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# ALBERTA POLICE BEAT

The Official Voice of the Municipal Police Associations in Alberta

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## CONTENTS

Curtis Hoople— <i>President</i> . . . . .	5
Mike Baker— <i>Vice President</i> . . . . .	7
Marc Gaumont— <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> . . . . .	9
Mark Flynn— <i>Director/Editor</i> . . . . .	11
Chris Young— <i>Director</i> . . . . .	13
Damien Cordrey— <i>Director</i> . . . . .	17
Brad Niven— <i>Director</i> . . . . .	19
Advertisers Index . . . . .	16

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# From the President

— *Curtis Hoople* —

## “Take a Breath!”

Welcome to the Fall issue of the Alberta Police Beat. There is no disputing 2020 continues to challenge our patience and test our ability to roll with the punches while finding time to reflect on what is important. Your Alberta Federation of Police Associations (AFPA) has been busy trying to keep their fingers on the pulse during COVID, the anti-policing and defunding movement, SFPP developments, Police Act reform, overreaching Cannabis zero tolerance policies, regionalized policing talks and Bill 32. All this, while our individual Directors have their own local Association duties, police duties and families to worry about. This is why I felt it was important to reflect, “Take a breath” and find time to focus on what is important to you!

Police Officers dedicate their professional careers ensuring they protect the communities they serve while providing for their families and loved ones at home. I can personally attest I have spent many extra hours sacrificing time with my family to spend more time working. The time away from home, in my mind, was always important and necessary. It was more time needed to fine tune a project, write an incredible bail package for a repeat offender, work on development strategies for my employees or navigate through countless emails to ensure my community partners or fellow members never felt ignored or under valued.

COVID changed the game. It didn't matter who you were or what job you did, COVID reminded us all of our humanity and vulnerabilities. It forced all

humans to bunker down and wait out a global pandemic. It forced all First Responders to intensely reflect on the reality they are not immune, but yet will still have to work out of necessity while caring for our families at home. Our Police family had to put their safety and wellbeing on the shelf while tending to the needs of the community we swore to protect.

It forced us to slow the pace and reflect on what is important. COVID cleared the calendar and forced us to find solace and protection in the safety of our homes. This meant sharing closed spaces with our ‘bubble’ people. This meant we started to eat together, entertain together, support each other and find ways to jointly interpret what was happening in the world. COVID slowed the hectic pace and permitted us to rest. COVID did allow for times of reflection on what is important and why we do what we do. Is this really bad?

I'm wise to the fact that 2020 has impacted all people differently but I do know we have learned plenty. AFPA is no different. AFPA has continually tried to adapt to the new normal while focusing on what is important to all police officers in Alberta and across Canada. It is our duty to keep current and share the voice of all members to Politicians, Chiefs of Police, Media and special interest groups. We actively listen while finding integral moments to speak. We do this for our members, their families and communities throughout Alberta.

While you are taking a breath, AFPA is working on getting Alberta Police

agencies to change their Cannabis zero tolerance policies. This includes utilizing sound legal opinions while navigating through the grievance process. AFPA is working with the UCP Government on what Police Act reform may look like. AFPA has provided the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police (AACP), local municipalities, and various outlets our position and recommendations on Police Act reform. AFPA is watching Bill 32 closely and trying to determine if this legislation will have any negative impact on Association business.

Finally, AFPA continues to check on you, our membership. Your health and wellness during unprecedented times is priority. While you are taking a breath, AFPA is working tirelessly on keeping current while staying engaged and focused. We find our solace in your confidence that we are watching your back.

When you read this article, there will still be a piece of 2020 left. The future is not as clear as we once thought. Hang on friends and embrace the foundational pieces that matter to you. Find some calm during times of ‘pandemic’ winds and punishing ‘anti-sentiment’ storms. Always reflect and remind yourself why you do what you do. This will energize you and allow you to become resilient throughout your career.

Be safe and AFPA is proud of every one that puts on the uniform and serves their community.

Take care,  
Curtis Hoople – AFPA President



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# From the Vice President

Mike Baker

## Is It Over Yet...

**W**ow! Just, wow! The first seven months of 2020 have been full of controversy and uncertainty, to the point that this year cannot end soon enough.

Most of us have made it through the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, relatively unscathed. Although it has been hard on all of us as a police service, it was much more trying on our homelife and families. Being locked down, having to re-learn scholastic principles in order to help kids and not being able to connect with extended family and friends, has pushed most of us to our limits. With that said, we also found some positives like, re-discovering the Alberta outdoors, focusing on family and taking inventory of what really matters. These unprecedented times truly highlight our resiliency and ability to come together, as a team, to overcome adversity. I hope that all of you and your families maintain good health, as we continue to respond to this historic event.

