

Canadian Policing

by Stephen Easton and Hilary Furness

(preliminary: Not for citation without permission, Nov. 2012)

The Scale of Policing

The actual number of crimes known to the police is falling although violent crime is declining less quickly than property offences. At the same time the amount of policing in Canada is on the rise both in terms of the number of officers and their costs. This is, to say the least, concerning. One observation that needs to be added to the puzzle is that there is a substantial and determined increase in the amount of private policing. The increase in the number of private security guards and investigators is greater than the increase in public police.

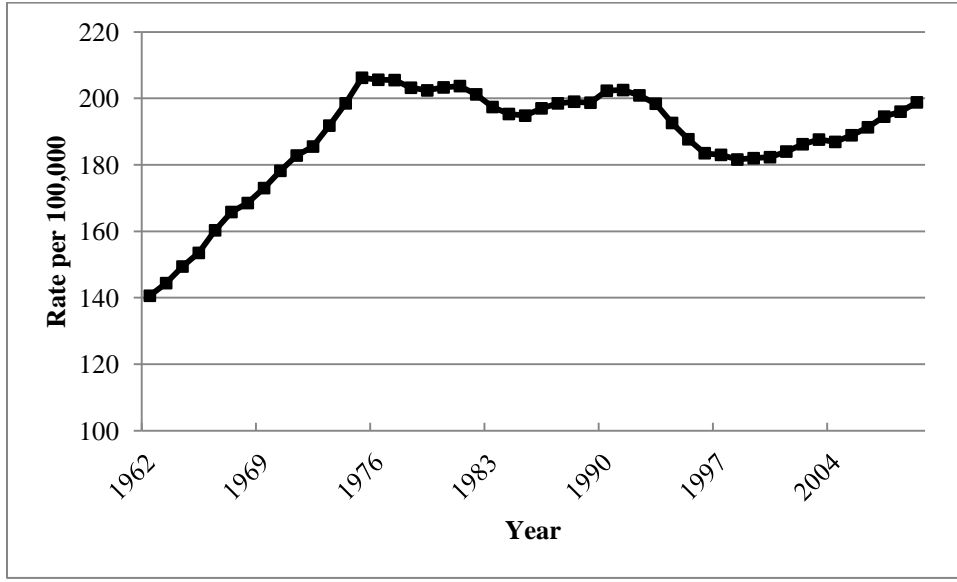
On the one hand, we might think that the increase in police numbers were simply part of some politically motivated public policy exercise during the past fifteen years, but the increase in the number of *private* security workers suggests that something else is at work. Clearly private organizations care little for the measured crime rate: they do, however, care about the security of their property. To the extent that the falling property crime rate is not reflected in falling costs of security, there is clearly an anomaly. We could speculate that (a) the numbers on reported property crime are too low; (b) the cost of thefts is greater than in the past thus encouraging more security; (c) more police or security facing criminals deters crime successfully; or, (d) other explanations.

The Police

In 2009, 67,085 men and women were actively employed in Canada as police officers – a 1,802 officer increase from 2008. Relative to the Canadian population, there were 198.8 constables per 100,000 citizens. We will term this the *rate of policing*. The number of civilian workers employed, regardless of provincial or federal standing, was 26,999 (or a rate of 80 per 100,000) which leads to a rough total of 97,000 involved in policing and support – a rate of 178.8. (Police resources 2009, Table 1)

As described in 40, the rate of policing peaked in 1975 at 206.2 and remained relatively stable until 1991 (202.5) when it began to fall. By 1998 the rate bottomed out at 88% of its peak or a rate of 181.6, and began to rise steadily. The average increase in police rate between 1998 and 2009 was 0.8% per annum (Police resources 2009, Table 1) for a total of 9.5 percent. The rate of policing is today roughly the same as it was in 1974 and 1993.

