

Researcher finds Canadian policing costs too high

April 1 2014, by Rosie Hales

According to a study by Queen's researcher Christian Leuprecht, if the cost of policing in Canada is to become more sustainable there must be a discussion surrounding the extent of police service and how these are delivered.

A debate about the extent and delivery of police services must take place immediately, according to a study by Queen's researcher Christina Leuprecht.

"The current business model for police services in this country is unsustainable, especially considering there is no evidence that greater expenditure has either made the country any safer or improved the quality of service," he says.

Dr. Leuprecht, a professor in the School of Policy Studies and Department of Political Studies at Queen's, says Canada spent \$12 billion, or nearly 1 per cent of gross domestic product, on [policing](#) in 2012. He recommends prioritizing police responsibilities to reduce that expenditure.

"The scope of policing has expanded greatly in recent decades," says Dr. Leuprecht. "Order is integral to freedom. But in a liberal democracy that is premised on limited state intervention, we should be debating 'what kind' of policing instead of 'how much.'"

The study features other ideas for containing the costs of police services

for Canadians.

"We need to place a much higher emphasis on quality over quantity when it comes to policing," says Dr. Leuprecht. "As well, we need to shift the emphasis of police work away from law enforcement and towards 'peace officer.'"

In his study, Dr. Leuprecht makes a case for economies of scale and reducing overhead, for example through greater use of technology by police in Canada to cut costs. This includes sharing court records online instead of using paper and cutting down on administrative work by using electronic messaging techniques (such as email or text messaging) to send minor offence notices.

However, Dr. Leuprecht suggests that with up to 90 per cent of police budgets spent on salaries, core and discretionary policing activities will have to be triaged to become more efficient, effective, productive, affordable and sustainable.

"In 2012, Canada spent \$12 billion, or nearly 1 per cent of [gross domestic product](#), on policing alone," says Dr. Leuprecht. "The current business model for police services in this country is unsustainable, especially considering there is no evidence that greater expenditure has either made the country any safer or improved the quality of service."

More information: The complete study is available online: www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/...ofPolicing_Final.pdf

Provided by Queen's University

Citation: Researcher finds Canadian policing costs too high (2014, April 1) retrieved 25 April

2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-canadian-policing-high.html>

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