As if the pandemic wasn't enough, another huge event has impacted the world and had a distinctly negative impact on police officers, their families and the police organizations they serve.

On May 27, 2020, the world was horrified by a ten-minute video, that appallingly captured the death of George Floyd Jr., while in police custody. Floyd was arrested for allegedly passing counterfeit currency and was observed for an

agonizing eight minutes, with an officer kneeling on his neck in a handcuffed prone position. Despite several pleas from Floyd, that he could not breathe, none of the officers took action to address the concerns. Despite losing consciousness, positional asphyxiation, didn't appear to be a consideration. Floyd died, in police custody. Tragically, the coroner determined that Floyd died of "cardiopulmonary arrest". Findings in the report, outlined drug use and heart disease, as possible aggravating factors, however when we put all of these indicia together, law enforcement often refers to these deaths as "excited delirium".

I'm not going to debate the tactics or decisions of the involved officers, as they will be judged in due course. The discussion that needs to be had, relates to the relationship that the police maintain with their communities and the communication/transparency, that follow such incidents.

Let me first address the challenge of implicit bias, that I recognize exists in my role as a union leader in the defense of our members, during the execution of their duties. In a perfect world, officers are educated and trained to manage a multitude of situations, when legally placed, utilize those skills to de-escalate and end situations in the safest manner for all involved. We do not live in a perfect world. Situations escalate and evolve, based on several complicated and unpredictable factors (drugs, mental health, emotions etc.), that

ultimately set off a chain reaction of decisions, which eventually lead to the conclusion of an incident. I believe in our members and how they utilize their acquired skillsets, to successfully resolve these situations. Like all members of society, police officers have the presumption of innocence and their day in court.

With that out of the way, 99% of all interactions that the police have with their communities are positive, or at least end with an amicable outcome for parties involved. It's the less than 1% of police interactions that result in our actions being scrutinized by our communities. We welcome this examination, as it instills trust with the community when actions are explained and investigations conclude legal justifications. Oversight is a key component in maintaining public trust, as it scrutinizes police actions, provides necessary recommendations and admonishes/addresses accusations of police misconduct.

I know that there is a suggestion that ASIRT are police that investigate police and that we benefit from this scenario. I totally agree with this insinuation, however not for the reasoning that we garner special consideration or protection. I believe that we benefit from proven and competent investigators, that reveal the details of an incident. Once an investigation is complete, it is up to civilian Directors and Crown Prosecutors, to pursue charges, not police. When it comes to analysis or legal consideration, our members are subjected to scrutiny far

beyond what any other member of the public would be, but that is a different article.

So back to the discussion on communication/transparency with our community.

In June, I was privy to a press conference that the Winnipeg Police Service had, relating to a use of force incident, involving an EDP with a gun. The WPS admittedly recognized the video did not look good, from the perspective in which it was being portrayed on social media. Despite pending legal proceedings, the Public Information Officer deconstructed the incident and explained officers' actions, perceptions and legal articulations. I had never seen this before, in relation to third party videos, circulated on the internet. The way this release explained the incident, clearly articulated many actions and considerations that officers dealt with, relating to the volatile incident. It did not come across as excuses or trying to reverse articulate a compromising video. It was factual and insightful, for anyone unable to understand the incident from the first-person perspective. In my humble opinion, it is now the standard for these types of events, in today's era of policing. We need to follow this lead.

Seems simple, right? Well it's not. We have been paralyzed in the age of video

surveillance and cell phone cameras. Videos pop up and are circulated on various social media platforms and are often picked up by a news outlet. Police services invariably respond, after a day or two, in a manner that ultimately is perceived as defensive or self-serving. These media scrums are often ineffective and futile, as the special interest groups have often created the narrative and undermined public trust, prior to police service response. The special interest groups are more organized, goal oriented and understand communication tactics/platforms better than us. They are winning the information war.

It is time that we adjust our own tactics and practices. We need to be proactive and get in front of controversy, where we can guide and encourage understanding. The old way of doing business, has left us at a disadvantage and we are losing a war to discredit/undermine police. The folks behind these actions are purposeful, well funded and committed. If we do not adjust our practices, we too will end up in the unenviable position, our neighbours to the south are suffering with. Services and unions need to strategize and work in unison to stop the systematic deconstruction of public safety and erosion of our communities.

