



REPAIRING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE PUBLIC

Date: November 25, 2021

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KEY EVENTS

On November 25, 2021, Commissioner Brenda Lucki of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), presented *Repairing the Relationship between Law Enforcement and the Public* at the 2021 CASIS Vancouver West Coast Security Conference. The primary focus of Commissioner Lucki's presentation was the law enforcement agency's initiative and pathways to re-earn the public's trust and strengthen bonds. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS Vancouver executives.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

The central theme of Commissioner Lucki's presentation was the improvement of law enforcement public trust, and how the RCMP's initiatives aim to improve public trust through reconciliation, equity, and diversity, and culture change. Some of the programs and strategies the RCMP has launched to improve public's trust were also discussed.

Question Period

During the question and answer period, Commissioner Lucki answered questions regarding the following points: how the RCMP is rebuilding trust with the emergence of a new social contract; the mechanisms used to prevent police misconduct, how the RCMP will engage with Indigenous and northern communities, and how the RCMP sees online community policing as part of its future role. RCMP's approach in tackling asymmetric challenges was also discussed.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

Commissioner Lucki started her presentation by recognizing how British Columbia had experienced a year of tribulations with the wildfires and flooding and expressed her support for those affected. She stated that with the decreased trust and bonds between the public and law enforcement, the RCMP has been working to help Canadian society re-establish those bonds by increasing public outreach. This in turn increases law enforcement's ability to protect and serve Canadians. Commissioner Lucki noted that throughout her career she has seen law enforcement officials working towards better serving and protecting Canadians and acknowledged that while there are some criticisms of law enforcement that are warranted, others are not.

Commissioner Lucki further acknowledged that, while most Canadians remain largely trusting of policing organizations, the public's faith in the RCMP is not what it once was nor where it needs to be to effectively execute their mandate. This is particularly concerning for the RCMP as it impacts their ability to provide day to day policing services to Canadians and to effectively conduct large national security investigations. With the lack of trust in public institutions, the RCMP has started new initiatives to help it regain the public's trust to improve networks between law enforcement and the community.

The framework of the RCMP initiatives is predicated on the ability to understand realities and public perceptions that have come to light. Commissioner Lucki emphasized that there is a greater need for transparency, inclusion, and action from the RCMP if the strained relationship between the institutions and the public is to be mended. Issues and fractures between the police and racialized communities such as Black, Indigenous, and other people of color should be acknowledged if there is to be a framework for rebuilding those relations.

Commissioner Lucki acknowledged that, unfortunately, the RCMP is part of the social structures and systems that have perpetuated racism and sexism and played a role in enforcing colonial rule. This underlines the importance of the RCMP to remain vigilant and work actively to ensure that discrimination is weeded out of the institution. Commissioner Lucki stated that an egregious act by a single police officer can have serious consequences on the public perception of law enforcement. Therefore, these changes are crucial and should be based on transparency and sincerity. Working towards an inclusive and open organization will improve relations between the public and the RCMP, increasing

effectiveness in policing. Commissioner Lucki iterated that to improve the relationship between the RCMP and the public, they are actively working to advance reconciliation, increase equity, diversity, and inclusion, and modernize their workplace culture.

Commissioner Lucki noted that reconciliation is a priority focus of the RCMP. Because the RCMP acted as an agent of colonial rule, there is often anger and distrust towards the RCMP from Indigenous peoples in Canada; hence the institution must acknowledge its past to help create inroads with the Indigenous population of Canada. Commissioner Lucki stated that to accomplish reconciliation and better public relations, Indigenous peoples must be consulted and be actively participating in the creation of, and involved in, programs that aim to bridge the gap in relations. Active consultation, discussion, partnership, and engagement with Indigenous communities, leaders, youth, and Indigenous policing services will better allow the RCMP to protect and serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Based on feedback from Indigenous partners, the RCMP is formalizing a new office for RCMP-Indigenous Collaboration, Co-Development and Accountability (RICCA), which focuses on establishing and sustaining mutually respectful relationships and achieving progressive outcomes for Indigenous employees and the Indigenous peoples they serve. The RCMP has also launched a pilot program aiming to encourage Inuit candidates to consider a career with the RCMP, help them navigate the recruitment process, and gain a better understanding of the unique challenges they face as applicants.

Commissioner Lucki emphasized that the creation of de-escalation and crisis intervention standards should consider preconceptions of law enforcement while ensuring Canadians are protected. Commissioner Lucki noted that de-escalation is the most effective tactic for peaceful, lawful, and safe resolutions and that the overwhelming majority of RCMP interactions are resolved in this manner. The RCMP will continue working with its partners to increase public transparency, enhance decision-making and de-escalation training, and create more options to further enhance de-escalation.

Commissioner Lucki highlighted that in January 2021, the RCMP started a strategy to work towards specific and measurable objectives aiming to establish a foundation for progressive and long-term change by actively promoting and improving equity, diversity, and inclusion. Commissioner Lucki stressed that the RCMP needs to reflect modern Canadian values by addressing systemic racism and discrimination, analysing police intervention methods, and becoming more

culturally informed. Understanding how intervention procedures are perceived and affect marginalized communities can improve community engagement and prevent systemic barriers within the institution, while providing protection and safety to the communities in question.

