.

May help if it came down to a major investigation.

We may have access to a school resource officer to come to our community. Increased services.

Targeting criminal activities as described by the community.

Might get more police officers.

If we were part of the regionalization it would increase services provided.

We could fight crime better, it would be an improvement.

Increased presence would be beneficial.

There may be specialized equipment or special staff that result.

A broader base or resource to draw from people.

Cost savings or increasing the levels of service, they are both economies of scale.

May increase services

Service standards

Access highly technical services you may not have.

We know of things happening that we can't get policing for, minor thefts etc, they aren't being investigated because of lack of service.

Interesting to this study was the fact that most, if not all of the stakeholders gave reasons *why* regionalization may benefit their communities, but very few mentioned *how* regionalization could do this. This may be an area for future study.

Another point made by a few stakeholders was their clear statements that in fact regionalization may not be a benefit to their community.

Can't see it sorry.

I don't think I will

I don't think it would, we have a very low crime rate.

I don't think it would.

Several stakeholders spoke to the benefits associated with the possible cost savings of regionalization.

Reduce our costs.

In the long run it would benefit us financially.

There may be some economies of scale, but it would be sucked up within the system.

Economies of scale will provide a better financial picture.

A few stakeholders referred to the possible benefits that neighbouring communities might experience from increased communication and synergies.

Ability to cultivate partnerships and educational pieces that are outside of law enforcement.

Helps in relationships between municipalities

Increased service levels seemed to be the greatest benefit that stakeholders perceived may be realized through regionalization. Funding, although spoken to, was not seen as the *only* reason to initiate any regional initiative. This finding is similar to the studies completed by Finney (1991,1999), Gyimah-Brempong (1987) and most recently the study of the future of policing on Vancouver Island conducted by Hames (2000). This leads me to believe that cost effectiveness and possible economies of scale should not be the driving force that should initiate

any regionalization movement in southern, Alberta. More importantly, service levels and the possibility of increasing service levels to communities through police regionalization should be the major contributing factor.

Describe where police regionalization may be non-beneficial to your community?

There were several emergent themes that stakeholders perceived as issues that may be non-beneficial to their specific communities. The question asked, and the conversations that ensued, spoke to the stakeholder's own ideas of where regionalization as a policing model may be a step backwards. For the most part, stakeholders were of the opinion that service levels would decrease with regionalization. One particular service that was spoken to by several stakeholders was the issue surrounding the potential loss of police response, or the timeliness of response, by police officers to exigent calls.

There may be slower response times.

May have perception that response times would be less.

Might not see as many police officers.

Response times to calls.

Loss of service.

If it was stationed out of Lethbridge [response times] it would be a decrease, there would have to be satellite offices.

I think we would lose a great deal of people, resources etc.

We may lose services and that would be non-beneficial to our community.

I believe that regional policing would increase response times and the expectation is service levels would decrease.

The centralization of services could occur and we wouldn't want it if it affected our service level.

This finding was interesting as the previous question asked stakeholder about the benefits of regionalization and the perception was that service levels would increase. This leads me to speculate that stakeholders are confused about whether regionalization would be beneficial or not. One could say that perhaps the stakeholders are ambivalent on the issue or perhaps their judgment as to whether there are advantages or disadvantages, is still open to consideration.

The second emergent theme was in relation to the lack of input or control that stakeholders felt they would have, as a result of the regionalization of policing services.

We may lose contact, or input into our policing.

Our issues may not be adequately looked at; there may be more regional issues at hand.

Local issues being overlooked.

Control, we could lose some.

Lack of input into control of policing.

Lack of influence on policing priorities.

Imposition of services that the smaller community may feel aren't required in their communities, these are the big city issues like photo radar.

A third perception raised by two of the stakeholders was the issue of local identity and the potential negative impact the communities would perceive as a result of the regionalization of policing services.

The community may feel that it has lost a sense of identity, from a turf protection point of view.

Lack of identity for the smaller community.

