



“Future-Proofing Policing and Leveraging Oversight to Make it Happen”

Keynote Address by Inspector General Ryan Teschner

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning, everyone.

It's an absolute privilege to stand before all of you today—police leaders, partners, and vital voices in shaping the future of policing in Ontario. Your dedication to the safety and security of our communities is not just admirable; it is essential. Together, as those who deliver policing and those that oversee policing, we share a profound commitment to uphold the values that underpin our work: fairness, accountability, and respect for all. These values are not just foundational; they are transformative in how we engage with our communities – and, with one another.

Before we dive into the heart of our discussion, let me take a moment to acknowledge the critical work each of you does as chiefs and senior leaders in your organizations. Leading a police service today is no small task. You carry the weight of protecting public safety in an increasingly complex, demanding, and scrutinized environment. The stakes are high; public trust is fragile, and every decision can have far-reaching consequences. We have seen these play out, in various communities, right across this province. What starts off as a regular police interaction, leads to a text message or phone call to you, and then the scrutiny of media and public reaction.

You do all of this work while honoring the foundational principles of policing in a democratic society. Remember, these principles are not mere words; they are the bedrock of our legitimacy and the lens through which we engage with our communities, shaping the future of policing and the trust we build with those we serve.

You're going to hear a lot of future-proofing over the next few days, from a wide range of esteemed leaders and experts. So, it's always good to start with the core question. I'm going to kick things off this morning by giving you my two cents on what is future-proofing, and why it matters.

First, I'm going to tell you why it matters to me, Ryan. I'm going to tell you a story that, I'll admit, has nothing to do with policing, but everything to do with my realization that I must – we must – constructively challenge institutions, and in particular, challenge the passive acceptance of “this is the way we've always done it”... but, more importantly, MOST importantly, we must challenge ourselves. Our beliefs. Our willingness to accept the safety and security of the tried and true even when we can see some early cracks in the foundation.

Then I'll tell you why future-proofing matters to me, the Inspector General of Policing in Ontario, and why I think it should matter to you, as Ontario's police leaders.

I'll go on to share with you some of my ideas about how we should go about future-proofing Ontario police services, together, and finally, I'll ask you to think about your own challenges, your own ideas... because as you'll hear me say over the next 30ish minutes, you will achieve far greater success as leaders, and for policing, if you share not only the glory of the good times, but more essentially, the burden of the challenges in our midst.

Let me just say: you in the audience know Morgan Terry from my office. We had a good time bantering ideas back and forth and preparing for this speech together. Unfortunately, she won the arm-wrestle that led to me having to use this photo.

Image description: A professional headshot of young Ryan Teschner, white male, short brunette hair, smiling. He is wearing a blue pinstripe suit with a red striped tie. The backdrop is grey.

This is me in 2006 as a young, bright-eyed, and bushy-tailed, brand-new associate with the law firm Heenan Blaikie. Heenan Blaikie was a Canadian legal institution, and at its peak in 2010, it had 560 lawyers and 1,300 staff in nine offices across Canada, as well as Paris.

I picked Heenan Blaikie on the recommendation of Eddie Greenspan, someone I had the good fortune of working with before I even went to law school. He worked with one lawyer in particular at Heenan Blaikie, and as I consulted Eddie on my big decision – a decision that could set the course of my legal career - I went with what he knew. And I will admit. It was the easy path. I was risk adverse and wanted comfort and stability and security. I liked the relative safety of this big, well-known institution, which still felt very much like a family business. And I was thinking about my own young family and making conservative career decisions that would ensure stability and security for them. So, I didn't really look outside, I didn't really consider other opportunities – other than other big, well-established firms. I didn't really dive into what could be better opportunities, or whether, deep down, I was really seeking a more important calling. And here's the reality for those of you who know how Heenan Blaikie's story ends: I probably never would have left Heenan Blaikie if its doors hadn't closed when the law firm collapsed.

Now, I began to hear murmurs and concerns about how the firm was being managed. The scandals, some of them making their way onto the front pages of newspapers – including allegations of one law partner engaged with an African dictator in some kind of arms-dealing situation. Then, partners started to leave – a trickle at first, that then sped up into something more like a conveyor belt. Now, I was still young – 34 years old. I wanted things to be okay. I didn't want to believe that the worst could be true. And, so, I didn't do what every good litigator is trained to do: ask the tough questions, of my leaders, or even of myself. I kept my head down and continued to do my work.

