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# **POLICE ASSOCIATION ADVOCACY – A STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

*Police Associations – Political Activism and Public Opinion*

Presentation to the

POLICE EMPLOYMENT IN 2001 CONFERENCE

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Over the past eighteen months there has been a heightened debate on issues concerning the political activity of police officers and, more particularly, police associations conducting activities on their behalf. The purpose of this presentation is to provide one association representative's perspective on the subject of police association advocacy, including:

- The role of contemporary police associations;
- The issues and trends giving rise to increased police association advocacy;
- Effective strategies in representing police association members;
- The importance of maintaining public support;
- The need for associations to engage in advocacy as a strategic priority; and,
- The challenges facing tomorrow's police leaders.

The views expressed in this document are my own. These are not necessarily representative of the views or position of the Canadian Police Association or our member organizations, and are not intended, in any way, to call into question strategies employed by any police association, domestically or abroad.

In this presentation I will make reference to a recent study undertaken by the by the Police Futures Group<sup>1</sup>, *Police Executives Under Pressure: A Study and Discussion of the Issues*. This recently published report provides excellent insight into the challenges confronting police executives, and proposes some possible solutions. I would highly recommend this book to all policing stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Biro, Campbell, McKenna & Murray, *Police Executives Under Pressure: A Study and Discussion of the Issues*, Police Futures Group Study Series No. 3, Published by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (2000) (613)233-1106

## 2.0 THE ROLE OF POLICE ASSOCIATIONS

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Police Associations have a legitimate, and in many provinces such as Ontario, Statutorily recognized role to play in representing front-line police personnel for labour-management issues. The structure of police services in Ontario has been compared to a three-legged stool, three distinct components discharging equally important responsibilities:

1. *Governance* – A Police Services Board, like the Board of Directors of a Private Sector Corporation, oversees the management of the police service, provides strategic governance through its policy-setting role, and represents the interests of its shareholders, in this case the community.
2. *Management* – Responsible for managing the operations of the police service and achieving the corporate vision established by the governors.
3. *Labour* – The association representing the interests of the front-line employees, as the collective bargaining agent.

For the system to function properly, there needs to be a balance and equality between these three legs, in discharging their respective roles and responsibilities. If any of these legs is weak, the other two carry a disproportionate share of the load. If any of the legs pushes up too far, the stool loses its balance.

In discharging these duties, it is important that the parties understand and respect each other's roles and responsibilities. There must be an environment of trust and respect which permits each to carry out its responsibility with confidence and dignity. Today's leaders must focus on problem solving and dispute resolution, which begins with the process of identifying common ground. The three must work together wherever possible to find mutually agreeable solutions to complex issues and problems.

In those instances where labour-management issues have been thoroughly examined, and a solution cannot be achieved, the parties must have access to independent and impartial third party dispute resolution. This should be seen as the process of last resort. An outsider is more likely to impose a compromise that nobody is totally satisfied with, compared to a solution developed through consensus of the parties which is based on mutually agreeable terms of compromise.

This system works in a traditional labour-management environment, however not all aspects of police employment provide access to independent third party intervention. More importantly, where relations break down and the organizations become dysfunctional, issues begin to spill over into the public domain.

### **3.0 THE EVOLUTION OF POLICE ASSOCIATION ADVOCACY**

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Over the past two decades there have been a series of changes in the police sector which have introduced new challenges in the workplace and affected the evolution of police labour-management relations. In some cases, such as the Charter, these issues have dramatically affected the manner in which police services are delivered.

One need only look at the array of issues that have been canvassed at this Annual Conference over the past decade to gain an appreciation of the extraordinary challenges that have confronted this profession. These include:

- Police Discipline
- Public Complaints Processes
- Criminal Consequences of Police Conduct (e.g. Special Investigations Unit)
- Charter of Rights
- Civil Litigation
- Human Rights Legislation
- Workplace Harassment
- Employment Equity
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Downsizing
- Fiscal Constraints and Budget Cuts, including government imposed wage restrictions
- Political influence on police services

These issues have required all parties to introduce new approaches to labour-management relations and have dramatically affected the way in which police associations conduct their business.

