

WSC 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Opening Address  
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**INTRODUCTION**

I'd like to thank the organising committee and Insp. Kash Heed for asking me to say a few words to you all. Eat safely and slowly but have no fear, I am Heimlich maneuver trained. In addition to the many Vancouverites here, I understand that you are privileged to have a number of our American colleagues with us and I wanted to give them a special thank you for attending.

In a world darkened in 2001 by terrorism, we drew strength from the power of your Country's response and simplicity of your grief. While we watched and helped, my own country continued to stand as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace and harmony, prosperity and understanding and when our friends needed our help we were there.

Anyway, thank you all for coming and our prayers are with yours and our leaders in the coming weeks for the difficult decisions they have before them.

Let me make one thing clear to start: It is my absolute and unqualified privilege to be Chief of Police of this great city. The United Nations says it is one of the best in the world and we know it. Vancouver has always shown the wisdom of reaching out instead of being restrictive, of rising to new responsibilities instead of retreating. I am honoured to lead this great Force.

You know, I did not always want to be in policing. I wanted to be an accountant once but my attitude was that if you got within a buck or two, it was close enough! So policing seemed just a natural leap for me.

Also I got cornered by one of your delegates who was very impressed with the hotel he was staying in. He felt it was really world class. The towels are so fluffy...couldn't close his suitcase. I have a surveillance team on him as we speak.

I still get a thrill coming to work and getting an opportunity to talk about Vancouver and some of the work we are doing. Much of it fits directly into the programs and issues you are discussing today and tomorrow. I'll go through some issues you may find interesting and I love to get some questions from anyone on any topic.

**CHANGE**

The changes involving policing are still coming at us fast and furious each and every year. Change has not bypassed policing, trust me. Many of you in your own careers--just think of how much it has developed over the years and now think of just what policing has gone through in the last 30 years.

As a young constable a few years ago, one of my first (and important jobs according to my Sgt.) was to tear up perforated index cards of release and wanted convicts and place them in shoe boxes. That was our filing system in Westlock, Alberta, in 1968. The scary part is that it worked pretty well! Just think of the amount that Technology now commands of your own budgets and when you add in the safety, life and death issues of policing, you will see there is never enough money.

It is said that it takes only a single idea, a single action to move the world. Well, we've got some pretty good ideas and I believe that a positive and productive attitude can cause a chain reaction of positive thoughts. I know that extraordinary results are lying ahead and we will not be deterred from achieving our goals. Some of the current negativity coming at us from a variety of places is just a phase and certainly not reflective of what we are all about. I am committed to do the right thing and to make decisions that have a single purpose, to follow the rule of law. Everything else is secondary. Some people have a hard time making decisions. They think the way to

stay out of trouble is to stay out of sight. I've never done that and I don't intend on starting now.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

There are some key points that I'd like to talk about. First some general concepts, then I like to get specific about Vancouver. Let's discuss customer service. I believe in it. Sam Walton said that "The growth of any organization is nurtured one customer at a time" and make no mistake we are in the customer service business. That is all policing is. We deliver a service and that service is policing. We have to be committed to deliver the best, and I mean the best. If the quality is poor, guess what happens? People will go elsewhere, you will cease to exist and some other agency will take over. The police understand this concept; we just have to ensure that everyone else understands it. I believe that the foundation of every great organization is rooted in this belief. I put everything I believe into concepts of integrity, professionalism, ethics, honour and duty. I am not being corny, just practical.

When I took this job I made a vow and promise to my people. I said that I would never let them down or cause any of them to second-guess the trust placed in me to occupy this office. You cannot buy or just demand a person's initiative, their enthusiasm, their loyalty or their devotion. You must earn these. And I am trying to earn all of these every day.

### **FAIRNESS, ENTHUSIASM & LEADERSHIP**

I started on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. I intend to strive for excellence in all things and promote the highest ideals of my office and I expect the same from everyone. Years ago, during one of our conversations about the justice system, I recall my wife Gail (the lawyer, not the golfer), saying that the cornerstone of the Canadian system is based on two words, reasonableness and fairness."

A chief constable has to be fair above all. I believe that you have to give people the freedom and tools to do the job and then get out of the way and let them do it. Sometimes we have to base our decisions on an element of risk and the best information we had at the time and I am not going to arm chair quarterback things that have gone on in the past. People in a modern police organisation deserve to know that they will be supported, held accountable and not second-guessed at every step.