I didn't seek real answers and, I will admit, I became satisfied hearing what I wanted to hear: that the noise would eventually die down, and that Heenan Blaikie would continue to thrive.

If the partners issued messages of reassurance, I believed them...because I needed to go on believing in the security and stability that this institution provided for me and my family. Like an ostrich, I chose to keep my head in the sand.

And then, one day, it was over. The firm collapsed under the weight of the departures, some greed (because what is a good story without the greed angle?), the public noise and speculation, and its own management fumbles and self-interested decision-making. The halls started to empty. Lawyers started landing in places they had been having conversations with for a while. And, on the last day the Toronto office's doors were open, in January 2014, I found myself sitting in a boardroom on the 26th floor of the Bay-Adelaide Centre, drinking whisky with a colleague from what was left in the bottle surrounded by boxes and garbage and irrefutable physical evidence of all the cracks and murmurs and signs that I'd chosen to ignore. And that is when I realized I'd waited too long.

I'd waited because I believed – and wanted so badly to continue to believe — in the institution. And, as a senior associate with a long career ahead of him, I didn't think it my place to challenge it or the management decisions being made on my behalf. I believed that longevity meant stability which meant security...and that was my idea of success at the time. There was some element of loyalty there too, but what I now realize is that loyalty, like public trust, does not continue to exist in the absence of care and attention. Loyalty, like public trust, can erode with bad decisions that don't seek to strike a balance between the varied interests at play. Loyalty, like public trust, must continually be earned.

More importantly, though, I think it boiled down to a lack of honesty with myself, both about what I probably could have seen if I just opened my eyes and really looked, and also a lack of honesty about what I really wanted. Was it worth it to feel that job security if I was also miserable, stressed out, and was no longer feeling that I was contributing in the way I had dreamed of when I graduated law school? Ultimately, though, what happened to Heenan Blaikie – none of which was in my control – taught me to consider a whole new world of opportunity, and also, my role in contributing to the public good in a way that would make my children proud.

So, what did this experience teach me, specifically, that could be applied in the context of policing? Well, let me say a few things about why I think Heenan Blaikie failed, and we'll see if any it resonates with you.

First, as I said earlier, it felt like a family business because it was run like a family business. Despite the firm's significant growth over the years, in terms of the size of the workforce, the scope and scale of its legal portfolio, and the complexity of the work it managed, it was poorly managed and lacked a foundation of modern business structures that would enable adaptation and the ability to navigate modern challenges as it operated.

Second, governance was weak. Some would even suggest real governance was non-existent other than in name. The real leaders – the ones with the authority to make decisions – were all like-minded, shoot from the hip kind of guys who behaved more like highly paid employees than business owners. There was a lack of process and scrutiny, and information about finances and operations was closely guarded.

Third, the management failed to admit that it didn't know what it didn't know. Lawyering is a profession, yes. But running a law firm requires attention to the profession and to the business. In spite of that, there was very little real strategic planning, succession planning, or preparation for predictable impacts to operations like the end of big cases. Again, some talked the talk of these things, but these critical elements were not really in place, let alone nurtured and baked into the DNA of the firm. Some have said that the foundation was built on sand, creating great risk.

The firm had operated this way for years – with Roy Heenan as the family patriarch who couldn't let go. But, unfortunately, like a broken marriage, longevity is not a sign of success. When people end a marriage, those around them often say the marriage 'failed.' That's not failure. Ending something that doesn't work to consciously and deliberately move to a path of better is not failure. But here is a reality: you are all trained police officers. That 'gut feel' that detectives talk about is a real thing. And there are always signs – always – of organizational erosion... stagnation...or worse. Many had a 'gut feel' that things were not okay. But we took an institution for granted. We cannot, we must not, take our institutions for granted. In the case of Heenan Blaikie, the losses were certainly major, but when it comes to the institutions of policing, the stakes are so much higher.