#### **The Public Are the Police**

Police personnel reflect the very communities they serve. Given the very public role of policing, the sometimes intrusive or invasive aspects of police duties and powers, and the potential consequences of police conduct, it is not uncommon for police issues or actions to be the subject of intense public scrutiny. Police employment issues are increasingly matters of public attention, not confined to traditional labour-management forums.

Police associations have, as a consequence, been required to expand their activities from the traditional focus on collective bargaining and internal discipline issues, to broader representation on issues that are increasingly the subject of public scrutiny and debate. This is not something police associations have sought to do, but rather it is something they have been required to do in order to represent the legitimate interests of their members. While this was very much a reactive approach a decade ago, police associations have become much more proactive in their approaches in recent years.

### **The Myth of “Americanization”**

There has been considerable hype generated in the past year over a perceived shift towards an American model of police association activities. This perception is misguided, to say the least. The truth is that the Americans have a very fragmented and distinctly different environment. Just as Canada has various models at the local, provincial and national levels, the same can be said for labour relations models, bargaining regimes and police union or association models at the local, state and national level.

At the local and provincial level, there is much greater consistency in Canada in terms of collective bargaining rights and responsibilities, than there is in the United States. Most, but not all, of our member associations in Canada enjoy statutorily designated bargaining units, the legislated ability to negotiate with our employers, and binding, independent, and impartial third-party dispute resolution.

Culturally, Canadians are resistant to certain cross-border influences, particularly in a political context. The extremes we may see in the U.S. are under a very different political environment and generally applicable to labour relations models where the employees have very restrictive, if any collective bargaining rights. These organizations are more frequently required to resort to recourse through the public airing of their issues and concerns.

This has been a gradual evolution in Canada, driven not by American models or influence, but rather in response to the forces and processes of change that have been brought to bear, often unilaterally and to the exclusion of front-line members and their representatives.

### **The Root Cause and Effect**

Associations are more likely to apply external pressure to resolve concerns when:

1. there is no recourse to independent and impartial third party resolution,
2. the systems or processes are not working in terms of addressing the legitimate interests of the association and its members, or

3. they are not being afforded an appropriate role in the decision making process.

This can lead to public airing of internal problems or concerns, as a means of exerting pressure on the other parties to change their practices.

If the relationship is healthy and the dispute resolution systems are working, many issues can be resolved without taking more aggressive forms of action. Public airing of internal issues should be viewed as a symptom or manifestation of systemic problems, and provide a wake up call and catalyst for change.

The same holds true with respect to political activity of police associations and their members. In the 80s and 90s police services in Canada have been influenced by political pressures from all levels. Police officers have seen special interests brought to bear to influence political decisions concerning police officers and the services they provide. Often, police officers and their associations have been excluded or marginalized in the decision making process, and have found it necessary to take those issues public as a means of addressing their concerns.

Police are not unique in Canada in terms of this approach. Public sector employees and professionals across Canada, including physicians, teachers, fire fighters and nurses have found it necessary to be more politically active in recent times than they would have found themselves 20 years ago. Governments have become much more aggressive in their dealings with public sector employment issues, compelling organizations representing those employees to adopt comparable approaches.

While some may want to debate the political rights of police associations and their members, this approach focuses on the symptom as opposed to the cause. So long as the need exists to seek external influence on issues that have not been, or cannot be, resolved through traditional channels, association leaders will be compelled to apply such approaches in the future. Instead of debating the merits of this approach, police leaders should focus their time and energy on strategies that will build effective labour-management relations and thereby reduce the potential for conflict.