I believe in enthusiasm. One sports writer used to say that Mitch Williams, a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs, used to throw the ball like his hair was on fire. I was told once that I do police work like my hair is on fire. I've also been told that I

only have two speeds, stopped and flat out. Well I don't apologise for being enthusiastic about what I do for a living and I believe that being a cop is the most rewarding and finest occupation there is. I love the science of policing and the concept of public service. There is no higher calling than to serve as a peace officer in this great Country.

I believe in good leadership. It is one of the most overused and misunderstood words banded about recently. You constantly hear about how a certain sports team needs it or why don't more elected officials show it or why don't business and banking leaders demonstrate it. The question is how or where do you find it when you really need it, especially in times of rapid change when every pronouncement or change, even for the good of all, is front page news before it even has a chance at success. If you are in public life, you had better learn some of the concepts of leadership, then get ready for a full frontal invasion of your personal life and all its skeletons. This means responsibility to the welfare of the group.

Trying to get everyone to be happy and like you is a sign of being average and you'll end up avoiding the tough decisions, the confrontation of the people who need to be confronted, and you'll avoid tough choices because someone might get upset. The best people, the most creative and productive want to be supported, they want to be able to bring you their issues and they want you to be a mentor and guide when necessary.

I hate the phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." They are the words of the complacent, the slipshod, the arrogant. Leadership, and I mean really profound leadership should be inspirational. Leaders should stir emotion in their people. I read once that if you want a ship built, don't drum-up the people to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea. Now, that is inspiration. The leaders I remember were always enthusiastic; they were optimists. No one likes to work for a pessimist. They had a sense of history, a sense of perspective to the events around them. They know the organization's history and they take the time to learn as much about their people as possible. They were visible when things are going badly and not so visible when they are working well. They must know that their leaders are there with them, supporting them unconditionally in face of dangers most people could only fathom.

You want to know what keeps me awake at night? It is not the scrutiny from the media, it is not the budget battles or the abuse from the narrow minded. It is that I might lose the confidence and support of my colleagues, of other police officers,

the fear that one of my people could get hurt and that I could have done more to provide a safe environment for them. That I wouldn't be there when they face danger is a haunting thought for me.

### **ISSUES IN RESEARCH & PRACTICE**

One of your topics is **Youth**: Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act – restorative justice (so very important), Literacy rates, education, smart choices, school liaison programs...

**Law and the Courts**: criticising judges (very unproductive, unprofessional); go to law school, be a judge--unless you sat in the court room heard all the evidence, submission from Crown...

**Mental Illness**: chair committees, where consumers interact with police, E based training, Psychotic crisis guide, teaching, demyth...

**The Four pillars**: One of the harm reduction pieces is safe injection sites but much more is going on, Vancouver agreement, umbrella document with a philosophy of focusing on the problems in Canada poorest and toughest neighbourhood, weather and geography, less severe sanctions, combine alcohol, poverty, mental illness...

Correctional Challenges, NJC, Incarceration rates...

### **THE ROLE OF POLICE**

Without any question and without any hesitation, we must all support our police agencies and allow them the freedom to do their jobs. We have civilian oversight mechanisms, judicial scrutiny, and quality assurance and audit systems as checks and balances to ensure we follow the rules and we would be a lesser society without them. And of all the things we don't need right now though, is indecision, weak people at the helm that project doubt and uncertainty. My people are not superhuman. We can only do what our character, experience and identity help us to do.

Let me talk for a minute about the role of a police officer in today's world. Never has there been more stress, more minute examination of every facet of policing, more second guessing, more arm chair quarter-backing than there is right now. But even with this we are attracting and hiring the very best, Canada's finest. The average age of the men and women we hire is about 28 with lots of education and intellect and all the passion and interest that this kinds of job needs.

We are in great shape for the future and the men and women of the Vancouver Police will help lead this city through its current challenges and protect its citizens whatever the cost. Many of the principles and strategies we incorporate are not unlike what most businesses use to provide quality service to their customers. But police services do not turn a profit, we don't make anything and there is no assembly line that stops and starts depending on the consumer. The calls for our service can never be ignored or put on the back burner for a quiet day when we have time. We deliver our service under an ever-expanding umbrella of risk and shrinking public morals.

It almost seems that lost in all this is the need to lead. Well we haven't forgotten and Vancouver Police will continue to lead Canada as a voice of reason in partnership with our communities, prepared to tackle the future with confidence and excellence.