So, pay attention to the murmurs and your 'gut feel,' and create pathways for people who are closer to the ground to say what they think and feel. Shake off the comfort of echo chambers, where you hear the same voices that help you justify status quo and tell you what you want to hear. Let those who are plugged in to real sentiment in the organization and the community ask, "what are we doing about this?" even if there's a risk that the answer is, "I don't know – yet." Because you can be sure that today's whispered concerns and quiet criticisms will be tomorrow's crisis.

This younger version of me learned the hard way, that you cannot act like an ostrich and bury your head in the sand. And I also now know that I knew that was exactly what I was doing – I just didn't want to admit it.

The exercise of future-proofing would have allowed Heenan Blaikie to anticipate future shocks and stresses and take steps to minimize their potential negative effects.

Future-proofing an organization does not protect it from every failure, which is an inevitable part of trying new things and learning about how to do better... but future-proofing supports the anticipation of and planning for change, increasing organizational resilience, and mitigating risks so you can continue to move forward – maybe differently, but forward.

So why should you, chiefs of police, care about future-proofing beyond securing a good performance review and a longer contract?

Let me take you to the night of a major protest in a mid-sized Ontario city not long ago. Crowds were gathering, tensions were rising—and officers on the ground needed real-time updates to respond effectively. But instead of accessing a common operational picture, neighbouring police services were using different systems. Communication between them broke down. One service deployed crowd control based on old intelligence, while the other was still waiting for confirmation from headquarters. The result? Confusion, public frustration, and a missed opportunity to de-escalate early.

That was not a failure of commitment or courage. It was a failure of connection. A failure of modernization. And it's not isolated. Across Ontario, too many services still operate in silos—each with their own tech, policies, data systems, and different definitions of and ways of measuring “effective policing.” The reality is that we behave as if every police service must reinvent the wheel—separately, differently, and at great cost – both cost in terms of dollars, cost in terms of the patience of the service's people to navigate change, and cost to public trust because we are less effective than we can be. And all too often, we chase outputs like arrest numbers or call clearance rates—rather than outcomes like trust, safety, and lasting impact. Yes, headlines are exciting and it's important to celebrate the wins, as long as those attention-grabbing headlines don't actually pull focus away from the daily, often unseen, certainly unsung, efforts of your service and your members to make a real, long-term and more permanent impact. Remember? The things you signed up for and talked about in your interviews for promotions, and even, for the chief's role.

We have seen where this leads in the business world. Think of BlackBerry. Once a Canadian titan, admired globally. But, when smartphones transformed expectations, BlackBerry clung to what had worked before. It stuck to what it knew and its comfort zone.

Siloed decision-making, slow innovation, and an unwillingness to rethink their model cost them the market—and the confidence of investors and customers. The parallels to policing are uncomfortable, but, instructive. They failed to future-proof.

As Sir Robert Peel put it nearly 200 years ago: *“The power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval...and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.”* In other words, your legitimacy as a police service has only one source: the members of the community you serve. It is often hard to remember that in the cut and thrust of the real world, with legislative requirements to abide by oversight to engage with, budgets to get over the finish line, and different stakeholders seeking your attention for the issues or asks they bring forward. But you are in the role you are in. You have agreed to take it on, and you have put in the hard work to get to this place. You are your organization's leaders. So, while the work is hard, sometimes tiring and often unforgiving, the work needs your real leadership. If you stick to obsolete methods because it is too hard or too expensive to change, or rely on hollow metrics, or just stick to the status quo because it is easier or will rock the boat less, you chip away at that essential public approval. If your service does not show up, quickly, effectively, and with the goal at the conclusion of every interaction being to help people feel safer – even when you can't guarantee an outcome other than that – that essential ingredient of public approval starts to erode. And it is always harder to get it back than to continue to nurture it when it is present.

The world around us is changing fast. Today, maybe faster in pace than at times before. If we fail to use future-proofing as our compass—working together, strategically, and with purpose—we risk not only inefficiency, but, ultimately, irrelevance. The public's confidence is not a given. It must be earned, every day, through a policing approach that is future-focused, unified, and rooted in meaningful outcomes.

This is urgent. It is also achievable. Policing can not only evolve, it can set the horizon point for what evolution looks like, and it can also do more to set the pace. You, as Ontario's police leaders are entrusted with guiding that change. The time to act is now, for our services and for the public we serve.