From the CPA perspective, I can tell you that we have recognized

these issues prior to the current crisis. We have developed a plan and engaged significant resources to target inappropriate and misleading messaging that comes from special interest and unscrupulous media outlets. I won't expand further in this medium, out of an abundance of caution, as we unfortunately have folks that leak information to these groups. I am sure you will all hear more about our strategies and plans in future messaging.

Before I conclude, I want to put a disclaimer out there. I am in no way saying that racism or police misconduct does not exist. I am not naïve or sheltered enough, to believe this. I have witnessed these types of events firsthand. What I am implying is that I believe that the men and women that sign onto this profession, do so out of a calling to serve and enhance their communities, despite great personal sacrifice. Police officers are human beings and are not beyond making mistakes. Intent is the difference between a mistake and misconduct.

*Stay safe out there and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that you may have at [mbaker@backtheblue.ca](mailto:mbaker@backtheblue.ca). ■*

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# From the Secretary/ Treasurer

— Marc Gaumont —

**G**reetings from the Windy South! When I started my policing career back in late 1996 I remember sitting with my class and getting a talk about our pension. I knew I was working to have a pension and knew that I was contributing to a pension, but it really struck me as odd that we were talking about retiring on the first week of work!

Time goes fast.

I don't recall through my career thinking much about the contributions that we make each pay to our pension, just that it's there; it's tucked away in the closet like a safety blanket waiting for that special day when it gets taken out.

In 2008 I joined the Lethbridge Police Association as the treasurer. What a time to join as the treasurer as if you remember back, 2008 was a financial crisis where too many people took out loans they couldn't afford and those loans drove up housing prices and many people simply walked away from their homes and frankly it was a mess! Now I get that I may have over simplified the crisis, but the US basically shut down and that made for my first trip to Vegas a very cheap one, but that's another story. As the Treasurer of the Association I watched each month as the investments of the Association slipped further and further south. It was also during this time that the Pension became a more discussed topic at the local association meetings as they too were seeing their investments returns under perform.

After the 2008 crash and into late 2009

we started to see the uptick in the market and things began to recover globally and as the Treasurer I began to watch as the Investments we held began to recover and effectively surpass where our portfolio was in 2008. SFPP (Special Forces Pension Plan) also began to see returns and the portfolio of our pension recovered from the 2008 losses that we suffered during the crisis.

Fast forward to 2020 and you may have heard about the SFPP in the news lately and you may have dismissed the pension news as frankly we care about catching the bad guys and don't pay much attention to that safety blanket that we have tucked away. So I thought I would use this forum to provide you the coals notes version of why the Pension hit the news.

On November 22, 2019, Bill 22 came into effect requiring Pension Plans in Alberta to enter into an investment management agreement with AIMCo (Alberta Investment Management Corporation) to be the exclusive provider of investment management services. You may remember this part in the News more so as the Alberta Teachers Pension was directed by the Alberta Government to effectively move their money from their investors to AIMCo. While AIMCo was the investment manager for SFPP already, there was governance awarded to SFPP less than a year earlier that allowed for SFPP to select an investment manager after 5 years; however, this opt out clause was effectively removed once Bill 22 came into effect. It makes one wonder why the Alberta Government is so keen

to have their thumb on a Pension to which they offer nothing?

Shortly after Bill 22 came into effect our world learned of COVID-19 and the global pandemic that has taken over every aspect of our lives.

As we are all aware, COVID caused a disruption in the market (to say the least) and then AIMCo hit the news with their 2.1 Billion loss due to their VOLTS (Volatility Trading Strategy) investment strategy, a strategy that aims to take advantage of volatile markets. COVID and VOLTS did not mix well and thus the significant loss and why AIMCo was hitting the news. If you wanted to read more on the VOLTS and AIMCo loss a quick Google search will give you plenty to digest!

As an Association member or Association leader of your organization I would encourage you to keep an eye on that safety blanket and not tuck it away so far back into the closet. We need to continue to ask the questions as to why the Government of Alberta is so interested in directing the management of our Pension funds.

I would also encourage you to check out the SFPP webpage (SFPP.ca) as it is a great source of information for you the member to keep up to date with what is happening in closet where you safety blanket is folded and tucked away.

Take care and be safe,

Marc Gaumont  
Secretary/Treasurer



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# From the Director/Editor

Mark Flynn

**G**reetings Everyone, and welcome to the Fall edition of the AFPA magazine!

This is my first year on the AFPA board and I would like to start off by telling you a bit about myself. I was born and raised in New Brunswick and followed my older brother into policing through training at the Atlantic Police Academy in Prince Edward Island.

