



CHIEFS' BRIEFING



Law Enforcement Staffing Crisis and the
Top Employer for Policing Framework (TEP)[™]

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Executive Summary

North American law enforcement is confronting a systemic workforce crisis of unprecedented scale, characterized as a structural failure of the traditional policing employment model, not a cyclical downturn. Agencies are operating with a nationwide workforce deficit approaching 10%, a shortfall that directly compromises operational readiness, officer safety, and public trust. This crisis manifests as a **“triple threat”**: a surge in **premature resignations** from **mid-career officers**, an **acceleration of retirements**, and a critically **shallow applicant pool**.

Traditional responses such as signing bonuses and mass advertising campaigns are demonstrably failing because they do not address the deep, systemic root causes. These include an erosion of public trust, a profound values gap between traditional police culture and Generation Z, an increasingly unfavorable risk-reward calculation for potential recruits, and archaic internal hiring and management systems.

In response, **My Transition Advisors** has developed the **Top Employer for Policing™** (TEP) program, a comprehensive, evidence-based framework designed to re-engineer an agency’s culture, leadership, and talent management systems. The TEP program is not a compliance checklist but a 15-dimension operating system that provides a data-driven roadmap for transforming an agency into a competitive “employer of choice.”

The fiscal case for this transformation is stark: the cost of replacing a single officer can exceed \$190,000, creating millions of dollars in hidden annual costs for a mid-sized agency and even more drastic impacts for large agencies. The TEP framework offers a clear return on investment by reducing attrition, improving recruitment, and enhancing operational effectiveness, making its adoption a strategic imperative for the long-term viability of modern policing.

Anatomy of the Policing Workforce Crisis

The current state of police staffing is a systemic vulnerability, hollowing out the profession from within and threatening the fundamental capacity of agencies to deliver on their public safety mandate.

The Scale of the Deficit

Data from early 2025 paints a stark picture of a profession in decline:

- **Nationwide Deficit:** Law enforcement agencies are operating at an average of 91% of their authorized staffing levels, a nationwide workforce deficit of nearly 10%.
- **Sustained Decline:** Sworn staffing levels in 2024 remained 5.2% lower than on January 1, 2020, despite a marginal 0.4% increase.
- **Widespread Challenge:** Over 70% of agencies report that recruitment is more difficult now than it was five years ago.

The "Triple Threat"

The staffing crisis is a convergence of three mutually reinforcing pressures draining current talent and choking off the supply of future talent.

1. **Surging Resignations:** The most damaging trend is the exodus of early- and mid-career officers. PERF data shows a 47% increase in resignations between 2019 and 2022, a figure that dwarfs the 19% increase in retirements over the same period. The loss of officers in their first 5-10 years creates an "experience vacuum," depleting institutional capital, investigative acumen, and future leadership potential.
2. **Accelerated Retirements:** A steady wave of retirements, often occurring earlier than planned, compounds the crisis. The NYPD, for example, saw 1,555 officers file for retirement in the first half of 2025, a 48% increase over the previous year and a 65% increase compared to a decade ago.
3. **A Critically Shallow Applicant Pool:** The pipeline of new talent is constricting. In Ontario, police services saw a 31% drop in applications between 2021 and 2022, including a catastrophic 49% decline in female applicants.

Root Causes: Why Traditional Levers Are Failing

The crisis is intractable because its roots are deep and systemic, rendering old solutions obsolete.

- **Eroding Public Trust:** Public confidence in the police has fallen from a high of 64% in 2004 to just 51% in 2024, according to Gallup. This sustained narrative has created a perception of policing as a controversial and vilified profession, deterring qualified candidates.

Root Causes: Why Traditional Levers Are Failing

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- **Generational Mismatch with Gen Z:** The values of Generation Z (born 1997-2012) are in direct conflict with the traditional paramilitary culture of law enforcement.
 - ♦ **Purpose:** 86% of Gen Z employees state that working for a purpose-driven organization is essential.
 - ♦ **Flexibility:** Work-life balance is a “non-negotiable prerequisite,” which is incompatible with rigid shift schedules and mandatory overtime.
 - ♦ **Growth:** 70% expect a promotion within 18 months, a pace at odds with slow, seniority-based advancement tracks.
- **Unfavorable Risk-Reward Calculation:** The magnified physical, psychological, and legal risks of the job, weighed against compensation that often lags the private sector, lead many qualified candidates to conclude that other careers offer a better balance.
- **Internal Systemic Barriers:** Agencies are often their own worst enemies, deterring applicants with:
 - ♦ **Archaic Hiring Processes:** Lengthy ordeals that can take nine months or involve 15 major steps are uncompetitive.
 - ♦ **Rigid Qualifications:** Non-predictive screening criteria related to tattoos, minor past drug use, or post-secondary education requirements disproportionately eliminate suitable candidates.