Some good news – I hope – is that I try not to lecture. I commit. We are in this together. While we're approaching this with a different set of responsibilities, I can assure you that I, as Inspector General, am as committed as you are to future-proofing Ontario policing.

At the Inspectorate of Policing, our Strategic Plan lays out a clear vision: to help raise the bar of policing by promoting excellence, identifying risks early, and building public confidence in all we do. This isn't about overseeing from a distance; it's about appropriately collaborating with services and organizations, including the OACP, supporting sector leadership, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement.

As we move forward, let's embrace a proactive, learning-focused approach to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Now some of you may be thinking – you're telling me we're going to raise the bar – so where is the bar? How will we know when we've reached it, or even surpassed it?

I promise you I'm not going to talk about the CSPA and its regulations, other than to say that it does create a new and important bar for policing in Ontario.

The specific regulatory standards set out in the new Act are a minimum bar, to be sure, but a consistent and articulable one, nonetheless. It is a bar that we will be assessing you against from a compliance perspective, but when it comes to future-proofing, I can tell you that I'm more interested in leveraging the new Generally Applicable Standard to determine where the bar needs to be based on what is reasonable, in addition to what is written. Because, if you think about how to anticipate future risks in your own organizations, you should, and in fact, must, according to the GAS, consider how the needs of your community, your people, your geography, your past successes, your failures, and the successes and lessons of your colleagues, inform what good policing should look like in your jurisdiction. In some ways, it sounds simple. And, while it may be less simple in application, it is essential.

And we're going to help you measure your performance, and whether or not you're meeting, or even exceeding, the bar. We are actively developing a first-of-its-kind Police Performance Measurement Framework to assess how well Ontario police services and boards are performing. We're building out key themes, categories and metrics under three main pillars of measurement: (1) the overall organizational health of the police service board, the service and its members; (2) operational effectiveness, which will assess how well the actual policing functions are being delivered; and finally, (3) metrics that assess how well the board and service are doing in relation to community relationships and expectations.

We'll share more in due course about this work, and how it will help us all to better understand, measure, and raise the bar, but what I can tell you today, with certainty, is this: raising the bar means embracing innovative practices that not only enhance service delivery but also respond to your members' and our communities' evolving needs. The needs that may not have completely manifested today, but you can see early indications of. We must prioritize mental health crisis and intervention training for officers, while exploring and moving forward with co-designed and co-delivered alternative service delivery programs for mental health, homelessness, and addiction matters, as seen in initiatives across many Ontario police services. These will ensure your people are best equipped - and positioned to help deliver the best response for our communities.

Furthermore, let's leverage community feedback mechanisms—like the engagement strategies implemented in cities like Hamilton, Sarnia, Ottawa—to ensure our policies reflect the diverse perspectives of those we serve. Together, we can create a more robust and responsive policing model that not only meets the expectations of our communities but also anticipates their future needs.

And one more piece on this. I know that the concept of measuring is easier to articulate support for than necessarily apply in practice.

I realize that there may be reluctance on the part of some to really get to measuring, if doing so can identify areas of weakness that require attention. But I'll make a slight revision to a famous quote that rings true: you can't change what you don't measure. At the foundation of future-proofing must be a genuine openness – a cultural approach, even – to tracking and quantifying progress or a lack of progress to support improved performance. This approach is not meant to be a 'gotcha,' and I hope you see in the work we have been doing at the Inspectorate, that we don't do 'gotchas.' But part of looking toward and being ready for the future must be about marshalling data of different kinds to drive analytics that tells you what is going well now, what could be better now, and connecting dots between where your organization is relative to anticipated future developments, trends and needs. This approach will help you meet the future with the very best you are able to give.

I was pleased to see this approach on the ground most recently in London, with a commitment to fully analyze the early, positive indications flowing from the Open-Air Drug Use Strategy. Not a victory lap just when the early results come in, but a focused approach to continuous measurement and analysis, improvement based on the data, all with a view to driving the maximal community safety outcomes in partnership with others that have a role to play. Across Canada and globally, we see emerging trends reshaping policing. We face new and sophisticated security threats—cybercrime, extremism, and others. In Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police has been at the forefront, developing specialized units to tackle these evolving threats head-on. Recently, the OPP's Cyber Crime Unit has been instrumental in dismantling networks involved in online exploitation, reinforcing the critical need for specialized training and resources.