Funding was a theme that also emerged as an issue for the stakeholders as they either perceived that regionalization would be more expensive or on the other hand less expensive for their community. Much of this perception had to do with whether or not the specific stakeholder currently paid for policing or not. Of importance to this study was the perception that when asked, what would be non-beneficial, the issue of funding came up, whereby when the benefits of regionalization was asked, funding was not a major concern.

Costs may increase; right now it doesn't cost anything.

Policing is like a big vacuum, it sucks up all the money it can.

Cost implications.

Fear of greater costs, it has cost us more in the past.

We would have to pay, we don't right now.

Would funding go up or down.

It would be more expensive, I think.

The economic factors, don't know if it is going to be more expensive.

Stakeholders were also concerned about the lack of individual police officer community commitment that the regionalization of services may bring to the table.

People would be brought here that don't know our community.

Consistency of members.

The last theme that emerged, with any degree of consistency, was in relation to governance and the method of police governance that would emerge within any regional policing initiative.

May be hard to find people to sit on the regional board, very time consuming for a part time person.

Governance, allowing small players to have a say in our community.

The governance structure may lend itself to the centralization of administration or operational services.

Anything else you would like to add?

When asked if there was anything else that the stakeholder would like to add to the interview, several stakeholders made a point of wrapping up with a closing statement. The question allowed the stakeholder to contemplate all of the issues that were raised during the previous conversation and encapsulate their ideas for one final comment. Six stakeholders made a specific comment and their perceptions are below. There were no themes that emerged from the data, but the responses are very interesting.

We have enough in common in southern Alberta that we could work together. We have enough commonality to share our policing, but we need to look after our own personal differences.

Communication processes would be a very large issue. Setting up the systems will be a very large task. The Chinook Health Region has experienced the problems of communication; it's imposed one-way communication not a synergy. You will need to stay away from that.

With the current model of policing within our community, with some changes they could become a better regional police service.

As degrees of urbanization increases, you will see a difference in expectations. The acreage lifestyle introduces attitudes to rural life of more service needs that were not there before. This will also occur in policing.

Perception of the RCMP in southern Alberta. Our experience has been that the RCMP is very well respected and that they are accepted as the law. The smaller town police or perhaps the regional police officer may not obtain that respect.

It is recognized that it is inevitable that we need to seriously consider the regionalization of policing. It's important that we recognize that funding will force this in the end. It's good to look at this now.

Out of the responses, each statement can be encapsulated into all encompassing phrases; it is interesting how each of these themes were also alluded to during the interview conversations.

- Shared values

- Communication

- Change

- Urbanization

- Professionalism

- Funding

These words, if read by themselves, would be an excellent cross section of the preferences of stakeholders in southern Alberta. If all of these words were converted into issues and were considered by the stakeholders when investigating any regional policing initiative, then any change that might occur would be met with acceptance rather than conflict.

Study Conclusions

This study revealed that the large majority of community leaders of southern Alberta believe that the community policing philosophy as outlined by their police agencies is their preferred approach to policing. However, there was little consensus over whether the espoused community policing philosophies are being implemented by police services, particularly by the RCMP. There was concern that the federally imposed mandates of the RCMP are not congruent with the communities of southern Alberta and that perhaps the RCMP allegiances lie elsewhere than the communities they police. This sentiment is alluded to earlier in this paper whereby Seagrave (1997) states, "this point has been made by Hann et al. (1985) who show how [RCMP] detachment commanders see their accountability to be owed to superiors within the force rather than to local government municipalities" (p. 86). It is further alluded to by Oppal (1994) where he speaks to the language within the RCMP Act, "it is clear that the commanding officer's

principal loyalty and accountability is to the federal solicitor general”(p. B-24). Communities wanted their police officers to reside within their municipalities; they would rather be policed by an agency whose officers live within the community. The stakeholders also believed that community policing philosophies required more communication between stakeholders and police than is currently the case in many of the municipalities in southern Alberta. Community policing was seen to be an expensive policing model that would perhaps require more resources than the communities in southern Alberta could provide. This is interesting, as the policing services of southern Alberta believe this to be the policing model of choice.