Upon completing of training, I was offered a job by Medicine Hat Police Service. After a quick google search I was able to confirm it was in fact a real place, and accepted the offer and started my career in 2010 at the age of twenty one.

I joined the Tactical Team in 2013 and took my sniper training in 2015. I have been and avid hunter and sport shooter all my life and have spent many hours behind a rifle, but until this course, I didn't know that I didn't know what I was doing!

I took on the role of director with the MHPA in 2017 as I was tired of being on the sidelines and wanted to be a part of the voice of the membership. In my director role, I took over management of an association owned condo in Radium, B.C.

In September, 2019, I suffered a major knee injury while playing in a charity basketball game for the service. After a bit of back and forth, I was very fortunate WCB eventually accepted my claim. I had surgery the following morning to repair several tendons and

ligaments, the largest being the patellar tendon, (the big one that connects to the bottom of your knee cap). The recovery was excruciating, both physically and emotionally. At the time, my wife and I were in the first year of our marriage, and had just found out she was pregnant... WITH TWINS!

What should have been such a happy and exciting time in our lives was clouded with mixed emotions and struggles that I was dealing with from my knee injury, and constant physical pain. I began fighting with depression thinking of everything I "couldn't" do now because of my injury. I was normally a very vibrant person and had a very outgoing personality but I found myself becoming more recluse and slipping into a very negative space.

I was very fortunate to have amazing friends who refused to let me feel sorry for myself, and would stop by my house often just to distract me and keep me company.

As my knee began to heal, and I started to shift my focus to what I COULD do rather than what I couldn't do, things got turned upside down once again. My wife went into labor with our twin boys at 24 weeks. It was a whirlwind of panic, fear, anger and frustration because having children was supposed to be a joyful time. I was too afraid to be happy or optimistic and felt like I was robbed of the experience of having our first children.

Luckily, they were able to get my wife to Calgary, and the boys were

born a week later at 25 weeks and 3 days at Foothills Hospital.

To say I was overwhelmed would be an understatement. I was thrown back into battling with anxiety and depression that I recently became familiar with during my knee injury and lost the ability to focus, eat, or sleep. Self-care not once crossed my mind because I was so concerned with being there for my wife and children.

As a long time patrol shift worker, I became acquainted many years ago with prescription sleeping pills to help either reset, or get me to sleep on time for that first day shift. I saw them as a safe tool to help get me to sleep so I wasn't tired the whole next work day. However, under all these new stressors, I required more than the suggested dose. It was about a week before I realized that I was in trouble. I was using the dosage not just to sleep, but to escape, and to get 'out' of my own head.

I began weekly meetings with a psychologist and started to develop healthy coping mechanisms and tools to deal with stress and anxiety. I have tried several mindfulness apps and have narrowed down to a few that I find work for me and have been falling back on the apps when I feel I need them.

Through this, I have learned that there is no quick fix to anything mental health related. At first, I was frustrated by that, because I am a hands on person and believe for every problem -

there has to be a solution. I am thankful I was able to realize when I did that I wasn't able to 'fix' this problem on my own.

Given the current anti-police rhetoric coming from south of the border, police are being exposed to a growing amount of workplace pressure from

seemingly all sides. Now more than ever we need to be there to support each other, and weather this storm.

I am excited for the years to come with AFPA and look forward to learning lots and meeting members from all agencies! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my

story or anything magazine related at [mark.flynn@mhps.ca](mailto:mark.flynn@mhps.ca).

Stay safe, and if you can't be safe, be fierce,

Director Mark Flynn



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# From the Director

Chris Young

## Communication is the Answer in These Trying Times

2020 has been a challenging year especially for law enforcement. On top of the global pandemic there has been a ragging anti Police sentiment sweeping North America. The unfortunate and tragic death of George Floyd has sparked outrage and anger that Police agencies throughout North America have bore the brunt of. People have been demanding change. They have been speaking out and protesting. Special interest groups have seized the opportunity to push their agenda of “defunding/abolishing” the Police. They have caused mayhem and rioting south of our border. It has had an impact here in Canada as well - just not at the same intensity as the United States. It’s frustrating and disheartening for Police Officers and many feel very disillusioned. Including myself.

