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# Policing Expenditures and the Costs of Crime

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## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies (ICURS) at Simon Fraser University has investigated the financial implications of crime in Canadian society – a cost that is borne both by the government in criminal justice system expenditures, as well as by victims in loss of property, productivity, personal security measures, and so forth.

Substantial declines in the Canadian crime rate have led many observers to question whether expenditures for policing services, which have increased substantially since the mid-1980s in both absolute and per capita terms, have grown out of proportion to expenditures for other major government services.

## METHODS

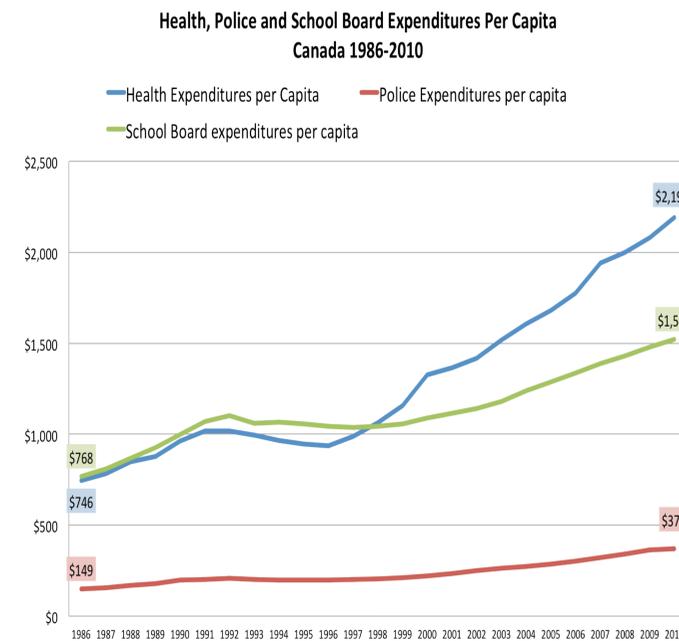
To determine whether or not policing expenditures have grown proportionally to other services, police spending was compared longitudinally with that of health and school board spending.

Estimating the monetary value of the harms victims suffer from crime is more difficult. Steve Eason and Hilary Furness have developed a method that takes advantage of the crime seriousness rating schedule developed by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics in order to estimate costs in relation to civil judgment awards for cognate civil wrongs such as assault and trespass. Assessing the value of loss of life, medical care needs resulting from violent crime, lost productivity, loss from theft and damage, expenditures for personal security, locking up and related crime prevention costs, and pain and suffering results in an indication of the overall harm caused to victims (see below).

Estimated BC Victimization Cost 2013	
Loss of Life	\$428,398,221
Medical Care (Violent Crimes Only)	\$23,938,726
Lost Productivity	\$197,610,138
Theft and Damage Loss	\$368,945,031
Personal Security Expenditures	\$323,075,269
Locking Up Cost	\$389,965,700
Pain and Suffering	\$6,372,649,818
<b>Total E&amp;F Methods Cost to Victims BC 2013</b>	<b>\$8,104,582,902</b>

## RESULTS

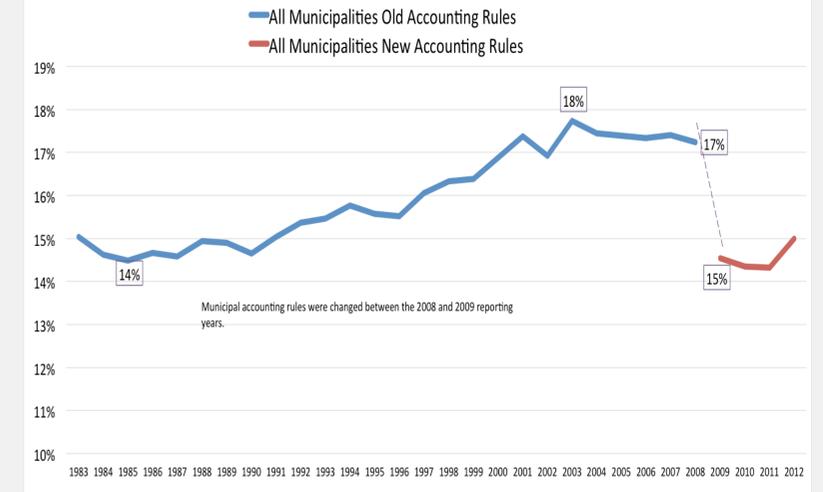
An examination of expenditure increases for health and education over the same timeframe suggests that expenditures for police services have increased roughly in line with increases for health and education. In 1986 Canadians spent approximately \$140 per capita for police services; in 2010 they spent \$371 per capita for police. School Board expenditures increased from \$746 per capita to \$1,522. Health expenditures increased from \$768 per capita to \$2,193 (see below).



In British Columbia, the proportion of municipal operating budgets committed to police services increased from approximately 14% to 18% over the course of two decades between the mid-1980s and the mid-2000s. That proportion then declined moderately through 2008. In 2009 the Province required municipalities to adopt new accounting rules consistent with generally accepted accounting principles. Under the new rules, expenditures for police services have remained at approximately 15% of total municipal operating budgets.

Note that these data exclude Provincial expenditures for Provincial police services in very small and unincorporated places, expenditures by Canada for federal police functions, and capital expenditures (see next column).

## Proportion of Municipal Operating Expenses Spent for Police Services



## CONCLUSIONS

Increases in expenditures for police services are very much in line with expenditures for education and health and do not, in context, appear to have been out of line. This research also highlights that the cost of crime borne by victims is staggering at over \$8 billion - about four times the total expenditures of criminal justice in the Province.

## REFERENCES

BC Local Government Division, Schedule 402.

Easton, Furness & Brantingham (2014) *The Cost of Crime*. Vancouver: The Fraser Institute.

Statistics Canada CANSIM database.

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