Municipality leaders in southern Alberta wanted assurance that policing standards are the same in their community as the community next door. Oppal (1994) agrees with this statement whereby he states, “proponents of regionalization suggest that, since there should be consistency in the way citizens are treated by law enforcement personnel...amalgamation of police services will result in more equitable law enforcement policies and practices within a geographic region”(p. D-4). Although the expectations of general policing are relatively low in this region, when emergent services are called upon, the level of service is expected to be high. The urbanization of the rural communities was observed to be an issue that would create pressures on policing resources. The expectation of policing services by people who once lived in the city and now have moved to rural acreages remains the same as when they were in the city. However, the rural municipalities can’t supply the same service levels as an urban area and therefore there is the potential for a conflict of values. Any change in policing models would require that the standard of policing remain the same for each municipality. A change that lowered the standard in any one or more areas would be unacceptable to all constituents.

The question of whether or not there would be economies of scale realized by regionalizing policing services was not determined by this research, other previous researchers have also drawn similar conclusions. (Murphy, 1994, Oppal, 1994, Government of Nova Scotia, 1997, Gyimah-Brempong, 1987, Finney, 1991) Further quantitative research in this regard would need to be conducted to make this determination. The communities of southern Alberta believe that regional policing would create a system where the cost of specialized policing services could be shared amongst municipalities. This realization of economies of scale should be seen as a factor to consider if any regionalization initiative were to take place in the future. The centralization of administrative services was seen as a benefit of regionalization with the caveat that rural communities keep their detachments.

The funding formula that was in place at the time of this research in southern Alberta was deemed to be unfair and not equitable; this inequity was also found to be the case in British Columbia. (Oppal, 1994, p. D-35) The change made by the provincial government in early April 2004, has done nothing to alleviate the bias that exists between municipalities; it has only increased the figures from 2500 being the population required to have free policing to 5000. The communities of southern Alberta feel that if they don't pay for policing then they don't feel they should have input into policing decisions. With the Alberta governments decision to increase the population of communities whereby policing is paid for by the Province of Alberta, there will be more communities, much larger than before, who may feel that since they don't pay their input into policing services will decrease. In fact, some communities may lose detachments all together as the pressure facing RCMP leaders has not changed.

Communities want control of their policing services, not only governance but also economic control. There is a fear that by losing their policing services, communities in southern Alberta may lose their identity. This topic is interesting as the communities wished to assert their control over policing services, however their policing contracts with the federal police don't allow for community control. There is an attitude amongst stakeholders in southern Alberta that the less the community pays for policing the less say they should have in strategic direction or control of policing services.

Visionary leadership is required for any change to occur within the policing model of southern Alberta. Stakeholder buy-in, and the involvement of communities at the commencement of any discussions are basic principals that need to be adhered to if, and or when regionalization is to take place.

Service levels and the type of service is the greatest concern of stakeholders in southern Alberta. Other factors were considered only after the service considerations had been taken into account. This leads to the conclusion that anyone who is going to tackle the initiative to regionalize policing services in southern Alberta needs to start by speaking to the people about service levels.

The current model of policing in southern Alberta was not seen as being overall problematic. Increased funding by provincial governments was seen to be a solution to many of the issues raised by the stakeholders. Instead, what is required is an improvement of some of the

communication strategies that are already in place between communities and their police services. Respondents have expressed that they want greater control over contractual policing arrangements between municipalities and the federal government. Community Policing initiatives need to become more community driven rather than externally packaged programs that are often times inappropriately brought in to solve unique community concerns. Police funding needs to be more equitable throughout the province to achieve desired stakeholder results. Regionalization of policing services is not seen as an insurmountable initiative, if the proper procedures are put in place to involve all participants in discussions at the beginning and driven by the participants' needs.