Figure: Police officer rate per 100,000

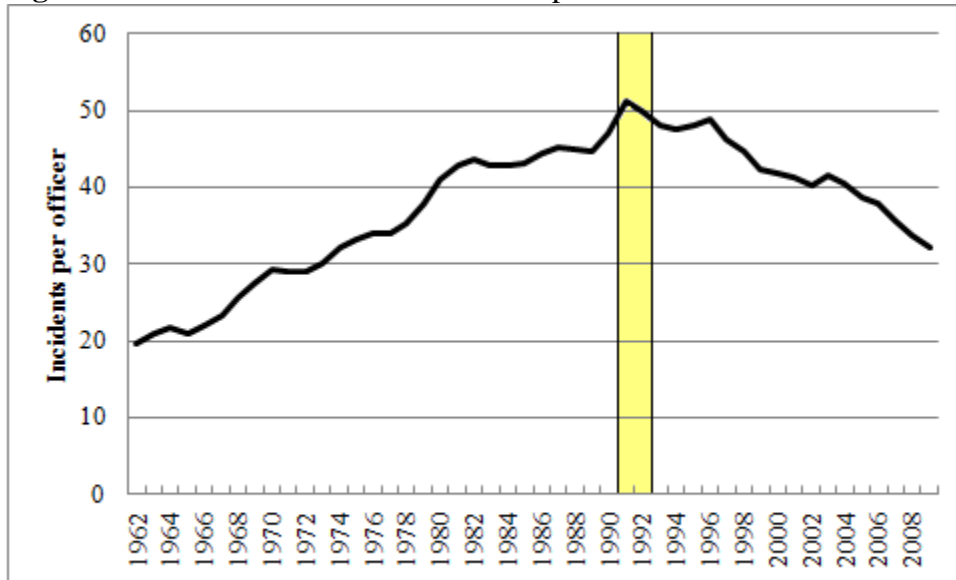


Source: Police resources in Canada 2009 Table 1

Incidents per officer

The number of 2009 criminal code incidents per on-duty officer was 32.1. Since 1991, this figure has declined from a peak of 51.1 (Police resources 2010, Table 1). The recent rate of incidents per officer resembles figures last seen in the mid 1970's. Since the peak in 1991, rates have declined 37%. In Figure 42 the yellow highlight represents the 1991 to 1993 period where the crime rates peaked and have since fallen.

