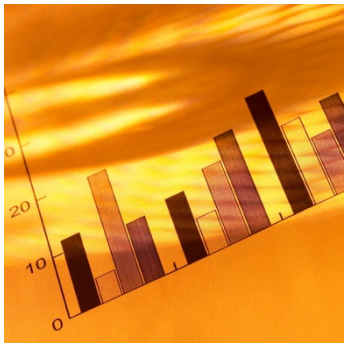
RESEARCH SUMMARY

Compensation for Public Safety Officers in Canada: A Brief Overview



2017–S011

www.publicsafety.gc.ca

BUILDING A **SAFE** AND **RESILIENT CANADA**

Variations in definitions and qualifications exist for compensation for public safety officers across Canada at provincial and municipal levels

BACKGROUND

Public Safety Officers (PSO), such as firefighters, police, and paramedics, are personnel that provide immediate response to crises, putting their own safety at risk to aid the public and maintain public safety and security. Compensation benefits for PSOs are important not only for the welfare of the emergency response provider and their family, but also to encourage recruitment and sustain existing emergency response services (Liong & Liong, 2010). Death or permanent disability can occur for PSOs on or off duty, can be related to an immediate occurrence (e.g., a police officer was shot and killed during a use-of-force occurrence in the line of duty) or through exposure (e.g., a firefighter was exposed to asbestos; Lippel, 2012) or psychosocial hazards associated with the job (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder; Guidotti, 2015). Compensation plans help provide a sense of security for the employee so that in the event of such an occurrence, they or their families will be compensated accordingly.

While Canada has Federal compensation and benefit policies and practices, such as those for veterans (i.e., Veterans Affairs Committee (VAC) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), in Canada, the majority of compensation policies and practices fall to the individual provinces and territories. This raises the question of what variations exist in compensation policies for PSOs across Canada's various jurisdictions. For example, the funding amounts in the case of death or permanent disability may vary across provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Also, definitions of compensation in regards to permanent disability may differ. A comprehensive examination of existing legislation and policies is required to assess the state of compensation for PSOs across Canada.

METHOD

The objective of this project was to: 1) Identify what existing federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal compensation plans pay to PSOs for a) death; b) "permanent disability" and what is meant by "permanent disability"; 2) Identify when death and permanent disability are paid out in the context of: a) on or off-the-job circumstance; and b) eligibility based on job classification.

The methodology applied was that of a literature review of relevant information as it pertained to death and permanent disability compensation for Canadian firefighters, police, and paramedics, including volunteer and/or auxiliary PSOs. Compensation refers to government legislated benefits and excludes private insurance and benefits negotiated through collective agreements.

FINDINGS

At the federal level, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) offer a lump sum of $70,840 in the case of serious injury or disease, while RCMP compensation is based on the degree of disability and the member's salary. In the case of fatality, a CAF's spouse/partner and/or dependents are offered a lump sum of $310,378.59. For the RCMP, there is a Death Gratuity that is twice the sum of the member's monthly salary and a Survivor's Income Plan which is a monthly payment for RCMP member's spouse/partner and/or dependents based on the deceased member's salary and total pay under existing legislation (e.g., RCMP Superannuation Act).

The average maximum provincial/territorial compensation benefit across Canada as of 2015 is

$65,371[1]. The maximum compensation benefits by province and territory range from $52,100 (P.E.I.) to $95,300 (Alberta). Manitoba is the only provincial jurisdiction that has no maximum on the compensation benefits an injured worker may earn[2].

Maximum monthly workers' compensation payments for permanent disability also vary. Some provinces and territories have a stipulated maximum payment (i.e., British Columbia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and Newfoundland and Labrador), others only offer a lump sum (i.e., Quebec and P.E.I.), while others base the monthly maximum payments from a calculation based on the person's earnings (i.e., Ontario and Nova Scotia). Additionally, it should be noted that not only does the definition of "permanent disability" differ across jurisdictions, so too does the terminology used (e.g., total impairment, partial disability).

In the case of worker fatality, the types of compensation, how it is calculated, administered and whom it is administered to among dependants, varies largely depending on the province or territory where it occurred. In the case of disability or fatality, compensation is based on it being job related, usually while on duty, except in the case of presumptive legislation.

The only compensation legislation that exists specific to public safety officers is presumptive legislation. The majority of this type of legislation applies to work-related cancers and myocardial infarction. Again, variation of types of cancers covered and eligibility can vary across jurisdictions. For example, part-time/volunteer firefighters are not always eligible (i.e., Saskatchewan). Also, which primary site cancers are covered and eligibility based on years of service vary by jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions do not cover myocardial infarction. Certain jurisdictions continue to have no presumptive legislation for firefighters (i.e., Quebec, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador).

Presumptive legislation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) exists in some jurisdictions and applies to a wider range of public safety officers beyond firefighters, yet the eligibility for PTSD presumptive legislation varies widely depending on occupation.

NEXT STEPS

The lack of consistency in compensation regarding who is eligible and how it varies in implementation across jurisdictions is a concern. What little literature exists regarding compensation for public safety officers at the municipal level suggests that implementation varies largely at that point.

SOURCE

Guidotti, T. L. (Ed.). (2015). *Health Risks and Fair Compensation in the Fire Service*. Springer.

Liong, A. S., & Liong, S. U. (2010). "Financial and economic considerations for emergency response providers". *Critical care nursing clinics of North America, 22*(4), 437-444.

Lippel, K. (2012). "Preserving workers' dignity in workers' compensation systems: An international perspective". *American journal of industrial medicine*, *55*(6), 519-536.

For more information on research at the Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Public Safety Canada or to be placed on our distribution list, please contact:

Research Division, Public Safety Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P8
PS.CSCCBResearch-RechercheSSCRC.SP@canada.ca

Research Summaries are produced for the Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Public Safety Canada. The summary herein reflects interpretations of the report authors' findings and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Public Safety Canada.

[1] Average calculated using maximum benefits by province/territory based on key findings from the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada. This average does not include Manitoba which does not have a maximum. The average was calculated using the maximum benefit from Saskatchewan if a worker was injured after January 1st, 2014.

[2] Source: Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada: http://awcbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Key_Benefits_Information.pdf. *Note.* The maximum benefit for Nunavut was recently amended in 2016 and is now $88,600.

2017–S011

ISSN: 1916-4009

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2017
This material may be freely reproduced for non-commercial purposes provided that the source is acknowledged.