Recommendations Based on Results of This Study

Policing should not be performed in a social vacuum. This is an overriding theme that should be encouraged within the communities of southern Alberta. For years, the vision of policing in Canada has been that the community is the end user of policing services and as such the community should have input into policing priorities. It is a vision whereby police in consultation with the community leaders adapt to ever changing environments. This research suggests the importance of police and community leaders continuing conversations regarding policing in Alberta. To that end, the following are specific study recommendations that emerged from this study;

Recommendation One

That the Alberta Solicitor General conduct a review of policing in Alberta, similar to the Oppal inquiry conducted in 1994 in British Columbia. A comprehensive review of policing has not been conducted for some time in Alberta. Prior to any major change in policing, the communities of Alberta deserve to be informed on the topic prior to making important community decisions. The MLA Review conducted in 2002 focused on equitable policing, leadership and public oversight. This is simply not enough; there are many policing issues that need to be examined above and beyond the scope of that review. The Solicitor General of Alberta should cause a more comprehensive study be conducted which would investigate associated costs and appropriate levels of policing in Alberta. A comprehensive review of why policing across the Province is inequitable needs to be completed. The Province has ignored the equitable policing recommendations of the MLA Review and as such has lost the confidence of the stakeholders who participated in the MLA Review. This failure to follow the preferences of the stakeholders of Alberta is demonstrative of a leadership gap.

Recommendation Two

That the communities that have contracted policing services through the RCMP request a governance process be put in place which enables the community to have similar legislative powers as municipal police commissions allowing input, direction and governance of their policing service. The RCMP should allow for this to occur prior to any changes that may be negotiated through the provincial government contract with the RCMP. This suggestion is similar to recommendation 28 and 29 of the MLA Review (2002), however the time delay that

will occur if communities are required to wait for the contracts to be opened is unacceptable.

The benefits of allowing communities input, direction and governance of their police service are numerous. The lines of communication will open up between police and community.

Communities will receive the policing that they want and they will be able to direct resources to community concerns rather than federally imposed mandates. Currently, RCMP police officers can be moved from one community to another at the choice of the commanders of the division.

This movement can leave community detachments short of resources and unfortunately, there is little recourse for the depleted community. Governance, input and direction of policing would shift decision-making processes to the community, rather than to a group of individuals whose allegiance might lie elsewhere.

Recommendation Three

That a regionalization committee, formed by stakeholders throughout southern Alberta, be formed to investigate the issues that will potentially change the face of policing in southern Alberta. This committee should primarily include police commission members and elected officials from each community within the region. The committee could call upon police leaders to provide their opinions and provide support when required; however the final decision making process needs to come from people who directly represent the constituents of the region.

Recommendation Four

That the Alberta government creates a police service funding formula that is equitable for all Albertans. The current funding formula is unequal and fairness for all taxpayers of Alberta should be seen as a principle of government. It's very simple, a roadway can be the dividing line

between whether or not someone pays for policing in Alberta or they do not. The Government of Alberta needs to do the right thing and make the change to the funding formula. Currently, the politicians are more worried about upsetting rural communities who don't pay for policing, rather than making the cost of policing fair throughout the province. As the MLA Review (2002) suggested, a per capita formula would be the simplest formula that is equitable for all.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Organizational Implementation

The Town of Taber will benefit by the findings of this research by being able to see that there is more in southern Alberta that binds us than divides us. The factors that affect decisions made by elected officials in other communities in southern Alberta are the same factors that affect our elected officials and community. If any positive outcome is to be gleaned from this research it is that effective communication and true leadership is required to bring about organizational change within our region. The Town of Taber could take it upon itself to spearhead a committee of this type.

The government of Alberta has not been a forerunner in issues relating to policing. Although the Alberta Justice Solicitor General (2002) M.L.A. Policing Review Committee released it's findings in July of 2002, the study falls short of other initiatives, such as the Oppal inquiry in British Columbia as cited throughout this paper, or others that have been launched in other provinces and do not meet the needs of communities and policing services of southern Alberta. An example of this is in relation to the non-equitable funding scenario that currently exists in Alberta. The M.L.A. committee suggested that all Albertan's should share the load for policing, taking into account policing needs and service levels along with the ability to pay for policing. The simplest method is for the province to continue policing in rural areas, but with the municipality paying for it.