Rapid technological change is another reality we must confront. Change with two dual impacts: how you do your work on a day-to-day basis as a police service, with functions that span emergency response, criminal investigations, and assistance to victims. And, how changes to technology show up in those that come under your investigative gaze and seeking to stay ahead of them.

Artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital evidence are not just buzzwords; they are tools that can enhance your capabilities if you take the time and invest the organizational energy to understand their capabilities, and work with your teams to maximize their proper application within your organization. Of course, we must navigate these advancements cautiously to maintain ethical standards that respect civil liberties. The College of Policing in the UK has emphasized the importance of integrating technology responsibly, with a focus on community engagement and ethical considerations. We have already seen, here in Ontario, important efforts to do that through modern board governance that tackles issues like facial recognition, artificial intelligence, and body worn camera use.

Public expectations are shifting as well. The community demands greater transparency, equity, and responsiveness. New and modern legislation, like the Community Safety and Policing Act, are a testament to Ontario Policing's commitment to accountability and ethical conduct. We must actively engage with our communities to build stronger trust and cooperation—because trust is the currency of policing. The recent implementation of community-led initiatives, such as the Greater Sudbury Police Service's community-led Moose Hunt program supporting at-risk Indigenous youth, or in Woodstock, where the service has responded to the growth and growing diversity of the community by hiring a new Community Service Officer position, who works in and with the community to ensure increased emphasis on proactive engagement and learning from someone who actually knows and reflects the diversity of the community by hiring a new Community Service Officer position, who works in and with the community to ensure increased emphasis on proactive engagement and learning from someone who actually knows and reflects the diversity of that community. These kinds of initiatives showcase how we can align policing practices with the aspirations of our diverse populations, fostering a culture of collaboration.

At the same time, we must lead in the smart use of technology. Administrative burdens weigh heavily on officers and services. We need to leverage modern tools—intelligent case management systems, automated administrative workflows, and advanced analytics—to free up officer time for frontline, human-centered policing.

For example, the Guelph Police Service has established a Community Safety Operations Centre (CSOC) that uses integrated camera feeds and innovative software to increase community safety in the downtown core, including informing frontline officers and dispatch in ways that have resulted in decreased wait times for community members and faster suspect identification.

The deployment of body-worn cameras, digital evidence management systems, and online public engagement platforms must be ethical, transparent, and in alignment with public expectations.

The thoughtful use of artificial intelligence, particularly in areas like predictive analytics for resource deployment, must be part of our conversation. But, when it comes to some aspects of policing – like supporting survivors and good old fashioned detective work – technology cannot, and should not, replace the human touch. It can amplify what you do well, but your people still need to be at the front of doing it.

The use of technology in policing must be guided by two principles: effectiveness and legitimacy. If we adopt technology that is efficient but erodes public trust, we have failed. If we embrace technology that is transparent, fair, and improves service delivery, we have succeeded.

While technology evolves and threats emerge, the heart of policing remains unchanged. It's about relationships, trust, and presence in the community. The best technology in the world cannot replace the fundamental value of a police officer who knows their community—a familiar face, a trusted presence, a bridge-builder, a crime preventer, and an emergency response.

We must double down on community policing – even the things that may seem basic, but are tried, tested and true. That means investing time and resources to truly being present in our communities in a proactive way. For instance, the Toronto Police Service's Neighbourhood Officer Program, now in its twelfth year, places officers in communities for a consistent period of years, so that they get to know the community intimately, and the community gets to know and trust a face they will see over and over – both when things are good, and when help is needed.

Listening is also critical. We must engage in meaningful dialogue with community members. The recent U.K. Chiefs of Police Council's "Policing Vision 2030" report emphasizes the need for police to be more accessible and responsive to community input. We see ways in which the sector is doing this well, now – for example, community forums hosted by the Peel Regional Police, where residents can voice their concerns and suggestions, leading to actionable outcomes that are made public and measured.