Figure: Trends in the number of incidents per officer



Source: Police resources in Canada, 2010 Table 1

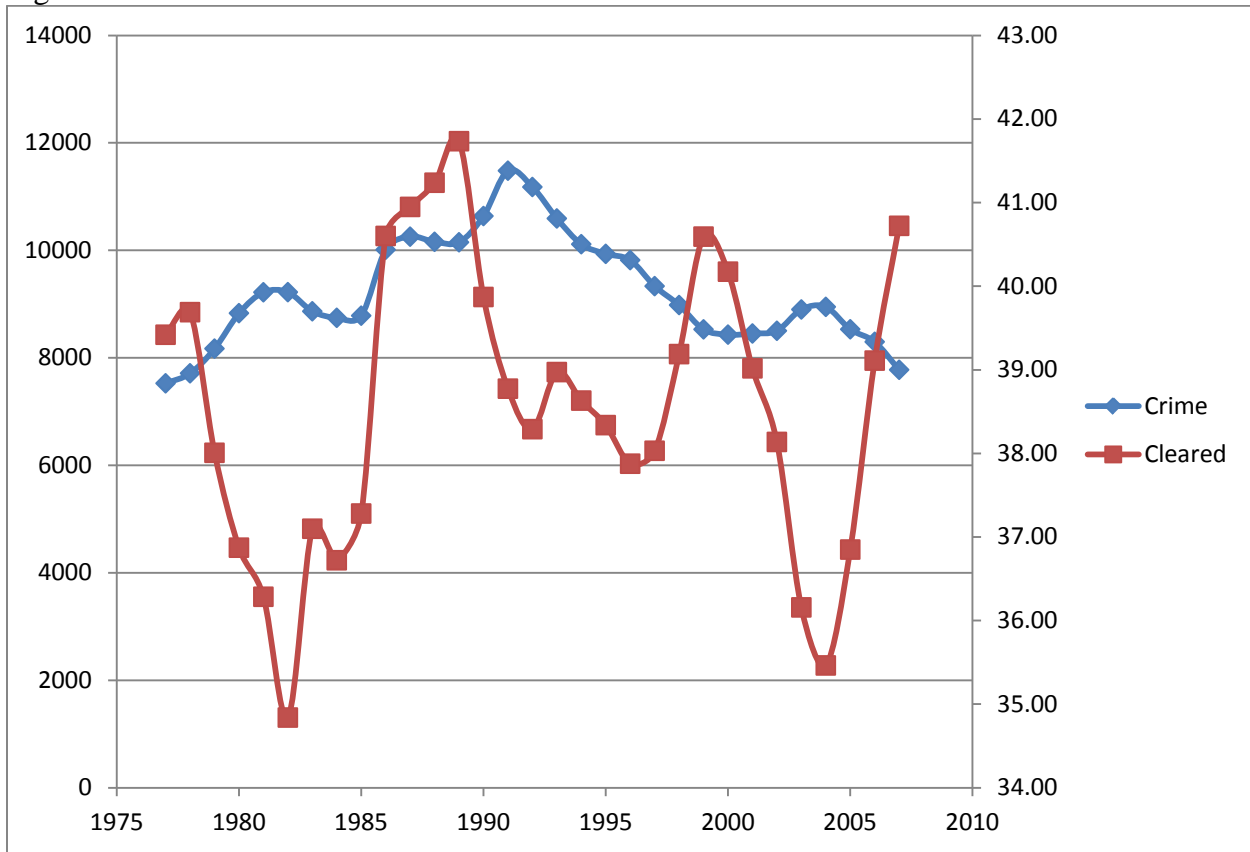
Clearance rates

Clearance rates are the rate at which the police are either able to lay a charge or otherwise close crimes that are known to them.¹ Generally, the more cases that are closed by charge, the better the police are doing their work. The pattern of clearances is an interesting and not altogether transparent. Figure 43 plots the clearance rates on the right hand axis as a percentage of crimes that are known to the police that have been cleared, and on the left hand axis is the familiar crime rate for the thirty years from 1977 to 2007.

What can we read from the figure? There are really two interesting and different observations that are present in the figure. First, it is clear that as the crime rate rose from the 1970s through 1991, the clearance rate fell until 1982 and rose until 1989. This was during a period in which the crime rate rose rapidly until 1982 and then fell off until 1985 when it began to rise again more or less through 1991. Clearance rates on the other hand fell for the decade between 1989 and 1997. From 1997 to 1999 they rose again and then again fell through 2004 when they began another increase.

¹ Cases cleared “otherwise” include those in which the suspect may have died, been dealt with on a more significant charge and so forth.

Figure: Crime and Clearance Rates: 1977-2007



Since 2008, we have a new measure of the crime rate², the weighted severity crime index (weighted by the average sentence imposed by judges).

Although we have argued that the crime rate and the clearance rates are related, albeit highly imperfectly, this is not the only concern. We are also interested in the cost of policing. We begin by looking at the overall expenditures that are taking place in policing and then turn to more nuanced measures.

Expenditures

The Sharp Increase in the Cost of Policing Since 1996

In 2009 the public expenditures for police (forces and total resources) was \$12.3 billion, an inflation corrected increase of 7.3% from 2008. This is the single largest increase in per annum expenditures since 1986³. For the average Canadian \$365 was being spent on policing (Police resources 2010, Table 7).

² As discussed above, in note X, the definitions change significantly reducing the usefulness of comparisons in the aggregate.

³ 2010 Police Resources handbook, p. 20. Data on expenditures were reported starting in 1985.

