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Value of the SRO Program: What Do the Numbers Say? Social Return on Investment (SROI)

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Summary from chapter 9 of the report
“Assigning Value to Peel Regional Police’s
School Resource Officer Program”



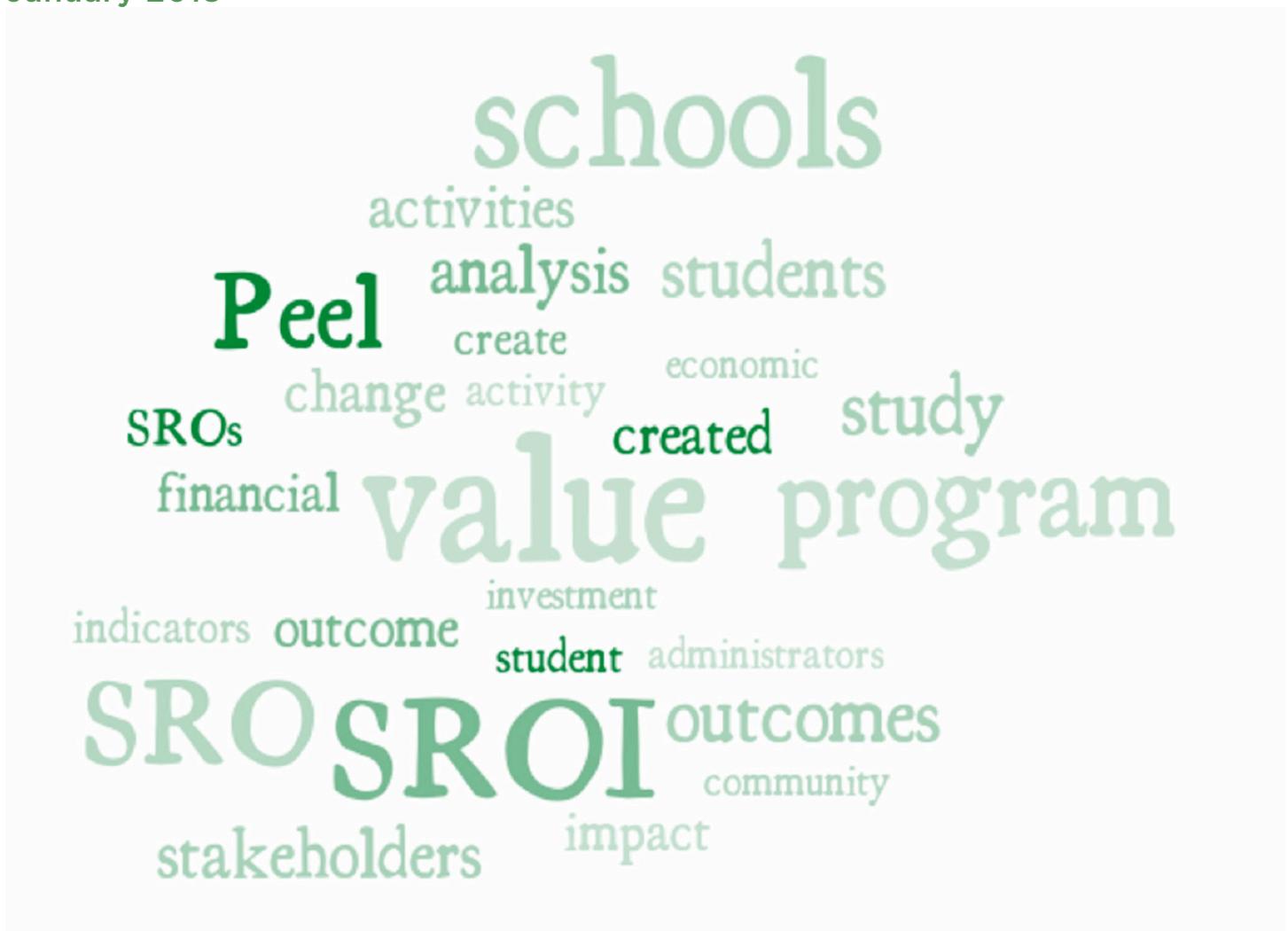
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WordMap: 25 most common words in Chapter Nine: The Value of the SRO Program: What do the Numbers Say?

“SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organizations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them” (Nef, 2012, Pg. 1)

SROI (Social Return on Investment) is an outcomes-based measurement tool that helps organizations to understand and quantify the social, environmental, and economic value they are creating. In 2015-2016, we undertook a major research project, which used SROI techniques to assess the value that Peel Regional Police create by having a police officer (i.e., a School Resource Officer or SRO) assigned to work on a full-time basis in every high school in Peel Region.

Five high schools located in Peel Region participated in this study. These five schools were selected in such a manner to ensure that we had schools from both school boards operating in the region. Schools were located in a diversity of neighbourhoods: two were designated “urban-grant” schools and were located in socio-economically challenged areas in Peel Region, one school was in an affluent community, and two schools were situated in “middle class” communities. Four of the five schools had student populations that were ethnically diverse.

A SROI analysis consists of six main steps: (1) establishing scope and identifying stakeholders to establish the parameters of the study, (2) identifying inputs, clarifying outputs, and describing outcomes, (3) evidencing outcomes and giving them value, (4) establishing impact (Impact = Outcomes – (Attribution, Deadweight, Displacement)), (5) calculating SROI, and (6) reporting. The interested reader is referred to Nef (2012) for an excellent review of the different steps required to complete an SROI analysis. The actual SROI calculations were done by SiMPACT Strategy Group, which specializes in measuring and valuing social impact. This summary presents key findings from the SROI analysis undertaken as part of this study. Full details are provided in Chapter 9 of the main report.