Building relationships is essential—establishing trust before crises emerge. The "Community Engagement Strategy" implemented by various police services in Ontario demonstrates that proactive engagement leads to better outcomes during times of crisis. For example, the York Regional Police's outreach programs have successfully built trust in diverse neighborhoods, resulting in increased cooperation and collaboration with local residents during incidents, ultimately improving public safety. In Durham, "Durham Connect" brings interdisciplinary agencies around the same table to collaborate on areas of acutely elevated community safety risk to reduce or prevent harm. And there are many other examples. Good examples of how we bring communities into policing work and better serve our residents in the process.

This is a callback to the founding principles of policing articulated by Sir Robert Peel—principles that remain as relevant today as they were in the 1800s. In short, while the world is changing, the basic idea that “the police are the public and the public are the police” must anchor everything we do. And this is an anchor we must keep firmly planted, even when the ‘shiny thing of the day’ tries to occupy space and time. Future-proofing policing is also about never losing sight of the basic concept and operational principles that must animate any healthy police service. You can evolve, adapt, and do things differently and better – but making sure your compass points you always in the direction of working to enhance public trust and legitimacy – that should never change.

Now, when the sector talks about oversight, it is usually in the context of needing to be accountable to an independent authority. And, traditionally, oversight has been viewed through an adversarial lens—as something to resist or manage cautiously. This must change. But modern oversight is so much more than that. Let’s delve deeper into the role of oversight as a crucial tool for excellence in policing.

Oversight, when done properly, is not about “catching out” or second-guessing; it’s about improving performance, strengthening public confidence, and helping services get better every day. It’s about supporting excellence. The recent report from the UK’s HMICFRS on police effectiveness highlights how oversight can drive improvements in service delivery. Regular inspections and assessments provide police forces with critical feedback that motivates them to address weaknesses proactively and adapt to future challenges.

Consider the example of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in the UK, which oversees financial markets. The FCA’s proactive regulatory framework not only identifies potential risks but also promotes compliance through advisory support, ensuring that financial institutions meet high standards. This model encourages innovation through collaboration while maintaining independent and ‘right touch’ oversight, fostering a culture of improvement rather than fear.

In the policing context, the Inspectorate of Policing is committed to these methods of operating that will support future-proofing. One of the significant ways we are doing this is by creating a Centre of Excellence that will provide advisory services and help embed best practices to police services and boards across the province. This initiative will help raise the collective bar of the sector by elevating the standards of policing through collaborative learning and shared experiences. For instance, by identifying and sharing best practices from successful Ontario police services – including with our own advice or direction on how to improve upon them – we can inspire others to innovate and adapt, thereby enhancing overall service delivery. But something that we will keep top of mind in this work – that is just as important as identifying the best practices – is talking about your capacity to implement them.

Because I am here to support your success. You have my assurance that I will not promote initiatives or practices without engaging you to have a clear understanding of what it will take to make it happen. And, where implementing what is best for Ontarians in policing requires legislative change or more resources, I will be an honest and independent voice that advocates for exactly that. Let me give you an example.

On May 26th, I released Policing of Protests and Major Events: Public Order Maintenance in Ontario, the first IG Spotlight Report.

As you know, it focuses on how police services across the province prepare for and respond to major events and protests and stems from a comprehensive inspection of all 43 municipal police services and the OPP. The report assesses compliance with prior provincial standards and identifies both strengths and areas for improvement, including in relation to new requirements under the CSPA. My overall conclusion is that public order policing in Ontario is strong. I also concluded that the public order policing system in Ontario would benefit from better and formalized coordination, clearer deployment criteria, and stronger officer support. But to do this, I acknowledge the need for, and make recommendations about, increasing capacity and resources, including through legislative change that would embed in law the current Hub model and enhance its operations to ensure its long-term sustainability, effectiveness, and permanence.

This report and the process through which we came to my final product is an example of oversight being applied to support policing excellence. First, the report promotes continuous improvement by offering 12 evidence-based recommendations—like better training, clearer deployment criteria, and formal debriefs after major events. Second, it builds accountability and transparency by making findings public and encouraging services to learn from each other. And third, we will support its implementation by monitoring progress against these recommendations with a view to moving the entire sector to a place of embedding them in your operations.