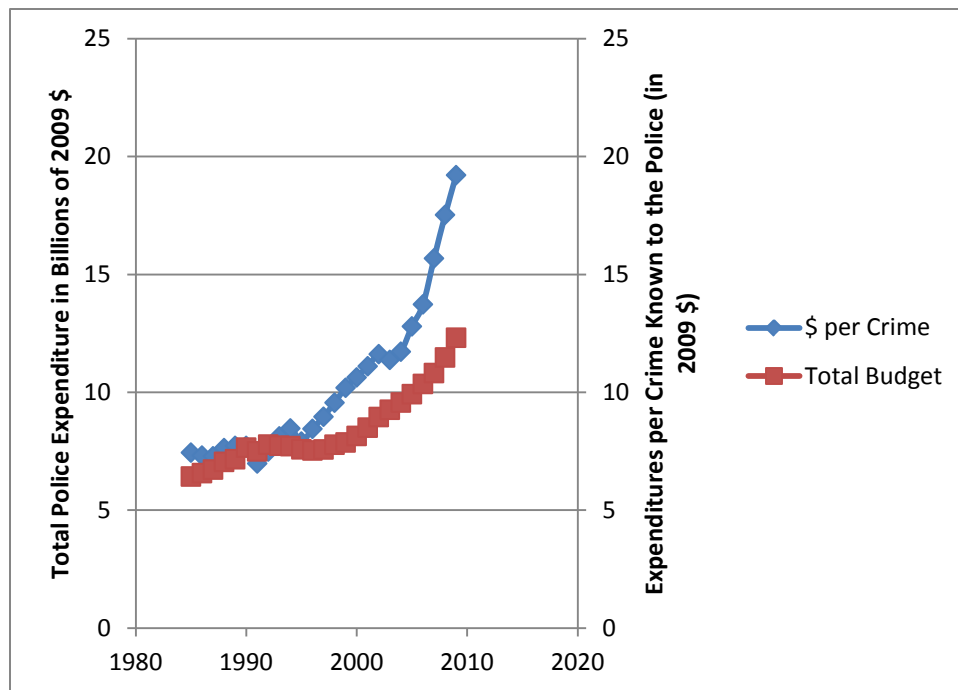
Between 1985 and 2009 public expenditures (in inflation adjusted dollars) on police services increased 91.5%. On average, the inflation adjusted costs rose 2.8% per year (Police resources 2010, Table 7). **Figure 44** summarizes the findings for the Total Budget of policing measured in billions of dollars which can be read off the left hand side axis.

A Quarter Century of Cost Increases

The actual cost of policing has risen in terms of the activities they are undertaking. **Figure 44** also describes the “Real Policing Cost per Crime Known to the Police” (measured along the right hand axis in real dollars) which gives a sense of the increase that has doubled the real cost of policing *per crime* (known to the police) since 1995. The falling number of crimes and the gradually rising cost of policing generate the sharp increase after 1996. Whether this reflects difficulty in the process and cost of investigation arising from higher standards required by the courts as we discuss below, or some other cause, this increase is surely a concern and is a striking development.⁴

Although it is no more than a simple observation at this point, there are three important Supreme Court of Canada decisions that may indicate why policing costs have been rising.

Figure: The Total Cost of Policing and Real Policing Cost per Crime Known to the Police: 1985 to 2009 (in 2009 \$)



⁴ Public attention focused on the time needed to develop a criminal mischief case when those involved in the Stanley Cup riot in Vancouver began to be charged a full six months after the event and to appear in court almost a year after the event. As of eighteen months later, the police continue to recommend charges to Crown prosecutors.

Source: Juristat, "Police Resources in Canada 2010" Table 7 rebased to 2009, and Figure 5 above.

Why might policing costs be higher today than in the past? Although there are no definitive studies that we have been able to find, the figure above suggests that something happened in the early 1990s since the increase in costs began at that time. One possible source of higher costs of policing is that the police are now being held to higher standards in a number of different ways. Three cases in particular are likely to raise the price Canadians pay for justice: the right to a state-funded lawyer (*R. v. Rowbotham et al* (1988) 25 O.A.C. 321.); the right to a speedy trial (*R. v. Askov*[1990] 59 C.C. C. (3d) 499 (S.C.C.)); and the right to full disclosure of Crown evidence (*R. v. Stinchcombe*, [1991] 3 S.C.R. 326)) that is something that in a large trial can be particularly onerous and costly.