The Strategic Solution: The Top Employer for Policing™ (TEP) Framework

The structural nature of the crisis demands a structural solution. Developed by My Transition Advisors, the TEP framework is an evidence-based, systemic program designed to guide the transformation of an agency into a competitive employer. It is a comprehensive operating system built on 15 core dimensions proven to affect attraction, retention, and performance.

Key Distinction: TEP vs. CALEA

TEP and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) serve fundamentally different, though complementary, purposes. CALEA focuses on risk management and operational compliance, while TEP focuses on people, culture, and talent systems.

ATTRIBUTE	CALEA ACCREDITATION	Top Employer for Policing™ (TEP) Framework
Core Focus	Policies, Procedures, and Compliance	People, Culture, and Talent Systems
Primary Goal	Risk Management and Operational Consistency	Talent Attraction and Employee Retention
Key Measures	Adherence to documented standards of practice	Lived employee experience (e.g., justice scores, well-being metrics)
Primary Audience	The public, municipal government, legal system	Potential recruits, current employees, and their families
Communication Value	"We are a professional, compliant agency."	"This is a great place to work where you can build a thriving career."

My Transition Advisors: Architect and Implementation Partner

My Transition Advisors serves as both the architect of the TEP framework and the implementation partner for agencies. Their team of advisors, with experience in both law enforcement command (“the squad room”) and corporate leadership (“the boardroom”), can guide organizations through each step starting with the evidence-based audit, phased roadmap, and cultural transformation. A unique aspect of their service is expertise in managing dignified career transitions, helping departing officers rebrand for private-sector success and turning them into powerful agency ambassadors. We have heard far too many times that officers on their way out of an organization say, “I would never recommend anyone to become a cop.” The best referrals and recommendations come from those who have done the job and ensured an honourable departure from a career of service.

The Top Employer Framework: Fifteen Dimensions of a High-Performing Policing Organization

The 15 dimensions are organized into five strategic clusters that function as an interconnected system for holistic talent management.

The Five Strategic Clusters

- 1. The Brand Proof Loop:** (Organizational Justice & Voice, Supervisor Capability & Support, Hiring Performance, Community Trust) Creates immediate, visible evidence that an agency is a superior employer.
- 2. The Load-Resource Balance:** (Work Design & Fatigue, Well-Being Governance, Health Surveillance, Crisis Readiness) Directly confronts the burnout epidemic by balancing job demands with robust support.
- 3. The Growth & Mastery Flywheel:** (Career Development & Learning, Knowledge Transfer & Succession, Engagement & Meaning, Innovation & Adaptability) Creates attachment and hope by providing opportunities for meaningful work and career progression.
- 4. The Recruitment and Culture Foundation:** Enhances recruitment reach and builds a cohesive culture that supports long-term engagement and professional growth.
- 5. The Governance Spine:** (Governance & Accountability) Ensures the framework is a permanent, data-driven operating system for continuous improvement..



The Fifteen Dimensions

The **Top Employer for Policing Framework** for policing organizations is anchored in fifteen interdependent dimensions that span the entire employee lifecycle, from recruitment to retirement. It begins with **Organizational Justice and Voice**, ensuring fairness and transparency in decision-making to build trust and retention. **Supervisor Capability and Support** recognizes that direct supervisors are the strongest drivers of engagement, requiring intentional development and accountability. **Engagement and Meaning** ensure officers connect their daily work to purpose and community impact, while **Well-Being Governance** embeds wellness as a strategic priority, not a symbolic initiative. **Hiring Performance** emphasizes speed, clarity, and a positive candidate experience to compete for top talent. **Career Development and Learning** provide visible growth pathways that reduce attrition by fostering advancement within the organization. **Work Design and Fatigue** focus on smarter staffing and protected recovery to prevent burnout. **Knowledge Transfer and Succession** codify institutional wisdom, reducing onboarding time and building organizational resilience. **Recruitment & Culture** attracts a wider range of applicants and builds a supportive environment where all employees can thrive through fair practices, clear communication, and a shared sense of purpose. **Community Trust** strengthens public legitimacy and supports recruitment through civic partnership and transparency. **Governance and Accountability** institutionalize continuous improvement through data-driven leadership reviews and scorecards. **Innovation and Adaptability** keep the organization modern and relevant by encouraging experimentation and rapid learning. **Health Surveillance** shifts wellness from reactive to proactive through data-informed monitoring of risks. **Crisis Readiness** reinforces internal pride and reputation by preparing for continuity in critical incidents. Finally, **Alumni and Offboarding** transform departures into opportunities, turning former members into ambassadors, recruiters, and future hires. Offboarding programs for employees eligible to retire can properly prepare them for “life after the badge” and, when combined with other program components, can incentivize them to serve until retirement eligibility requirements are met, thereby mitigating early departures. Employees can have greater confidence knowing that “second career” opportunities are available to them and that their agency is committed to their personal success post-service. In short, offboarding programs and second career transition programs can communicate to employees that they can have “the best of both worlds.” A full and rewarding career in law enforcement and a second rewarding second career leveraging all their knowledge, skills and abilities achieved in law enforcement.