## 4.0 STRATEGIES FOR CRISIS AVOIDANCE

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Just as there is no one cure that will affect every disease, there is no one approach that will work for every problem. There are, however, effective strategies that leaders can employ to reduce the likelihood of confrontation, manage challenges effectively, and maintain credibility in the process. Here are a few suggested strategies that can be employed by all police leaders, not just association leaders, in achieving long term success:

### **Maintain Positive Labour-Management Relations**

There are many successful examples of productive labour-management relations, where joint committees have been established to develop new policies or address new responsibilities, using common ground as the basis for problem solving.

Successful examples of labour-management relations have raised the amount of dialogue and discussion at all levels. It is becoming more acceptable in many circles to involve the bargaining unit in more management decision and discussion. Successful police managers and governors understand and respect the role, objectives and statutory purpose of their bargaining units. They understand that the role of the association is not to “run the police force”, but to fairly represent the legitimate interests of the employees of the police force.

In a recent study conducted by the Police Futures Group<sup>2</sup>, *Police Executives Under Pressure: A Study and Discussion of the Issues*, surveys were conducted of various police stakeholder groups. In analyzing the responses from police association leaders, the report makes the following observation<sup>3</sup>:

*The responses suggest that where good relations exist between the chief and the association there is less likelihood of labour conflict and less reason for the association to take extraordinary measures to present their issues. In other words, police associations believe that police executives might experience less pressure with a more collaborative and open approach to their police associations.*

This requires all parties to buy in to the process, have comfort with the process, respect the roles of the parties, and trust the other players.

If these elements are lacking, then the relations begin to deteriorate<sup>4</sup>.

*...police associations described several important factors that lead to pressure for police chiefs:*

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, at p. 45

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, at p. 46

- *lack of communication and human relations skills*
- *inadequate management and leadership abilities*
- *insufficient training and preparation for the job of police executive*
- *lack of knowledge and understanding of labour matters*

As in any human relationship, when one party feels intimidated or under-represented in the “partnership”, then they will likely become uncooperative, disenfranchised and/or react with confrontation.

These things can often be cyclical in nature. It is a constant balancing act and any one party can drive the process towards confrontation, or be the catalyst to improving an acrimonious relationship by offering an olive branch for change. In any relationship there will be peaks and valleys. Change requires commitment from all parties, to start with the issues they share in common and move forward from there.

### **Communicate Effectively with Members**

Police association members exercise control of their associations through the democratic process, and hold their association representatives accountable through elections, petitions, or directions at their general meetings. As in any organization, there are those who are more involved in association activities than others. It is this core group of individuals who may guide or direct the activities of the organization, however the tone and approach adopted by the association is generally reflective of the expectations of the association’s members:

- If the members perceive the management and governance of their police service to be overly oppressive or aggressive, or if they feel that they are not being treated fairly, they will push their association to respond with more confrontational tactics.
- Conversely, if the members believe they work in an environment where they are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and the work they perform is valued and appreciated, they will expect their association to be participatory and consultative and less combative.

It is a delicate balance for association leaders to walk, as there is always a risk of being seen to be too confrontational, or, conversely, too close to management. Management, on the other hand, may be concerned about perceptions that they are “pandering to the association”, or conversely “not listening”.

To effectively manage and focus member expectations, it is extremely important for police leaders to have effective communications systems in place. The chief of police, police association president, and police governors have common, yet perhaps occasionally competing interests in ensuring that the members of the police service are informed about the issues and challenges.

An effective relationship with the association can provide value to police boards and management. If they earn the trust and respect of the association, and the association carries that message to its members, it has much greater weight than the boards or chiefs trying to carry the message themselves. As stated earlier, it is a delicate balance for the association leaders to manage. In the long term, people are more likely to give greater weight to criticism from a source that is known to provide praise when recognition is due.

### **Build Relationships**

In order to be effective, you must have credibility, respect and trust. These are not qualities that can be established at the dawn of a crisis or at the beginning of a relationship, but are built over time through effective, proactive efforts. In order to be influential, you must develop a network of influential people who are open to your ideas, value your input, recognize your stake in the issue, respect your opinion and trust you to live up to your side of the bargain. True leadership requires you to deliver on your promises, stand by your principles, and be true to your word.