The impact of *Stinchcombe* has imposed substantial burdens on police, Crown prosecutors, defence lawyers and courts. Massive volumes of information must be prepared, transmitted, read, and interpreted. Police, for instance, are required by case law following from *Stinchcombe* to provide to Crown prosecutors, for disclosure to defence lawyers copies or transcripts (validated by the original investigating officers) of all the following investigative materials: all audio and video tapes; notebook entries from all officers; reports; all source debriefings; all tips (and outcomes of tips); all connected cases; all affiant material; all wiretap information; all operational plans; all surveillance notes; medical records; all analyses of phone records or other documents; undercover operation information; information relating investigative techniques considered, whether they were actually used or not; and, investigative team minutes of meetings or debriefings. In considering the scope of disclosure in 2003, the Supreme Court stated that "little information will be exempt from the duty that is imposed on the prosecution to disclose evidence". (*R. v. Duguay*, [2003] 3 S.C.R. 307.) For further discussion of this issue in terms of expanding procedural demands on police time and costs, see Malm, *et al.* (2006,2007).

Another

The Distribution of Policing Costs

Policing divisions in Canada are divided into three categories: municipal, provincial, and federal. Of the \$12.3 billion spent in 2009, 54% was spent municipally, 21% provincially and 25% federally (Police resources 2010, Table 8). **Table 15** summarizes the findings and differentiates them by region.

Table: Expenditures by region and by governmental division

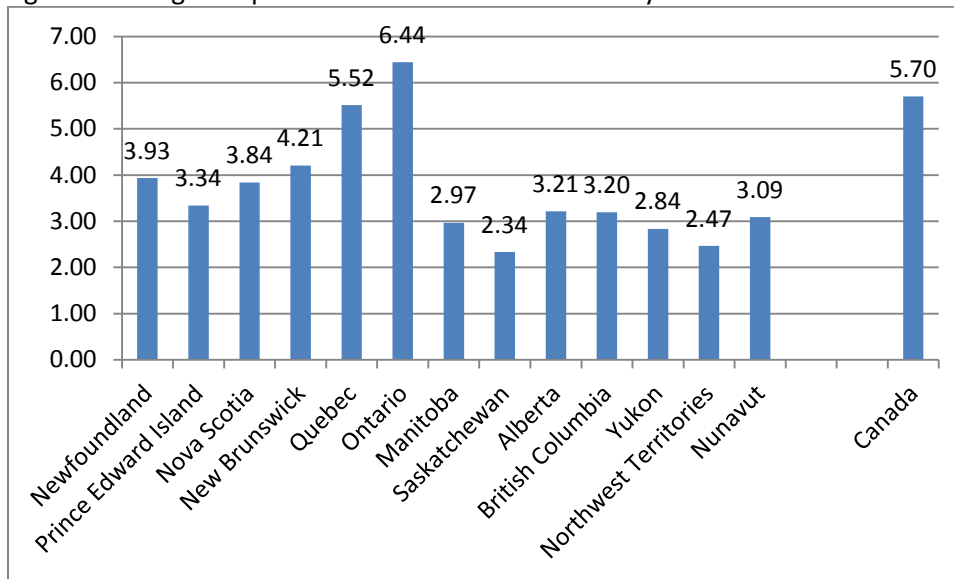
Region	Municipal	Provincial	Federal	Total
Newfoundland	-	105,753	23,785	129,538
Prince Edward Island	11,290	12,522	5,708	29,520
Nova Scotia	120,850	88,530	40,460	249,839
New Brunswick	83,439	64,441	29,588	177,468
Quebec	1,318,994	847,321	-	2,166,316
Ontario	3,253,037	706,800	-	3,959,838
Manitoba	218,259	90,913	46,351	355,523
Saskatchewan	139,929	113,942	51,607	305,478
Alberta	730,641	181,567	100,028	1,012,236
British Columbia	782,110	313,508	186,640	1,282,258
Yukon	-	15,482	6,635	22,117
Northwest Territories	-	31,546	13,520	45,066
Nunavut	-	26,301	11,272	37,573
Provincial & territorial total	6,658,549	2,598,626	515,594	9,772,770
Other RCMP expenditures	-	-	2,544,127	2,544,127
Total	6,658,549	2,598,626	3,059,721	12,316,896

