

Catalytic Converter Theft in British Columbia: Is Regulation a Viable Solution?



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British Columbia is experiencing a wave of catalytic converter theft due to the high market price of the metals inside – platinum, palladium, and rhodium (Strandberg, 2021a). Catalytic converter theft costs both the direct victim and BC taxpayers thousands of dollars and may also result in lost services and productivity (Howell, 2021; Strandberg, 2021a; 2021b). This project seeks to understand the impact regulation might have on catalytic converter theft in adding platinum, palladium, and rhodium to the *BC Metal Dealers and Recyclers Act (2011)*.

METHODS

1. Analyzed the effects regulation had on **copper theft as a comparison piece**.
2. Conducted a content analysis on BC news media depicting copper theft.
3. Thematically coded the effects of copper theft regulations to inform results.

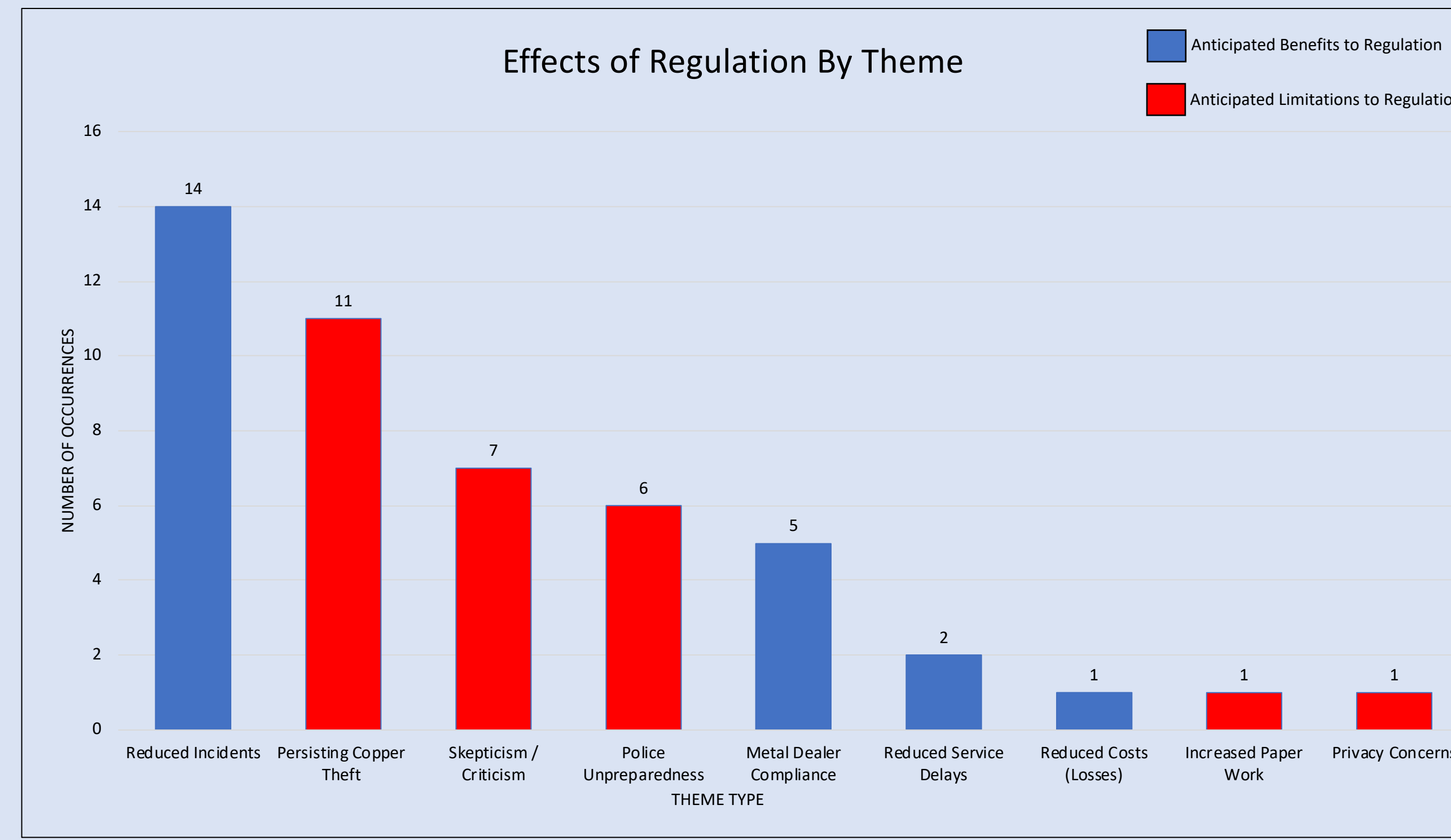
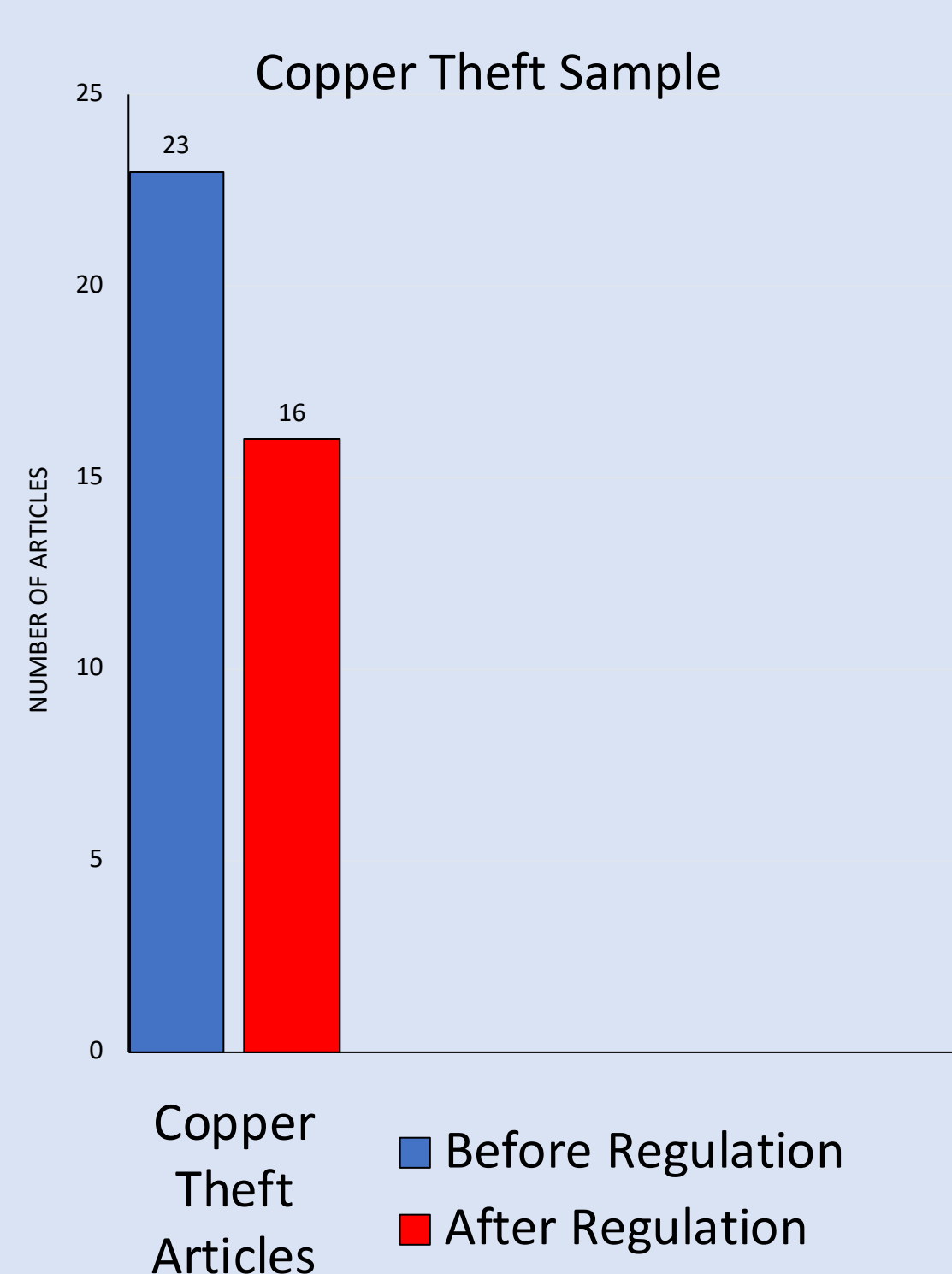
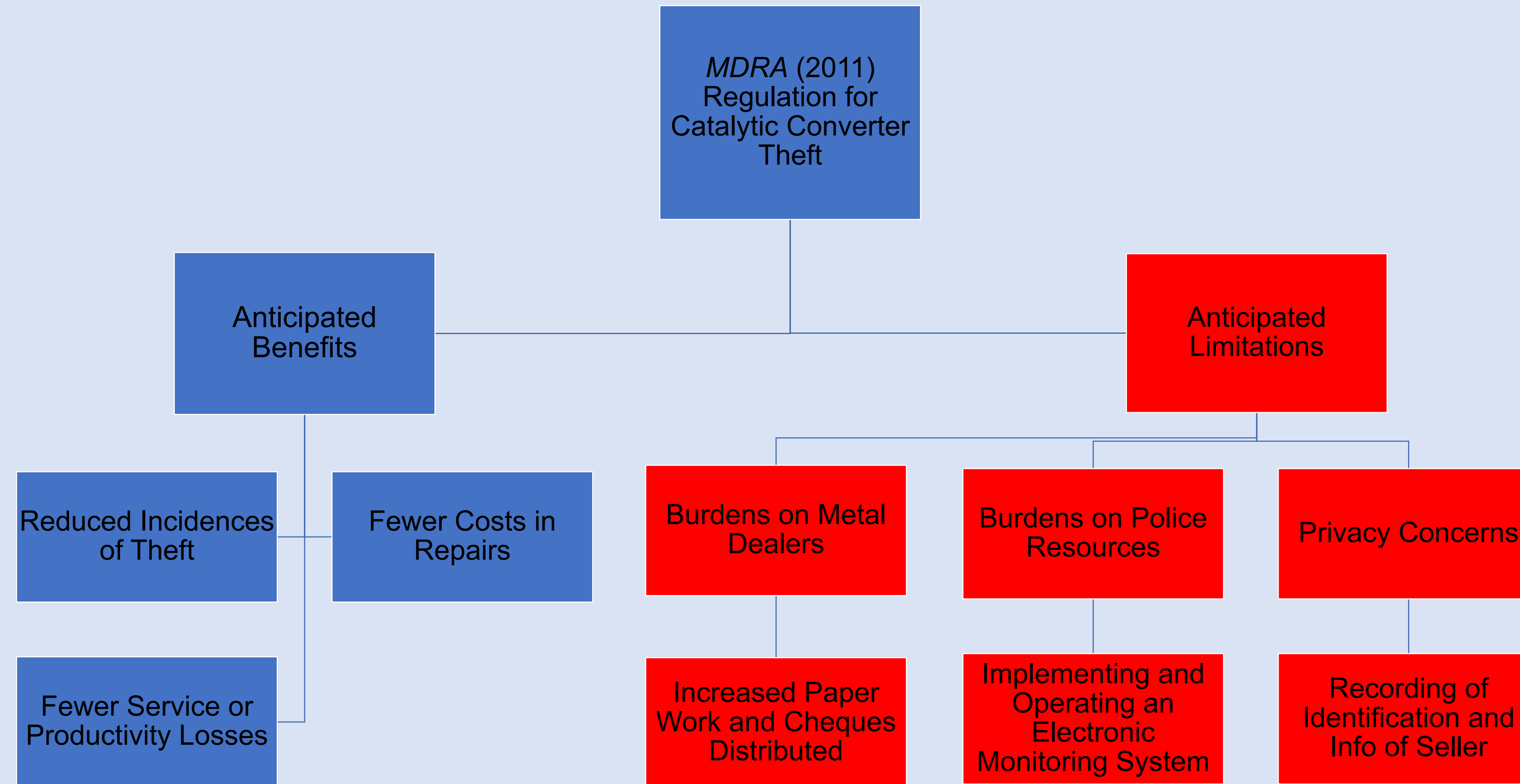
PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Regulation had reported reductions in:
 - Theft incidents;
 - financial losses, and;
 - service losses of copper theft.
- However, regulatory practices placed resource burdens onto metal dealers and police and copper theft persisted.

DISCUSSION

- These results indicate regulation as a solution might be effective but has its limits.
- The international market price of a metal may trump regulatory efforts.
- Future research:
 - Analyze official police data of copper theft before and after regulation

Regulation may reduce catalytic converter theft, but it is not without its limits.



Similarities Between Copper and Converter Theft

- Theft Rate Mirrors International Market Price
- Public Safety Concern
 - (e.g. electrocution, exposed wire)
- Costly to victim and taxpayers
 - Roughly \$50,000 per repair
 - Reportedly \$20 million in losses province-wide in 2011
- Marked Loss of Service or Productivity
 - Power and Phone Outages

Copper Theft in 2011



- Theft Rate Mirrors International Market Price
- Public Safety Concern
 - (e.g. crush by vehicle, harmful emissions, assaults by thieves)
- Costly to victim and BC Taxpayers
 - Roughly \$2,000 per repair
 - Reportedly \$2 million in ICBC payouts in 2020
- Marked Loss of Service or Productivity
 - Company vehicles inoperable

Catalytic Converter Theft in 2021



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