A large disappointment for me was not seeing a lot of support from our municipal, provincial and federal politicians. Many remained silent during the heart of this upheaval. And some (not all) actually joined the anti Police movement and have spoken out against law enforcement. With the exception of Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who spoke out against the idea of “defunding/abolishing” the Police, there has been little said or done by our respective Governments to defend the law enforcement community. In Calgary it took the defacing and vandalism of a Police statue/monument for municipal and provincial politicians to say anything supportive at all. It indeed makes Police Officers feel devalued. It has been often said that, “in times of crisis, true leadership stands

out.” I would have liked to have seen more support and defence for the law enforcement community from our politicians as our profession is being demonized. That would be the “true leadership” that we need right now in my humble opinion.

It would appear that law enforcement has become the scapegoat for our society’s shortfalls. Believe it or not this is nothing new. The civil unrest, the anti Police sentiment and movement have all happened before. In the United States there have been hundreds if not thousands of demonstrations, riots and anti Police sentiment during the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. It’s even infiltrated popular culture with anti Police music and songs such as “F\*ck the Police”, and “Cop Killer” which hit the music charts in 1988 and 1992. Many Officers in the United States have been injured and killed in such events of civil disobedience throughout history. In Canada we have experienced civil unrest and anti Police sentiment as well. An example of such is the incident in Oka, Quebec where a Police Officer was killed. What gets me is that how quickly people choose to blame the Police and go out of their way to make it seem like the Police are the ultimate problem. No one at any of these protests/demonstrations is carrying signs that say: “F\*ck the Government,” or “F\*ck the law makers.” It just doesn’t seem like a logical approach to target law enforcement if your true goal is to invoke true change. It’s the Government that makes decisions, writes the policies and creates the law. The news is littered with articles and stories of al-

leged corruption and ethics scandals involving our respective Governments. In fact the Prime Minister of Canada along with the Federal Government is the subject of a third ethics scandal right now (at the writing of this article). Where’s the accountability of our respective Governments? Where are the protests and the call to “defund/abolish” the Government? I’ve heard many Politicians calling for more Police accountability. How about more Government accountability?

With all that being said, I do not believe that every politician is corrupt. Also, not all protesters are rioters. Reform and change is necessary and a good thing. The way to achieve proper reform and change is peaceful discussion and collaboration. A big part of Community Policing is listening to citizens, getting direct input from them and getting the community involved in crime prevention etc. We need to be open to community concerns and we need to listen to our citizens. However, issues and problems do not get resolved by finger pointing, laying blame, being irrational and destructive. Calm, rational discussion from all parties, stake holders and communities is needed to resolve issues and problems. A lot of people have labeled all Police Officers as being “bad”, or corrupt. Not only is this completely untrue, it is also irresponsible thinking. Just like it is wrong to label a community or culture because of the actions of a few individuals. All politicians are not corrupt and they also should not be labeled as such. There are actually some good people in public office that do genuinely care

and want to make a difference. Many still support the Police. We need these elected officials to speak up and show their support for the Police publicly.

With everything that is going on right now it is sometimes hard to not react emotionally to the situation. Some Members have told me that they have wanted a more aggressive response from their Association in the media to address the anti Police sentiment/movement. An example they often give is President Patrick Lynch, (President of the New York Police Benevolent Association), and his address to the media regarding the protest/riots that had taken place in New York City back in June of this year. You have to understand the entire situation that Lynch and his Members were in at the time he addressed the media. 400 plus NYPD Members had been injured in the rioting taking place in New York. There was anarchy in the streets of New York. Innocent people were being hurt. Hence the response from Patrick Lynch which was reasonable, appropriate and the correct response for his Members and their situation. When you are the voice of the Membership you have to respond accordingly. There was no rioting in Calgary. Our buildings have not burned and we did not have 400 plus Members injured. The response needs to be reasonable, appropriate and professional because it not only can have an affect on the speaker, but it can also affect the entire Membership. Warren Buffett, investor, business tycoon and philanthropist worth about 80.3 billion dollars, once said the following: "You will continue to suffer if you have an emotional reaction to everything that is said to you. True power is sitting back and observing things with logic. True power is restraint. If words control you that means everyone else can control you. Breathe and allow things to pass." Although I think Mr. Buffett was referring to how an individual should act, I believe the same concept can apply to a group or organization. Emotional

maturity and control is difficult, but it is necessary when representing others. A true leader should try his or her best to not make an emotional decision. The consequences far outweighs the temporary satisfaction that may be felt. Strategic communication is the key. Hence why so many Police Associations are looking at hiring Public Relations experts/companies. In Calgary, we are utilizing Public Relations experts to improve our communications. The last thing we want as an Association is to be shut out of the discussions that are taking place now regarding reform, funding and the future of law enforcement. We need to continue to be the voice of the Members we are representing. Anyone can get up in front of cameras and throw a temper tantrum, but in the end concerning our situation in Calgary that would cause more harm than good. We need to be professional. We need to be open to discussions. We need to keep our place at the table. We need to be the adults. We need to be the leaders especially when elected officials, rank and the heads of organizations fall short of the mark.