The committee recommended that a per capita based assessment would be the most appropriate. The stakeholders were polled through the M.L.A. review that was conducted by the province however, at the end of the day their collective voice was ignored. Likewise, this study

found that the current police funding formulas are not equitable. The Town of Taber may, through the findings in this research, voice its concern over this issue and take advantage of the stakeholder's opinions. Perhaps pressure could be placed on the Alberta government to change the formula so it meets more stakeholders' needs.

Eventually, in my opinion, the region of southern Alberta will be forced into a situation whereby communities will be required to regionalize services. The previous experience from other provinces is evidence enough in this regard. The time to start talking about these foreseeable changes is now and the longer the communities of southern Alberta wait to commence communication, the more likely the road to change will be uphill. If the true vision of what policing in southern Alberta is, is not discussed, the more likely it is that external pressures and influences will come to bear and create our future without our input.

Future Research

The region of southern, Alberta will require a quantitative study to determine the cost effectiveness of regionalizing policing services within the region. Although service levels and the type of service are the stakeholder's primary concern, an accurate assessment of the true cost benefits associated to police regionalization would need to be conducted before elected officials would take the next step.

The scope of the communities involved in this type of research could be expanded to include all of the communities of Alberta. These issues have further reaching consequences than

the geographic region of southern Alberta. A future researcher may want to tackle that research using a possibly different research methodology. A questionnaire may be a more suitable sample method to determine stakeholders' preferences throughout the province.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

Research Project Lessons Learned

It is important to take the time to reflect on problems and or issues that have been encountered while conducting research, in order to allow other researchers to avoid making the same mistakes that current researches may have made and also permits adult learning to take place.

The timing of this research could not have been better; the issue of policing has been a hot topic in Alberta for the past two months. I did find however that the Solicitor General's press release and current changes within policing in the province have overshadowed some of my research findings. I could not have forecast the timing of these events, so in that regard the cards fell where they did. When conducting future research, I will attempt to better assess the current political environment and try to make concessions in that regard.

If this study were to be conducted again, I would include the tripartite policing service on the Blood Reserve within my study. I was of the opinion that since the policing arrangement of the Blood Reserve was so different than that of other communities in southern Alberta, that perhaps the Blood Reserve stakeholders may not share the same policing concerns of other southern Albertans. In attempting to understand the cultural issues surrounding stakeholder preferences, the native populations of southern Alberta need to be assessed and on that issue this study is mute.

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Appendix "A": Research Consent Form

Project Title: Stakeholder Preference and the Regionalization of Policing Services

This research project is part of the academic requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training.

The student concerned is Graham Abela. Mr. Abela's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning either Dr. Gerry Nixon, Dean of, Royal Roads University at () or Ms. Angella Wilson, Coordinator, MALT, ()

This document constitutes an agreement to take part in a research program, the objective of which is to attempt to understand stakeholder preference in relation to police regionalization. This interview will consist of a number of open-ended discussion topics and is foreseen to last between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours. The open-ended questions are meant to create conversation and to obtain stakeholder preferences.

Information will be recorded in electronic format and, where appropriate summarized in anonymous form, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained in advance. A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible.

Prospective research subjects are not compelled to take part in this research project. If an individual does elect to take part, she or he is free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice, and without any other stakeholder learning about any other stakeholders' withdrawal. You may ask any question at any time during or after the interview by contacting Mr. Abela at the Town of Taber by calling (tel.)

By signing this letter, the individual gives free and informed consent to participating in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix "B": Interview Schedule

The following are questions that were utilized during the face-to-face interviews with the stakeholders of southern Alberta. The questions enabled a conversation to take place between the interviewer and interviewee, thereby allowing for the collection of the data.

What are your feelings towards community policing?

With regards to police regionalization, what areas do you think are important?

What are some advantages of police regionalization?

What are some disadvantages of police regionalization?

What are the major pitfalls of implementation?

What aspects of police governance are important to your community?

What issues surrounding police funding do you see affecting your current provider of policing services?

Are police service standards important?

Describe the areas in which police regionalization may benefit your community?

Describe the areas in which police regionalization would be non-beneficial to your community?

Anything else you would like to add?