In short, this Report shows how modern oversight can drive real, practical improvements in policing—grounded in data, focused on people, and committed to public trust. Future-proofing through the application of modern oversight principles and our ‘right touch’ philosophy.

I want to take a moment to sincerely thank the OACP, and in particular Deputy Chief Roger Wilkie and Executive Director Paul Pedersen, as well as those who reviewed our report and provided feedback for me to consider. This was an important first example of collaboration and input on the Spotlight Report before its release. Something that I am starting to call “collaborative oversight” that better blends independent oversight with genuine partnerships, so that I can better execute my mandate in a way that will maximize this sector’s effectiveness, in the public interest.

When we work together, as we did on this, you help to make us better – and that’s a pretty powerful thing, and something which I do not take for granted. I hope you see the ways in which, in helping the Inspectorate be better, we can help you be better at future-proofing.

I would also like to thank police chiefs across Ontario—many of whom are here today—for the way you have welcomed the Inspectorate of Policing into your communities.

Your openness, willingness to collaborate, and commitment to improvement demonstrate that the Inspector General’s role and mandate are not only understood but embraced.

Real accountability and independent assurance do not weaken policing; they strengthen it. They help ensure that policing remains legitimate, resilient, and capable in a world of changing risks and rising expectations. The approach to embracing change and focusing on continuous improvement that we cultivate through oversight is commendable and essential for truly future-proofing the profession. It’s time to leverage oversight as a powerful tool for transformation, allowing us to not just react to challenges but to anticipate them and emerge stronger.

Future-proofing policing also means acknowledging that policing is not the answer to every societal issue. Good and strong partnerships are. Police must partner with health, social services, education, and community organizations to build resilient communities. Mental health, addiction, and homelessness require integrated, cross-sectoral responses. Of course, this does not mean police services won’t still be part of the solution, but, as you know all too well, you must also advocate for the right resources to be in place so that police are not, by default, society’s sole first responders. This will help you future-proof by creating more bandwidth in areas where it is for police to engage in prevention or responsive-based activities.

I realize that versions of these words have been articulated in various formulations, by various people, in various settings. I have heard them many times myself. But this does not mean that the central truth to these words is not very applicable to any conversation about future-proofing. In fact, this philosophy of partnership with others in the safety sector needs to be embraced in how you, as leaders, operate in your domains. This aspect of future-proofing is not about police organizations simply coming along for the ride when it comes to ways to ensure the right person is responding, either with police or on their own. It is about police services owning at least a part of this, leading the brokering of partnerships in a way that lives up to the philosophy of community safety and well-being, and making your data and information about how you operate available to others in the community safety landscape to help drive the changes we need to see.

Quite frankly, even though this is more about what others should or will do, you, as police leaders, may often need to be the spark that lights the fire.

The U.K. Commission on Crime and Justice has demonstrated that collaborative approaches can yield significant benefits. For instance, Mental Health Crisis Teams, which go by different names in Ontario, integrates police with mental health professionals, and consistently showcase how effective partnerships can create comprehensive responses to community needs. We see so many examples of this happening across the province, with benefits that are tangible, and we should lean into.

Also, within policing, partnerships are of critical importance, and future-proofing simply won't work as we wish it to if it a siloed exercise. Think about the ways in which you partner to increase horsepower and reach on large-scale investigations through JFOs and consider whether you can take a similar tactical approach to taking down other challenges you're collectively facing. Work with your boards, work with your associations, and most importantly, work with each other... so that whether you're sharing in your successes or sharing the burden and heavy lift that comes with looking around corners and preparing yourself to meet tomorrow's challenges, you'll never miss the opportunity to learn from one another, leverage one another, avoid mistakes others have made, and double down on successes by amplifying them across this sector. It is truly time not only to "share what's there," but to use evidence of success by another as an invitation to upping your own success, so that each of you benefit, and as a result, we lift all the boats at the same time.

I know many of you in this room have a Chief for a Day program and what a great experience it must be for these kids... but also, I wonder, for those of you who've spent the day with one of these young leaders, when we go past the pictures to what this is really about, how does it impact you when you consider that they really are the potential future of your organization?