Source: Police resources in Canada 2010 (Table 8)

What is the most useful way of viewing expenditures on crime? We argue that instead of dollars per capita, a measure that is frequently reported, the more useful approach is to view the expenditures relative to the number of crimes known to the police. In contrast to per capita spending, these expenditures highlight the putative reason why the expenditures are taking place. Figure 45 gives these figures.

Interestingly, among the provinces, the cost per crime (known to the police) is about \$5.70 on average in Canada with the highest being in Ontario at \$6.44 per crime and the cost in BC at \$3.20. Ontario spends a lot on each crime that is known, while the high volume areas, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, spend not so much: under \$3 per crime that is known. In other words, in the relatively high crime rate areas of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, much less is spent on policing compared to the lower crime areas in Ontario and Quebec. Equally interesting is that in Quebec and Ontario, there is no federal contribution to policing (except of course for federal crimes and at airports and so forth), since both have their own provincial police.

Figure: Policing Cost per Crime Known to the Police: by Province in 2009

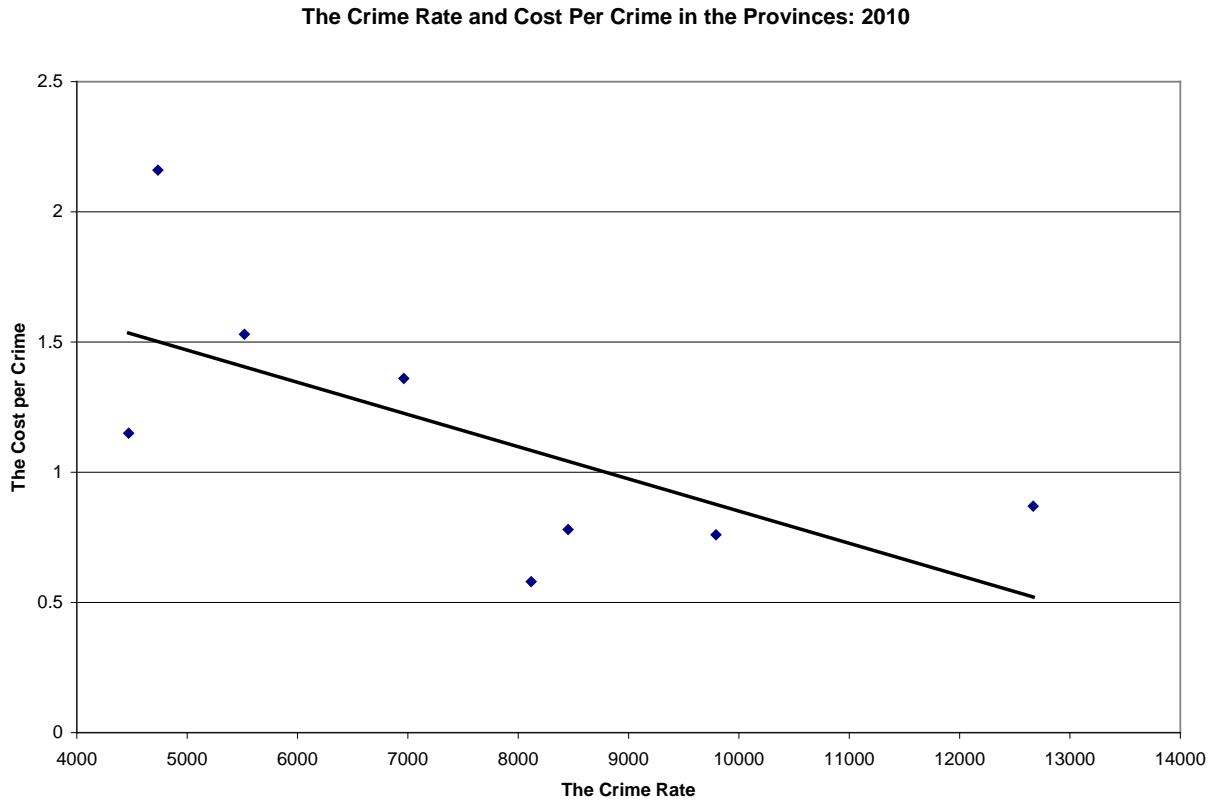


Source: Police resources Police Resources in Canada 2010 (Table 8) and Police Reported Crime Statistics 2009 (Table 5)

To pose the questions starkly: what is the outcome of higher expenditures per crime? If we plot the cost per crime against the crime rate in the major provinces⁵, then as displayed in the figure, we have a relationship that suggests that increased police costs per crime is associated with a lower crime rate. A ten percent increase in the cost of policing per crime is associated with a 6 percent lower crime rate. Figure 46 shows a scatter plot of the association. This is a measure of association, not causation, but it does give one pause. Would doubling of the expenditures on policing per crime in Manitoba and Saskatchewan lower the crime rate? Would decreasing expenditures per crime in Ontario and Quebec increase crime? .An alternative explanation is that policing (cost) is allocated in a way that is generally *unrelated* to the amount of crime. Thus low crime districts display relatively high costs per crime while high crime provinces show up as low expenditures areas per crime. We should insist that we know the answer since on the one hand if policing is effective, we might want to spend more resources in high crime areas to reduce the crime rate. If it has little effect, then we can reduce the expenditure in low crime rate regions without raising the crime rate.