Relationships can pay off in many ways. People who identify you as an ally will want to see you succeed. They will take you into your confidence, alert you to potential danger, and work with you to identify a solution.

### **Understand the Lay of the Land**

Start at the front door. Establish a positive rapport with everyone who has the ability to provide you with access, information, ideas and ultimately influence your course of action. If you are rude to the person who answers the phone, you should not be surprised if they fail to make any effort to put you in touch with the person you need to talk with.

Get in on the ground floor. Don't wait until a decision has been reached before you attempt to influence the direction. Human nature is such that once people have made up their minds, and publicly committed to a position, they will be far more resistant to moving away from that approach. Get in early on in the discussion phase, when people are looking for answers, not defending their solutions. Put your position on the table early on in the process, have a game plan, and give the other side an easy way out. Point them in towards the path of least resistance.

Respect the role, understand the responsibilities, and identify the pressures that other individuals bring to the table. Picture yourself in their shoes and try to understand what motivates them to find a solution. Look for common ground and "Win-Win" solutions.

## **Be True to Your Profession**

Always remember whom you represent, and be true to their image and your profession. Be positive in your tone and speech, be constructive in your criticism, avoid sensationalizing the issue, and refrain from using inappropriate language.

Dress appropriately for the situation. If you are there to do business, be business like in your appearance and approach. Don't expect other people to take you seriously if you don't look serious about what you are doing. Proper grooming and attire will make you feel more confident, and be more effective.

Don't wait for a crisis to get on the job training. The first time you appear on camera should not be to represent your members in a crisis situation, it should be in a classroom or in a mock scenario. Practice your lines before you go on air, stick to the script and don't offer opinions, guesses or speculation.

## **Be Prepared**

It has been said that there are three keys to success:

Preparation, Preparation and Preparation.

Do your homework. Preparation instills confidence in yourself, demonstrates commitment to the problem, and demonstrates to others that you know what you are doing.

## **Don't Paint Yourself into a Corner**

Do what you say, and don't promise to do something you can't do; especially to your members. Don't adopt a public position that is impossible to attain and difficult to back down from. Always have options, and leave room for an escape plan if necessary.

## **Get Good Advice**

Seek independent advice and a fresh perspective from people who are not affected by the outcome, and are not afraid to disagree with you. Listen carefully, and think twice about what they are saying and why they are saying it. They can provide valuable insight on how others, in particular the general public, may react to your position. Keep an open mind.

When the going gets tough, get professional help. Manage your consultants to ensure their interests are aligned with yours, and focused on results, not process. Make sure they understand the problem.

## **Look Beyond the Issue**

Remember that you are in this for the long haul. Crises will come and go. Think through the implications of your actions and make sure that you will be seen as part of the solution, not part of the problem. Don't tie yourself so tight to the problem that your exit becomes part of the solution.

Leaders recognize that a crisis presents an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and rise above the pack. Don't go looking for a crisis to prove your worth, but when a crisis hits, seize the opportunity to demonstrate your skills.

## **Demonstrate Value**

Spread good news effectively, it doesn't travel nearly as fast as bad news or gossip, so you have to work harder at it. Demonstrate your organization's value by promoting your successes and ensuring that your members understand the importance of your effort. Don't assume that others know what you have been doing, or appreciate how important your accomplishments have been.

## **Create a Common Vision of Success**

Everybody on your team should have a clear and common vision of success, and understand their individual roles in bringing this about. There is nothing more detrimental to achieving success, than confusion, or worse yet disagreement, on what success will actually look like.

### **“4 P's” of Transition Communications <sup>5</sup>:**

1. The purpose: Why we have to do this.
2. The picture: What it will look and feel like when we reach our goal.
3. The plan: Step-by-step, how we will get there.
4. The part: What you can (and need to) do to help us move forward.