Commissioner Lucki explained that if public perception is to be mended, changes should not just occur externally, but also internally. Changing practices and operating procedures in the RCMP to build a more respectful, inclusive, and diverse workforce is crucial to ensure better representation and response to the needs and expectations of the diverse communities they serve. According to Commissioner Lucki, restructuring organizational norms and challenging the status quo will also help the RCMP to address the root causes for the lack of public trust.

Commissioner Lucki pointed out that the RCMP has launched an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy to reinforce their firm stance against racism and discrimination. To support this strategy, the RCMP has developed work plans and is implementing performance measurement frameworks to ensure they are heading in the right direction. In addition, based on the results of a recently completed survey on the RCMP culture, Commissioner Lucki stated that they are in the process of renewing the core values and establishing an organizational values statement. The RCMP is also introducing mandatory cultural awareness and humility training and will soon implement anti-racism training.

To better support their employees, the RCMP has developed an independent, civilian-staffed internal harassment complaints regime, which operates outside of the chain of command to help resolve workplace conflict at its earliest stage. One of the long-term goals of these efforts is to create a holistic, inclusive work environment, pre-establish behavioral expectations for new recruits, and increase diversity and representation within the institution's workforce.

Commissioner Lucki concluded by stating that transforming the RCMP will not be completed overnight, and neither will restoring public trust. However, the RCMP is committed to proving to Canadians that they are deserving of their confidence by keeping Canada safe through leading-edge policing that reflects the values and needs of the diverse communities that they serve and by encouraging collaboration to better understand crime. The RCMP of tomorrow will be an organization characterized by respect for diversity and enriched by the contributions of all employees.

Question Period

The first question for Commissioner Lucki pertained to the RCMP's ability to rebuild trust after increased scrutiny while a potential new social contract is emerging within the global West. Commissioner Lucki pointed out that building trust with communities requires time and effort and it is a long-term commitment. Because the RCMP wants to be more visible within the communities they serve, the institution is working on investing in community outreach and building public trust up in a more coordinated and-long term manner.

The second question was regarding the use of mechanisms the RCMP could or is using to prevent incidents of abuse or misconduct. Commissioner Lucki stated that education is a cornerstone of prevention. Courses on humility and cultural awareness are very important as they allow policing to take into account Canada's diversity and norms in a more responsive manner. Commissioner Lucki also stated that these courses are designed to increase knowledge and enhance self-awareness and are already a core part of RCMP's training, with 90% of members having completed the mandatory training.

With respect to how the RCMP's role is evolving to engage minority, Indigenous, and northern communities in community policing, Commissioner Lucki referred to Robert Peele's principles in adopting community policing and focusing on a client centred model. This outlook focuses more on meeting clients' needs and shifting more into customer service-oriented policing. By working with communities to identify and solve problems together, better bonds and cooperation between the community and the RCMP can be established.

The fourth question touched upon the future of the RCMP in online community policing as part of its expanded list of priorities. Commissioner Lucki explained that the RCMP is always looking at how to adapt and identify solutions to policing challenges. In addition, she noted that she has seen first-hand how serious threats to public and national security can surface and grow and stipulated that increasing outreach and awareness in online communities is an important aspect of the RCMP's strategy to detect and prevent threats. Countering narratives and addressing online sources that are breeding grounds for crime and hatred are stated as priorities for the RCMP when it comes to online community policing. By using this proactive approach, the RCMP aims to gain trust and inform people on how to report criminal activity.

Lastly, although the last question diverged from the core of the presentation as it was concerning what the RCMP is doing to tackle changing and growing

asymmetric challenges and trends, Commissioner Lucki responded by highlighting that it is crucial to maintain the view of transnational and cybercrime as something that is beyond traditional national and geographic borders. Collaboration with international and local partners is important in combating the threats posed by asymmetric crime. Shifting towards evidence and intelligence to prevent and identify threats will allow the RCMP to be proactive and ensure that problems and challenges are identified and dealt with before they become a major issue. Adapting to changing technologies while ensuring that legislature and policies changes adjust to the ever-evolving sphere of policing will enable the RCMP to adjust to asymmetric security threats and paradigms.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- While most Canadians remain largely trusting of policing organizations, the public's faith in the RCMP is not what it once was nor where it needs to be to effectively execute their mandate.
- There is a greater need for transparency, inclusion, and action from the RCMP if the strained relationship between the institutions and the public is to be mended.
- To accomplish reconciliation and better public relations, Indigenous peoples must be consulted and be actively participating in the creation of, and involved in, programs that aim to bridge the gap in relations.
- Understanding how police intervention procedures are perceived and affect marginalized communities can improve community engagement and prevent systemic barriers within the institution.
- Rebuilding trust and connections with communities will require long-term commitments to changes, both internal and external to the RCMP.

Question Period

- Although it requires time and effort, the RCMP is committed to rebuilding trust with communities by investing in community outreach with a long-term outlook.
- Policing courses on humility and cultural awareness are being conducted as mechanisms to reduce and prevent incidents of abuse or misconduct.
- Adopting a client centred approach in policing will improve bonds and cooperation between minority communities and the RCMP.

- Increasing outreach and awareness in online communities is an important aspect of the RCMP's strategy to detect and prevent threats while aiming to gain trust and inform people on how to report criminal activity.
- The RCMP is increasing its scope and outlook to ensure that asymmetric challenges and trends do not pose a threat to Canada's security.



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