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Cost of Police Education and Learning in Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The *Police Expenditure Survey*, administered annually by Statistics Canada, is the best source of information for expenditures on policing at a national level in Canada. According to the survey, the cost of policing in Canada has been on the rise, hitting an all-time high of \$12.9 billion in 2011, up from \$12.6 billion in 2010. However, if adjusted for inflation (i.e., in constant dollars), police expenditures have actually slightly decreased from \$10.86 billion in 2010 to \$10.79 billion in 2011.

Excluding expenditures on rural and territorial policing, the largest source of expenditures in urban policing is on salaries and wages – about 70% of total expenditures, followed by benefits (17%), and “other expenditures” (13%). However, Statistics Canada does not ask a separate question on police training expenditures in the *Police Expenditure Survey*; as such, expenditures on training are rolled into “other expenditures.”

STUDY AIMS

The purpose of this research is:

- to examine available data on cost of police training in Canada;
- discuss more appropriate measures of costs of police training; and
- suggest places to look for savings, especially when it comes to online training.

METHODS

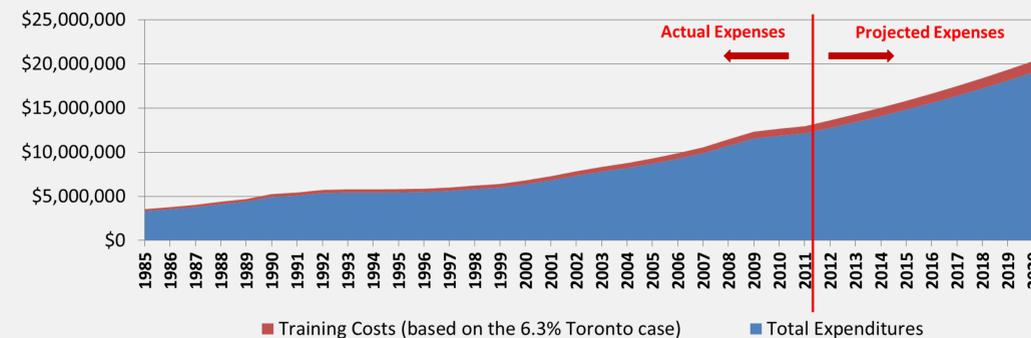
This study used proxy measures from relevant studies on police training to estimate the expenditures associated with police training in Canada.

A proxy of the cost of police training in Canada may be derived from the 2006 Toronto Police Services Study. In 2006, the City of Toronto Auditor General produced an internal audit report titled “Review of Police Training, Opportunities for Improvement for the Toronto Police Service.” The report found that about \$46.5 million was spent on police training by the Toronto Police Service in 2005. This amount represented approximately 6.3% of the total operating budget of the Toronto Police Service for that year. Further, the study concluded that about five percent of police officers’ time is dedicated to training.

RESULTS

Using the 2006 Toronto Police Service proxy of 6.3% of the budget being spent on police training, it may be estimated that about \$814.7 million was spent on police training in Canada in 2011. Since there were 97,566 police service employees in Canada in 2011, the cost of training was about \$8,350 per police service employee in 2011. Using this calculation, the two largest provinces - Ontario (\$272.5 million) and Quebec (\$150.5 million) - together would account for over half of all police training expenditures in Canada in 2011.

Great caution should be exercised when considering the Toronto 2006 proxy. First, the 6.3% was an estimate from the 2006 City of Toronto Auditor General study, which noted that the calculated amounts were an approximation since some costs were impossible to determine. Second, no similar study was ever conducted in Toronto or elsewhere in Canada, making comparisons impossible. Third, it is unlikely that all police services will spend 6.3% on training, especially when considering the different requirements of smaller vs. larger services. Fourth, the amount and cost of training for civilian police employees and frontline officers is different. Finally, the average training costs may have varied since 2005.



DISCUSSION

A possible savings for police services might be found in modernizing the delivery of training. In a separate study called “Police Training in Canada: Training Practices at a Selection of Police Services,” Public Safety Canada looked into possible savings that may be achieved if police services employed more innovative forms of training, such as online training. Data obtained from a medium-sized police service in BC indicates that in 2012-13, 17% of its courses were delivered via online methods for a total cost of \$3,540. The remaining 83% of the courses were delivered via other methods, for a cost of \$60,918. Thus, 17% of training was delivered for less than 6% of the total training budget. The savings could be significantly higher if a higher percentage of training was provided online: \$18,490 could be saved if 25% of training was provided online; or, \$36,650 could be saved if 50% of training was provided online.

Several other police services in Canada are becoming more creative when it comes to online training. For example, a large police service in Alberta designs its own online courses, which the Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN) then provides to other police services across Canada. In return, the police service gets financial credits from CPKN which may be applied to other online training through CPKN. Another large police service in Ontario pays a set fee of \$60,000 for blanket access to the entire CPKN catalogue. In 2012-13, the service was able to train all of its members on 12 online courses, resulting in significant savings. In a similar manner, a small police service in Nova Scotia paid a set fee of \$3,000 for blanket access to the entire CPKN catalogue.

SUMMARY

There is evidence that online training could be a potential source of savings for police services in Canada. More police services across Canada are switching to the e-learning model where possible. However, proper data need to be collected to better estimate the actual cost of police training and further research needs to be conducted to better understand police training costs and how savings could be better achieved through online training. This would allow police services to undertake cost-benefit analyses when evaluating delivery methods to improve training cost efficiency.

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