William Bridges and Susan Mitchell

## **Be Proportionate**

A successful leader knows when to be gentle and when to be firm, when to be conciliatory, and when to declare war. The ends have to justify the means.

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<sup>5</sup> William Bridges & Susan Mitchell, *Leading Transition: A New Model For Change*, Leader to Leader Series No. 16, Published by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Non-Profit Management(2000) [www.pfdf.org](http://www.pfdf.org)

You have to pick and choose your battles carefully, and use the methods best suited to the given situation. Focus on finding the best solution to the problem, and tailor your approach accordingly.

### **Focus on Results**

Focus your efforts on the destination, not the scenery, and avoid believing your own rhetoric. Leaders who choose to measure themselves by the amount of noise they make will soon discover that nobody else is paying attention to what they have to say. People who want to undermine your efforts will find it easy to counteract your efforts if you give them the ammunition. There will always be somebody who has something to gain by rallying others against your cause. Don't make it easy for them by being too confrontational, too heavy handed, or too extreme/unrealistic in your position.

Identify what success will look like, focus your efforts on achieving the desired outcome, and measure your actions by how close you get to the target. Learn from your experience and don't repeat your mistakes.

## 5.0 PUBLIC SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

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Police officers generally enjoy a very high level of public support and confidence in their day to day activities. Historically, police leaders have been able to use this support to further certain objectives.

In the modern *Information Age*, Canadians are much more informed about issues and have access through various media to a wide range of opinions and views on any given topic or event. While police officers and police organizations continue to enjoy generally broad support and confidence, the better informed and better educated Canadian taxpayer is less tolerant of “self-interest” groups and more inclined to measure their support of issues on the basis of “what this means to them”.

In order to evaluate a course of action that will take an issue to the public domain, it is important for the association to ask a number of key questions:

- What is the *objective* we are trying to achieve?
- How can *public support* of our issue help us to move forward?
- What are the *threats* that we face in the court of public opinion?
- What *messages* will we need to convey to earn their support?
- Who can we call upon to *champion* our issue?
- Can we realistically *achieve success*?
- Are there better *alternatives* to this approach?

### Identify the Objective

The first step in deciding a course of action is to clearly identify what you are trying to achieve by taking your issue to the community. Is this objective consistent with the mission established for your organization? Does it assist in achieving your vision? Will your members support your stance, publicly and privately?

Leaders have to carefully consider why they are choosing this course of action. If the objective is simply to get you into the limelight, there may be a better way of doing that; something constructive or positive within the community.

### Evaluate Public Support

How can *public support* of our issue help us to move forward? Do we really know if the public supports us on this issue? Should we get a read on public opinion before we move forward? Can public opinion really influence the

outcome of this issue? How does this issue affect the citizens of your community? What does this mean to them?

Public support is critical to launching a public campaign. If your target audience is internal, don't run the risk of creating resistance against your position by taking a controversial issue public. If you lose public support, you may not only lose the battle, but also discredit yourselves so badly you lose the war. Don't rely on your own passions to evaluate how the public feels about your issue. Get an accurate reading on public sentiment, such as independent unbiased advice or a public opinion poll.

### **Threat Assessment**

What are the *threats* that we face in the court of public opinion? What are our strengths and weaknesses? Who is likely to challenge us on this issue? What will they say? How will we respond? Who will they believe? Are they well respected in the community?

Don't pick a fight you can't win. Don't take on the city's favorite son unless you are sure you'll come out on top. He didn't get there overnight, and likely has a wave of supporters who will come to his rescue, including people who are much better than you at influencing public opinion.

### **Messages**

How does this issue affect the average citizen? What do you propose to do about it? Will that make things better for them? Will they understand the issue? Will the reporters understand it? Will they report it accurately? How can they help us? What do they have to do? Where can they get more information? Is this really news? Can we maintain a consistent message?