To be sure, there are things we could all learn from kids that would help us as leaders in a new era of policing. Kids are enthusiastic, creative, and willing to try new things and take risks, which is why they learn and grow so fast. And today's police leaders must embrace continuous learning – even when it is uncomfortable – because yesterday's best practices may not meet tomorrow's challenges.

But there are some other things that those in this room serious about future-proofing will take to heart and find a way to activate in your organizations and spheres of influence in a consistent way.

First, let's talk about leadership development. Looking one last time to the U.K., the College of Policing's commitment to the focused and disciplined development of leaders underscores the importance of cultivating adaptive leaders who can navigate the evolving landscape of policing. They are investing in leadership development because it needs focused attention and investing in.

Like my Heenan Blaikie story, policing is both a profession and a service that, in many ways, resembles a business operation. But why do we expect police officers to grow up and, somehow, become the leaders we need of multi-million or even billion-dollar organizations? We can't just chance it. We have to be serious. And that means you – as the leaders of now – have to ensure your organization is equipped and investing in the policing leaders we in Ontario need for tomorrow.

Respectfully, you are best positioned to fulfil this duty. And, once again – there is no need for 44 approaches to this. Collectively, we must be able to identify what is needed universally, what works well already, and invest time and resources to ensure the balance of what we need can be in place – consistently, from one corner of this province to another.

Second, let's talk about working across and between. Beyond leadership development generally, and in recognition of the growing complexity of community safety issues that impact our communities and their members, police leaders must be systems thinkers—able to see connections across disciplines, sectors, and communities—in order to build those critical partnerships, I mentioned earlier and turn them into positive community safety outcomes.

Third, let's highlight the need for organizations to represent those they serve. Leaders must also be cultural diversity champions—not just in hiring or in relation to a particular metricized outcome, but in building inclusive cultures that allow every officer and civilian member to bring their whole selves to their work. To ensure that the community comes into the walls of your organization so that you can truly have a continuous pulse check on where you need to be, and how you need to show up. I know many of you have made great strides in doing this important work already. I would urge you to continue, and to demonstrate that these things are not moments in time – they are woven into the fabric of what an Ontario police service is about. You can look both domestically and around the globe to see evidence of how initiatives aimed at building inclusive organizations drive up job satisfaction, reduce labour relations strife, improve outward service delivery, and foster public trust.

Finally, our leaders must be courageous—willing to make the hard choices that innovation demands. This includes embracing new methodologies, technologies, and partnerships that can enhance our effectiveness in serving the public.

It also includes being honest with your boards about where you are as an organization, what capabilities you wish to acquire or further develop, and what it will take to get there. Honesty, and maybe even a little vulnerability on your part as chiefs – recognizing that you're the leader, but you're only one person – will help the board know what YOU need to be successful. Sometimes, that may require a conversation about prioritizing or re-prioritizing. Sometimes, it will be a conversation about net new investment. Sometimes, it will be a conversation about altering the focus of existing investments. You are the chiefs and senior leaders. You can and should be able to best articulate how prioritizing or investing can improve the service's ability to deliver, enhance the public's regard for the work you do, and drive positive community safety outcomes over the long term. You can also articulate how the absence of doing these things will hold the organization back, and, ultimately, not serve the community.

And you can marshal your data and other evidence so that the conversation is grounded in truth and fact. Future-proofing is about using what you got to connect the dots and move people towards thinking forward.

Closing: A Call to Action for Chiefs and Policing Leaders

Chiefs, future-proofing policing is not a project with a start and end date. It's a mindset, a way of leading, a commitment to adapt, improve, and stay rooted in the public trust that is at the core of our legitimacy.

It demands that we hold onto what makes policing noble—service, courage, compassion—while boldly innovating for the future. It demands that we invest in our people, leverage technology smartly and follow the evidence, welcome modern governance, build deep community relationships, lead with humility and depth of thought, and embrace the opportunities that oversight provides to grow stronger.

At the Inspectorate, we are your partners in this work. Together, I am asking for your renewed commitment to raise the bar – to future-proof policing for the communities we all proudly serve. And, to solidify Ontario's policing sector as the shining star example of the very best of policing performance around the globe.

Thank you.