



Resolution 17-01

RESOLUTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF REASONABLE GUIDELINES SURROUNDING POLICE INFORMATION GATHERING

Background

In recent years, various community groups across Canada have utilized access to information legislation to obtain statistical data in relation to police interactions with fellow community members. In Ontario, these interactions are commonly referred to as **carding**. In Alberta, they are called **street checks** (Edmonton) and **check ups** (Calgary). Data obtained in some Canadian jurisdictions appears to demonstrate an over-representation of certain minority groups, when compared to the population as a whole (Edmonton statistics showed indigenous and black people as over-represented).

Some community groups have suggested that over-representation is proof of systemic racism within our police services. They have further suggested these interactions are random in nature and violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There have been public calls for the Government of Alberta to prohibit all street checks by police.

WHEREAS the Alberta Federation of Police Associations (AFPA) recognizes the value and importance of community policing in Canada. It subscribes to the principles of Sir Robert Peel, particularly the notion that; ***“The police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence”***. AFPA submits that a ban on police interaction with community members, outside of any criminal process, would handicap investigations and severely hamper community policing efforts. It would be the first step to creating a purely reactive policing model in Alberta; and,

WHEREAS AFPA maintains that statistical street check information in isolation does not provide a full and accurate account of what is really occurring. It would be ill advised to draw conclusions from raw data without a detailed and proper analysis. AFPA believes that a thorough review of street checks involving over-represented minority groups in Alberta, would discount the notion that police are profiling individuals based on race and / or violating their individual rights; and,

WHEREAS what constitutes a street check is not well defined. In many jurisdictions, the same administrative form is used to document subject information in a variety of

situations. For example, Calgary uses a document commonly referred to as a **checkup slip**. This form is used to record chance encounters with community members (at an officer's discretion), but it is also used to document deliberate encounters, when members of the community are subject to court imposed release conditions and the police are confirming adherence to those conditions. Raw statistical data does not differentiate between different sets of circumstance; and,

WHEREAS statistical over-representation of minority groups in the justice system is not new. ***“It is not a new observation that some of Canada’s minority, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system”*** (Howard Sapers, Office of the Correctional Investigator - Canada, annual report, 2013 – 2014). There is much debate as to why minority over-representation occurs; however, it is generally accepted that it is a product of history and broader societal challenges. AFPA submits that any over-representation of minority groups in Alberta street check data is symptomatic of larger societal issues. It is not the product of systemic racism or profiling by police, as some community groups have suggested.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT

The Alberta Federation of Police Associations calls upon the Government of Alberta to:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the public records detailing police interaction with any over-represented group, with the view of determining whether the interactions were in keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Maintain provincial commitment to the community policing philosophy and the Peelian Principles by rejecting calls for an outright ban on police interactions with citizens outside of the criminal arena.
- Develop reasonable guidelines and establish best practices for the collection, access and storage of information obtained by police through citizen interaction.