Know who your intended audiences are and how best to approach them. Test your messages with people on the outside you can trust to tell you the truth, or use a professional to conduct focus groups. Don't presume people understand your issue, or what you are talking about. Package it so that they will understand what this means to them, and how your proposal will be in their best interests. (Not yours)

### **Identify Champions**

Are there well-respected people in the community who will champion our issue? Are they independent? Are they credible? Do they understand the issue? Can they explain it in detail? What's in it for them? Do they have any real or perceived conflicts of interest?

Look for people who can help influence public support, and, more importantly, key decision-makers. Make sure they understand the issue and what this means to your key audiences. Make sure they are closely aligned to your objectives, and don't have competing interests.

### **Weigh Your Chances**

Is it the right time to raise this issue? Is the public pre-occupied with other issues? Is your message going to reach your target audience? Are your goals realistic? Do you have the tools and resources (money and people) to pull this off? What does success look like? How uncomfortable will failure feel? How will the public influence decision-makers? Can the decision-makers weather the storm?

Don't roll the dice with your reputation, and, more importantly, the image of your organization and members.

### **Consider the Alternatives**

Is there any way to do this that is faster, cheaper, easier, simpler, and more likely to succeed?

Human nature demands that we find the shortest distance between two points. Take the easiest, safest and most direct route possible. It may not be the most glamorous, but you will deliver on your promises.

## **The Canadian Police Association – A Case in Point**

Here's an example of how the CPA has employed these strategies, following a series of high profile incidents where innocent bystanders and police officers were killed during the course of motor vehicle pursuits by the police.

### **Identify the Objective**

Promoting legislation that would make it a serious criminal offence to engage police in a pursuit.

### **Evaluate Public Support**

By monitoring media attention to the issue of police pursuits, a number of consistent factors were observed.

- Canadians are consistently concerned about safety in their communities.
- Canadians are mixed on whether or not police should engage in pursuits.
- Canadians expect police to apprehend offenders.

### **Threat Assessment**

- Some members of the public and opinion leaders believe the risks to public safety posed by pursuits outweigh the risk of offenders being allowed to escape.
- Others focused on alternative strategies such as helicopters and spike belts.

### **Messages**

- Banning police from engaging in pursuits encourages offenders to hit the gas instead of the brake, raising the threat to public safety.
- Police have adopted policies and criteria to restrict pursuits to serious situations.
- Statistics gathered by the Ontario Solicitor General identify the risks and provide insight into the types of offenders who flee from police, and support the actions being adopted by police services
- Police support the use of alternatives to combat pursuits, such as spike belts, helicopters in urban areas, and research into the use of technology.
- There must be meaningful consequences to deal with offenders and deter drivers from making the deadly decision to flee police.

### **Identify Champions**

- Families of victims who have been killed by offending drivers.
- By meeting with politicians from all political parties, the association developed broad support for a private member's bill, brought forward by a Member of Parliament who had an innocent bystander killed in his riding.

- All party support for the Bill enabled the legislation to pass procedural hurdles on unanimous consent of the House of Commons.
- Associations representing Chiefs of Police and Police Services Boards.
- Municipal and Provincial Governments.

### **Weigh Your Chances**

A series of tragedies involving members of the public and police officers, combined with broad political support, increased our likelihood of success.

### **Consider the Alternatives**

- Doing nothing was not an option. The death of Sudbury Regional Police Sergeant Rick McDonald demanded that the CPA mobilize widespread support and move this issue forward without delay.
- Public attention concerning tragic incidents demanded a high profile effort, as opposed to a low-key, behind the scenes approach.
- Proactive media relations were required to raise awareness about the issues, represent the police position, and counter arguments against police actions.

## 6.0 ADVOCACY - A LEGITIMATE STRATEGIC PRIORITY

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***“For associations whose members may be highly regulated, or are dedicated to a specific social welfare cause, a government relations program is a necessity - not an option.”***

Canadian Society for Association Executives<sup>6</sup>

In order for 21<sup>st</sup> century police associations to be effective, they must engage in strategic activities which position the organization as an influential and respected stakeholder on issues concerning the safe and effective delivery of police services in their communities. Police officers have a bona fide, legitimate role to play in ensuring the legitimate interests of their members are considered in the decision making process.