⁵ We do not include PEI, Newfoundland, the Yukon, NWT and Nunavut.

Figure: The Crime Rate and the Cost per Crime in the Provinces



Source: Police Resources in Canada 2010 (Table 8) and Cansim 2520051

Private Security

The number of police and the expenditures to support them are only part of the total cost of security -- albeit the largest segment. The number of private security guards and investigators has been growing at a faster pace than the number of police officers. The most recent data available (for 2006) show that in the previous decade while the number of police officers (per 100,000) grew by about 11 percent from 205 to 216, the number of private security guards grew nearly 20 percent. In the five years between 2001 and 2006 the growth is even more striking averaging 3.6 percent per year.

Table: Police and Private Security: Numbers per 100,000 of Population 1991-2006

Job title	Year			
	2006	2001	1996	1991
-				
Police officer	216	209	205	224
Total private security	321	280	284	297
Security guards	289	245	242	267
Private investigators	32	35	42	30

Source: Li, Geoffrey. Security and Private Policing, Statistics Canada, *Juristat*, December 2008: Vol 28 No. 10

As a result, the overall increase in the number of people engaged in protecting the public has increased during the early 2000s with the rate being higher than any time in Canadian history. We have more policing and protection. We have a lower and falling crime rate for property crime. Explaining why this is the case is an important discussion to have.

The overall cost of private policing must be added to the cost of crime. **Table 17** gives the figures and the comparative wage bills. Of course especially in the case of the police, salaries are only a part of the \$12.3 billion total cost. They are included here simply as a point of reference. We do not have the non-salary expenses associated with private policing, so the estimate included in our discussion must be considered a lower bound on total policing costs. The total spent on security and policing is displayed in Table 18.

Table: Salaries of Security Guards, Investigators, and Police (2005/06)*

Job titles	Number	Average annual income	Aggregate income
Security guards	91,325	33,201	3,032,084,065
Private investigators	10,200	53,245	543,102,468
Total			3,575,186,533
Police officers	68,420	78,733	5,386,894,071

Source: Li, Geoffrey. Security and Private Policing, Statistics Canada, *Juristat*, December 2008: Vol 28 No. 10

* Because the data are for 2005/06, the salary data have been boosted by 7 percent to put them into 2009 dollars.

Table:: The Cost of Policing and
Security: 2009

(in billions of \$)

Police	12.32
Private	
Security	3.58
Total	15.89

Sources: Table