There has been a lot of talk about systemic racism as of late. Systemic racism means a lot of different things to different people. Is there systemic racism in the Justice System? Is there systemic racism in our Services/Organizations? The truth is I don't know. I don't know every corner of the Justice System. Nor do I know every nook and cranny of the Calgary Police Service. I don't think anyone does. I have not witnessed systemic racism in my 16 plus years with the Calgary Police Service. There are people in our communities that say it exists. The only logical and reasonable way to resolve this conflict is rational and calm discussions. If evidence of systemic racism is presented then all parties can work cohesively to create reform and rectify any wrongs. Peaceful, logical and reasonable behaviour and communication is the key to success for all parties/stake holders.

I know a lot of Members are down right now. I know a lot are discouraged and are feeling very unappreciated. The media has not been kind to the profession of law enforcement. To these discouraged Members I say this: Do what is needed of you and make sure you and your partner go home safe at the end of every shift. There are many people who still support law enforcement. Some are members of the media like Rex Murphy, a Canadian commentator and author on the subjects of politics and social matters. Mr. Murphy stated the following in a recent editorial: "I admire that so many Police Officers have restrained themselves as well as they have, and stayed on the job. I know cops have flaws and there are some bad actors. I know too that they are mainly decent men and women, with more courage and stamina than most of us."

Despite the anti Police rhetoric and bad treatment of cops by some people, special interest groups and some media personnel, there are a lot of people who still support us and they depend on the Police to hold the thin blue line. We all knew that it wouldn't be all "sunshine and rainbows" when we took our respective positions on the thin blue line. We signed up to make a difference and to protect good people and citizens like Rex Murphy. No one said it would be easy and we signed up anyway because we felt compelled to. There is nothing more honourable than that and I'm proud of every one of my fellow Members. I know the great majority of our Members are not racist and stand up to corruption and wrong doing. Chin up. Things will calm down. Things will balance out and good will prevail because of all the good our Members are doing each and every day.

I'll leave you with the words of President Patrick Lynch which I find are truly inspiring and what every Police Officer in North America needs to hear:

"Don't ever apologize for being a Cop. Brothers and Sisters, please don't ever apologize for being a Cop."

The position of Police Officer is one of the most noble, giving and rewarding professions there is. And although

it is a difficult job, it is a great, great job. The best one I've ever had personally. We'll get through these trying times because like Mr. Murphy has said our Members are "decent men and women, with more courage and stamina" than the majority of people on the planet. Keep doing what you all are doing. Our

resolve, stamina and courage will continue to show through our actions and professionalism.

Take care and be safe,

Director Chris Young

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BENNETT JONES LLP.....	04	HARLUND INDUSTRIES.....	16	RIVER VALLEY BEVERAGE.....	12
BENEFEX HUB CONSULTING.....	08	HEALTH SPECIALTY SERVICES.....	16	RUSTY'S EQUIPMENT & GENERAL HAULING LTD.....	10
BROKERLINK.....	04	IMPERIAL BEVERAGES GLOBAL PVT. LTD.....	12	SADLER INSURANCE.....	12
CANADIAN TIRE #347.....	06	JOHNSON INC.....	02	SCI CANADA.....	22
CANADIAN TIRE.....	15	L & W RESTAURANT.....	16	SHIBLEY & CO.....	10
CAVEMAN TRANSPORT.....	10	LETHBRIDGE CUSTOM CANVAS LTD.....	16	STAR PLUMBING AND HEATING.....	10
CERTIFIED WEIGHING SYSTEMS.....	15	MCCONNELL BUILDING MOVERS.....	12	STRATHMORE MOTOR PRODUCTS.....	12
CITY FORD.....	18	MID CITY CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT.....	16	SUNSHINE COAST HEALTH CENTRE.....	21
CLEAR FLOW SERVICES LTD.....	12	MOBILE HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING.....	15	VENTURE TAX & ACCOUNTING.....	18
COMPACT RENTALS.....	12	MOBILITY FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.....	10	YELLOW BIKE SOLUTIONS.....	20
DALTON TIMMIS INSURANCE.....	10	ORIENTAL PHOENIX.....	16		
DR. MALCOLM P. MILLER.....	06	POLLOCK & CO.....	18		