This role is not unique to police associations. *Advocacy* is often the single most important function for a wide range of associations, grass root organizations, lobbyists and special interest groups. From chicken farmers to drug companies, victims of crime to competitive sports organizations, associations representing a common interest want to influence public policy in their sectors.

This is a legitimate and strategic function for the modern association, as recognized by the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE):

### ***Positioning Lobbying as a Strategic Priority***<sup>7</sup>

*Although lobbying is an essential activity for many associations, volunteers and staff often hesitate to identify their lobbying activities as a priority. Lobbying can be described as the activity of influencing public policy. For associations whose members may be highly regulated, or are dedicated to a specific social welfare cause, a government relations program is a necessity - not an option.*

*The association's role in government relations is to communicate the perspectives and views of members to government officials. The association manager and board have to work together to develop strategic priorities and goals related to their lobbying activities. As with other strategic priorities, the activities of the lobbying initiatives will be influenced by the association's communication strategy, its public relations initiatives and most likely its member services activities. When properly planned and managed, a government relations program benefits both the association, its members and the public at large.*

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<sup>6</sup> *Advocacy Primer for Associations*, Advocacy Selected Topics, Published by the Canadian Society for Association Executives(2001) [www.csae.com](http://www.csae.com)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

The CSAE practices what it preaches. As the representative for more than 1,500 executive members managing Canada's leading trade, professional, occupational, philanthropic and non-profit organizations, the CSAE conducts its own advocacy with legislators and policy makers on issues impacting the effectiveness of the association sector.

### **Advocacy Primer for Associations<sup>8</sup>**

Most associations are affected directly or indirectly by legislation. Whether the group is dealing with health issues, environmental concerns, rights of the family or business or trade legislation, they will be affected by the decisions and actions of the government. In many cases the decisions will not only affect the public policy areas the association is concerned with, but may also affect the association's ability to obtain needed revenue. Communication and dialogue with governments is a widely recognized and acceptable function for associations.

Typically, associations will deal with government for the following reasons:

- to seek relief from government measures such as sales taxes or customs duties
- to influence public policy and the administration of government programs
- to lobby the government for changes to legislation and laws affecting the membership.

The circumstances and techniques for communication will vary depending on a number of issues. Approaches will range from public versus private to sporadic versus continuing to confrontational versus subtle. The best communication style should match the issues, the urgency of the issue and the appropriateness for the association.

Successful lobbying strategies often come from ongoing communication with government officials, building relationships and common understandings of related issues. The focus is to influence government officials over a long period of time, and thus have influence on current issues.

Police officers have a legitimate interest in ensuring that their views are also factored into the decision-making process. Few government officials have a working knowledge of the issues affecting the association's members, and thus the association can take the role of providing accurate, timely information about areas of interest. Forms of proactive advocacy implemented by police associations to raise awareness have included:

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

- Organized *non-partisan lobbying* efforts, such as the CPA and PAO Lobby Days, where association representatives meet with their local MP or MPP to discuss policing and public safety issues.
- Non-partisan *candidate endorsement* at the local, provincial and federal levels. Identifying champions in the political arena who have been supportive of policing issues.
- Attendance at *political party events*, such as party policy forums. This ensures police have a voice in the process of setting political policy that may ultimately influence policing direction.
- *Building relationships* with decision-makers. Developing strategic alliances to create a broader understanding of the association's issues.
- *Public opinion polling*, to gauge public support on an issue. This provides essential data that can be used to support the association's position, identify gaps, develop messages, and promote resolution.
- *Raising Awareness* of the association's issue, by implementing effective communication and media relations programs to inform members, decision-makers and leaders and promote the association's position and activities.
- Forming *Strategic Alliances* with organizations that share common objectives on a given issue of concern. This may include:
  - other police organizations, such as the OACP, OSOPA and OAPSB provincially, and CACP and CAPB nationally.
  - victims groups, such as the CPA sponsored Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, CAVEAT, Victims of Violence and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).
  - local business associations, chambers of commerce, and community groups.