At its core, the framework’s mechanism is a data-driven, system-of-care approach that links culture, leadership, and well-being through measurable performance indicators across all fifteen dimensions. Its goal is to build policing organizations where employees experience fairness, growth, belonging, and purpose—creating environments that attract, retain, and sustain exceptional people through every stage of their career and beyond.

The Staggering Cost of Inaction

THE REPLACEMENT COST FOR A SINGLE OFFICER IS SUBSTANTIAL, REPRESENTING A MASSIVE AND OFTEN HIDDEN FINANCIAL DRAIN.

Cost Category	Specific Line Items	Estimated Cost Range (USD)
Separation Costs	Administrative processing, exit interviews, terminal leave payout admin.	\$1,500 - \$3,000
Recruitment Costs	Advertising, recruiter salaries, job fairs, marketing materials.	\$5,000 - \$15,000
Hiring & Selection	Backgrounds, psychological/medical screenings, polygraphs, staff time.	\$7,000 - \$12,000
Training Costs	Academy staff/recruit salaries, uniforms, equipment, FTO time.	\$80,000 - \$160,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED DIRECT COST		\$93,500 - \$190,000+

For a mid-sized agency losing 25 officers to voluntary resignation in one year, this represents a hidden replacement cost of \$2.3 million to \$4.7 million, not including ballooning overtime costs.

Call to Action: A Commitment to Transformation

The law enforcement profession is at a strategic inflection point. The evidence is clear: the staffing crisis is a systemic failure of an outdated employment model. Continuing to rely on the recruitment and retention tactics of the past while expecting a different result is a formula for continued operational decline.

Agency leadership must commit to a new path forward. The **Top Employer for Policing™** framework provides the definitive blueprint for this transformation. It is a rigorous, data-driven, and evidence-based system for building a resilient, effective organization where the best people want to join, stay, and thrive. The cost of inaction, measured in millions of wasted dollars, diminished capacity, and eroding public trust, is no longer sustainable.

The time to act is now. The first step is to commit to a clear, data-driven assessment of your agency's starting point. Schedule an onboarding call to begin the Top Employer for Policing™ audit and take decisive action to secure the future of your agency.

Meet the Team



Brian Reich

Founder, My Transition Advisors

Brian Reich, MAS, CPP is a former law enforcement professional and the founder of My Transition Advisors. Since retiring from the public sector, Brian has been a corporate leader at several Fortune 500 companies. Whether developing operational programs, overseeing personnel management, or leading business enhancement projects, Brian brings extensive experience and expertise to a project of this nature.

Brian is a pioneer across the U.S. in the Second Career Transition field and collaborates closely with law enforcement professionals across the country. As a career transition leader, Brian has been a guest speaker at the FBI National Academy, the Florida Police Chiefs annual training conference, the New Jersey State Police Chiefs Conference, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and numerous NYPD programs to guide their membership on second career planning and organizational development. He is dedicated to helping law enforcement professionals and agencies develop successful second career plans.

Under Brian's leadership, My Transition Advisors was recently tapped by the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department to assess and develop leadership, career transition, and personnel organizational career mapping policies and procedures. Brian and his team bring a mix of private and public sector expertise to merge best practices and create a powerful combination of perspectives.



Chief Neil Dubord

Chief Neil Dubord (RET) is a distinguished leader and visionary in public safety and organizational transformation, with over three decades of dedicated service advancing law enforcement practices. A trailblazer in the field, Neil has held pivotal leadership roles in large law enforcement organizations, including Chief of the Delta Police Department, Chief of Metro Vancouver Transit Police, and Deputy Chief of Operations with the Edmonton Police Service.

Neil's career is defined by unwavering commitment, innovative thinking, and the ability to turn challenges into opportunities for meaningful change. As Chief of the Delta Police Department, his leadership saw the agency become one of the first police organizations in Canada to be recognized as a top Employer for seven consecutive years—an unprecedented achievement.

A lifelong learner, Neil holds a Doctor of Business Management (Ph.D.) and a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training, complemented by certifications from the FBI National Academy and the University of Virginia. He is a Certified Fraud Examiner, Certified Financial Crime Specialist, and a Certified member of the Society of Human Resource Management. His extensive qualifications underscore his expertise in human resource management, organizational development, and public safety.

Neil's academic accomplishments are matched by an impressive array of awards, including the Officer of the Police Order of Merit from the Governor General of Canada, the King Charles III Coronation Medal, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and multiple Police Exemplary Service Medals.

Continuing the Conversation on Agency Growth and Resilience

Our team's leadership is accessible, collaborative, and deeply committed to long-term partnerships that strengthen law enforcement agencies and their people.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss your agency's goals and challenges — whether related to workforce resilience, or becoming a top employer in policing, or any of the TEP program components.

To explore how we can assist or to schedule a confidential consultation, contact:

Brian Reich at **551-310-5322**, or email **info@MyTransitionAdvisors.com**.

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