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# From the Director

— *Damien Cordrey* —

Sometimes it is the deafening silence of the majority that is louder than the vocal minority. During the last few months, we have seen a culmination of special interest groups taking center stage and controlling the narrative, controlling the media, and controlling the politicians. They have propped up their radical agendas on the back of what we can all agree was a horrific, tragic, and criminal event in Minnesota. But they have catapulted far beyond a voice for change and have become a movement for hate, violence, and vitriol. These groups have focused on demonizing the policing profession and have created a villainized profile for every police officer that wears the uniform. The politicians have catered and pandered to these interest groups in order to secure votes and in doing so have alienated critical partners to create positive change. Police chiefs have shown their true colors in times of great political pressure, showing where their true allegiances lie. Some have stood fast and brought forth true empirical and statistical data to show the amazing work their members are doing everyday and how they continue to strive to be better. While others have cast their members aside in favor of the “safe” option to appease the vocal minority and create less drama for themselves.

So where does that leave our good police officers? When the media is filled with hate, because hate sells, when the politicians disguise a Covid related police budget reduction as “Defund the Police” budget reduction in order to appease the vocal minority, when Police Chief’s make critical

decisions related to their membership based upon the loudest voice of the day, when you have members of special interest groups repeatedly telling our officers that they should kill themselves, our officers can not help but feel demoralized and isolated from all supports. We as the Associations send our message of support throughout our respective services, but every time we try to support our members in the media, they carefully edit the interview to create the narrative they require to feed their message of police are bad and Associations protect the bad police.

Often, we get letters sent to our office in appreciation for our members and the work they do. Some from citizens, business owners and even the odd politician will quietly support our members. Some will bring treats to the divisions to say thank you for the good work our members do and they send messages of understanding that not all cops are bad and that by and large the police have the support of the citizens of Edmonton. While this is appreciated by all police officers, it begs the question of why your support is silent. In a city of 1 million people (Edmonton), with a citizen approval rating of over 80% for its police service, where is the 80%+? It is clear that speaking out in support of police these days is not a popular or easy thing to do. But imagine what it is like to be a police officer in today’s environment. Going to work each day in a job that demands you to be ready to sacrifice your life to protect others, yet all eyes are watching and waiting for you to make a mistake. Remember that police officers

are not allowed to be human, they are expected to be perfect at all times in all ways. Could you take that kind of pressure every day, not just on duty but off duty? Do not get me wrong, police should be held to a higher standard and we should be accountable for our actions. But a higher standard does not mean an impossible standard, and accountable does not mean guilty until proven innocent.

So now that I have set the stage for the current climate of police morale we go back to my opening statement, “Sometimes it is the deafening silence of the majority that is louder than the vocal minority.” Sometimes it is the silence that cuts deeper than the words of hate. When our members feel so completely unsupported and targeted, it makes it impossible to effectively do their job. They do not want to engage in proactive policing as it is too risky to stop and talk to someone suspicious and receive a complaint of profiling. Even taking a call for service presents a risk that can lead to a use of force, which is filmed and aired by all media. Let’s face it a use of force is never pretty and without context it can and has been portrayed by media as police brutality. You get politicians and special interest groups condemning police actions based upon the video that the media has aired without having any details or investigation creating a volatile political climate. If the police chief decides to bow to the political climate, as some have done, this leaves the member in a position of guilty until proven innocent and fighting for their livelihood, without any context or true investigative process completed. So

how can anyone operate in a climate of constant perfection without exception, and without any form of support. The sheer stress of this placed upon our members is unimaginable by most until you have experienced it firsthand. There are some people at large that say that this is what police officers signed up for, that they knew the risks of this job and that if they can't handle it, they should get out of policing. To them I say, thank you for confirming your level of ignorance to the entire world.

What is it our police need from the silent majority? We do not need you to drown out the vocal minority. We do

not need you to stifle the message of change because that message is critical to the continued improvement and evolution of policing. What we need is to drown out the hate. Reaffirm to our police officers that they are good people, doing good work and that by and large our citizens have trust and faith in them. Bring balance to the politicians and police chief's that are so easily swayed by the loudest voice and then once we achieve balance, we can refocus on building effective partnerships that work collectively towards real solutions. Not just racism within our entire society, but finding solutions to mental health, addictions,

homelessness and more. Let us not forget that these issues are society's failures that have now been placed on the shoulders of the police to solve, while everyone else plays armchair quarterback.