## 7.0 WHAT LIES AHEAD

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***“Few leaders know how to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.”***

William Bridges & Susan Mitchell  
Leading Transition: A New Model For Change<sup>9</sup>

As police personnel are generally reflective of the communities they serve, police services and police associations will face challenges to traditional approaches from tomorrow’s membership. With an aging population and retirement of the baby boom generation, police forces will compete aggressively with other police agencies, and other professions, to attract and retain qualified candidates.

There are a variety of attributes associated with the tomorrow’s police officer and civilian employees. S/he will be:

- Well educated;
- Knowledgeable;
- Comfortable with Technology; (The first computer generation is now entering the workforce)
- Self confident;
- Well Informed;
- Skilled; and,
- Marketable.

Tomorrow’s police officers will be aware of their individual rights, and expect to be treated fairly. They will have high expectations for advancement and recognition, and will seek and expect opportunities for advancement. Unfulfilled expectations will lead to discontent.

They will be more demanding of their employers and the bargaining unit with regards to working conditions, wages, benefits and their rights as provided for under the Charter and Humans Rights legislation. They will be more likely to challenge or question, in a constructive way, authority or direction. They will not be blind followers, as they have been raised as masters of their own destinies. They value their personal time and leisure pursuits, and will be highly mobile.

They will be more likely to seek remedy by invoking labour law rights and all forms of due process such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This is consistent with the trends in all aspects of society.

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<sup>9</sup> *Leading Transition: A New Model For Change, supra.*

This does not sit well in a quasi-military structure. Tomorrow's management has to be prepared to lead and guide, and move completely away from the command and control model.

Police associations will have to meet the higher expectations of tomorrow's members, who will no longer accept the role of their association on blind faith or fraternal loyalty. Police associations will have to be problem solvers on behalf of their members and will aggressively compete for their member's time, attention, loyalty, and interest. Police associations will be compelled to constantly demonstrate their value, relevance and effectiveness. To meet this challenge, advocacy will grow as a strategic priority for associations.

Technology continues to drive global change, and policing will have to adjust aggressively to the new global environment. Traditional geographic borders will become increasingly meaningless, and "jurisdictional" concepts will have to be streamlined in favour of seamless service integration.

Police labour-management relations will continue to be impacted by external forces, and issues such as:

- Human rights advancements;
- Labour law decisions;
- Economic and compensation pressures;
- Privacy law;
- Competition between police services for resources and territory;
- Private competition for public policing functions;
- Technological advances, both in crime and law enforcement;
- The "talent war" for skilled workers; and
- Globalization.

Success will be achieved through collaborative resolution of issues in a fair and equitable manner. Police officers will expect their leaders to produce results that satisfy their needs and expectations. Failure will be marked by increased confrontation and acrimony.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

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Tomorrow's leaders will continue to face new challenges and demands that will test the resolve of their labour-management relations. In order to reduce the potential for conflict, police leaders should focus their efforts on strategies that will build effective labour-management processes defined by fairness, equality, mutual respect, and trust.

In order for 21<sup>st</sup> century police associations to be effective, their leaders must strategically position their organizations as influential and respected advocates for their members. This requirement is not unique to police associations, as communication and dialogue with governments is a widely recognized and acceptable function for a wide range of associations seeking to influence public policy in their sectors.

Police associations that employ effective strategies focused on achievable results will demonstrate value to their members and recognize sustainable benefits.

**“When properly planned and managed, a government relations program benefits both the association, its members and the public at large.”<sup>10</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> *Advocacy Primer for Associations*, CSAE *supra*.