Do not be afraid to be the leader. Do not be afraid to be vocal about your support of the police.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." - MLK

Damien Cordrey



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# From the Director

— Brad Niven —

**O**ki. Hello everyone, greetings from Camrose and I hope you are managing well in this new Covid world. As I prepared to write my first submission to the Alberta Police Beat, admittedly I was pretty uncertain what to even write about. The sound advice received was to introduce myself and share some details about who I am, my background and so on. As someone who sees themselves as pretty boring, I was sure I could not even come close to Damien and his bravery in his first contribution to the magazine, or Chris for his article in the last issue. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to visit the website to read these (and the many other articles) I highly recommend you do so. This being said, I decided to stay a bit more "high-level" with my first contribution, and I thought I would tuck in a few personal details along the way.

As a relatively newer member in Camrose, and a former member in Calgary I have a combined 14 years' of service. The majority of my service has been spent in Patrol with stops in General Investigations, Traffic, Major Events and as a Community Liaison Officer. In the past three years I have served as an Executive member of the Camrose Police Association, first as VP, and I am just now beginning my second term as President. I wanted to share that I owe a great many thanks to our outgoing President Jason Scheibelbien, and I am grateful for his many years of service to our association, and ongoing support as I learn this new role and realize just how much work

he did behind the scenes.

It feels a little like the first day of recruit training writing this piece. Who are you? Where are you from? And so on. Here goes. Firstly, I am actually a quitter. That's right, a quitter. After nearly 10 years service with Calgary I quit policing altogether in 2012. There were many reasons "why" at the time, mostly I felt I just needed a change, a feeling I actually couldn't shake off for almost a year. I came to learn it isn't easy being a quitter in our line of work. People in law enforcement communities look at you a little differently, some make assumptions to the negative, or some say things like "I'd leave too if it wasn't for the pension..." or "who'd hire me??" and so on. I'll never forget writing my letter of resignation and how incredibly difficult it was to actually put the words on paper. The response from the service was pretty much what one should expect; no fanfare, no big farewell (other than from my teammates), just procedures on how to return all of your kit, make sure to stop at HR and such. So I did. I know members will come and go, it happens, however if anyone reading this finds themselves facing a similar situation, please feel free to reach out to me and I'd be happy to share my experience in more detail and maybe share a few thoughts.

After leaving Calgary, I went to work in Edmonton for the Government of Alberta. The work was great, and I served in roles including operations staff in the Provincial Emergency Op-

erations Center during the floods of 2013, then jumped over to the Crown Prosecution Service, and finally with an investigative team as part of Alberta Transportation. Oh, and my wife gave birth to our third child, I managed to work through a Masters degree at the University of Victoria, and we moved a couple of times all somewhere in there as well. If anyone is thinking of pursuing a Masters program this too is another experience I'd be happy to share if you wanted to discuss it further. Now, back to the matter at hand. The government positions are what brought me to Camrose, they also allowed me to work with the members here, and 4 years ago I made another difficult decision to return to policing. This City has been fantastic to my family and I, and the community support for our members is outstanding.

These professional and personal experiences have given me a fairly decent understanding of the issues members face both in large and small centers. There is still so much to learn, and I hope all members are alive to just how dynamic our collective environment is. Change in some areas seems to move at a glacial pace (for instance the AACP's stance on Cannabis), while other issues (such as Defunding) seem to grow exponentially overnight. In my view our issues across the province are actually quite similar, and really only separated by a matter of scale. As I begin my time with AFPA I hope to continue to advocate for change as part of a larger group with many different perspectives. We cannot stop moving is-

sues central to our profession forward as AFPA has done, and will continue to do.

In closing, I would always encourage members to be active in their respective associations, either in or outside of the traditional roles. Admittedly, I was not always the first person raising my hand when issues arose, and taking an active role in our Association has changed my perspective toward our profession in so many positive ways. As I wrote this I stumbled across

a quote from Criss Jami (thumbs up to Google) who is an American poet, author, and activist that says:

“I would rather have strong enemies than a world of passive individualists. In a world of passive individualists nothing seems worth anything simply because nobody stands for anything. That world has no convictions, no victories, no unions, no heroism, no absolutes, no heartbeat. That world has rigor mortis.”

Even though I may not agree with all Criss writes, this quote illustrates that we all benefit from the larger collective experience, even in darker times, where opposing views exist to the work we do, and the way in which it is done. It is my intention as a member of our collective to be the so-called “strong enemy” to those who seek to diminish or limit our profession, and carry on the amazing work being done.

Stay Safe. ■



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