“SROI analyses show value for money in terms that go beyond the financial. They assess a ‘triple-bottom-line’ of financial, social and environmental returns and compare them with cash and other investments to create a ratio.” (MBAAssociates, 2015, p. 5)

Establishing Scope and Identifying Key Stakeholders

“The scope of an SROI analysis is an explicit statement about the boundary of what is being considered. It is often the result of negotiations about what is feasible to measure and what you would like to be able to improve or communicate” (Nicholls, 2009, p. 18). This study looks at the value the SRO program provides to the following key stakeholders: students, school administrators (principals, vice-principals), Peel Police, and the SRO. Some stakeholders, such as the surrounding community and the parents of students, were not included as stakeholders in the SROI analysis because it would be hard (if not impossible) to gather information from a representative sample of parents and these stakeholders have limited, if any, familiarity with the SRO program.

Get Buy-In from Key Stakeholders

To collect the data needed for the SROI analysis it was necessary to get the participation of both of Peel Region's school boards in the research project, along with Peel Regional Police. The fact that we were able to obtain excellent buy-in from these groups was a central element to the success of the research. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for the commitment they showed to this project.

Resource constraints on all sides meant that we had to select from the 62 high schools in the region a subset of schools to participate in the SROI research initiative. These schools had to agree to participate in all data collection exercises that were required by the SROI methodology. Ultimately, five schools that represented the full gamut of the region's cultural, religious, and socioeconomic spectrum participated in the study. By ensuring that the schools who participated in this research varied on a wide range of contextual variables of possible relevance to the value provided by the SROs, we hope that the study's SROI story will reflect the realities of Peel Region as well as increase the generalizability of the findings.

Timeframe for the SROI Evaluation

School administrators from the five participating schools were consulted and asked for how long the research initiative should run in their schools. After much discussion, the group of administrators decided that the study should run over the course of the first semester of the 2015-2016 high school year (i.e., the beginning of September 2015 to the end of January 2016).

Establishing the Goal of the Program Being Evaluated

Peel Regional Police's SRO program was designed to meet the following goals and objectives: (1) create a caring and inclusive learning environment within the high schools in Peel Region, (2) establish a connection between the Peel Regional Police and the high schools in Peel Region, (3) create in all stakeholders a feeling of ownership and pride in their school and in the surrounding community, and (4) create a safe learning environment in all the high schools in Peel Region.

Above all else, the goal of the NPU program is *"to create a safe learning environment for Peel Region Secondary School Students."*

Inputs, Activities, Outputs, and Outcomes

A central element of the SROI methodology is the creation of an impact map, which is a table that captures how an activity makes a difference (i.e., how the different activities performed by the SROs lead to particular outcomes for different stakeholders). The following pieces of information are included on an impact map:

- **Inputs:** Inputs are resources used to run the activities – money, people, facilities, and equipment. This is the investment against which the value of the

impact is compared. In this case, we are looking at the amount Peel Police invests to deliver the SRO program in the five schools in our study (i.e., \$660,289).

- **Activities:** Activities are the intervention or program that is provided (i.e., the 20 activities undertaken by the SROs to fulfil their mandate).
- **Outputs:** Outputs are the direct and tangible products from the activity.
- **Outcomes:** Outcomes are changes that occur for stakeholders as a result of the activity.

To put the above information into the context of this exercise:

- The goal of the Peel Regional Police's SRO program is to ensure safe schools.
- The SROs engage in a variety of proactive and reactive activities to deliver on this desired outcome.

The table below provides an example of how each of the elements of a SROI impact map can be conceptualized in our study.

Mapping Key Terms to SROI Analysis of the SRO Program (Source: PRP)

Goal	To create a safe learning environment at Peel Secondary Schools
Inputs	Assigned NPU Officer to each secondary school in Peel
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enforcement of Federal, Provincial and Municipal Statutes 2. Investigation of all Incidents and related follow-ups by NPO at assigned secondary school 3. Create and implement POP (Problem Oriented Policing) projects targeting behaviour that interferes with the safe learning environment of the school. 4. Monitor Youth Gang activity 5. Lectures 6. Liaison between School and Police
Outputs	Tickets/Charges by NPO's. Master Occurrences for each Secondary School cross referencing all occurrences at the school Investigation of all school occurrences by assigned NPO POP projects Youth gang reports Lectures at schools School/Principal awareness & satisfaction with officer involvement
Outcomes	Safer environment at Secondary Schools Fewer occurrences at Secondary Schools Improved relationship & communication between students/officers Safer Community Improved police presence/visibility in Secondary Schools

The SROI methodology involves evidencing the outcomes and giving them a value (i.e., identifying outcome indicators that can provide evidence that the outcome is or is not occurring). The research team worked with the SROs, school administrators, and a Steering Committee that had been set up to guide the research to generate a complete list of the desired outcomes of the SRO program.

Outcome indicators are measurable signs, signals, or pieces of information that allow the researchers to determine whether or not a specific change has taken

place. In this study, we followed the advice of SROI experts who recommended that practitioners seeking to measure more complicated outcomes should use multiple, complementary indicators. Accordingly, in this study we identified both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey) indicators and relied on both subjective (self-reported) and objective (activity) data.

The theory of change that guided our SROI analysis is summarized below.

Theory of Change
Create a one-sentence statement that describes your theory of change
IF secondary schools that have safety concerns due to issues such as drug dealing, bullying/cyberbullying, assault, and theft are offered the services of a skilled full-time police officer who engages in prevention and enforcement related activities in and around the school, THEN students will feel safe, be engaged, have a positive educational/academic/school experience, will be deterred from crime, and will not be victimized. They will embark in their young adulthood successfully, while the community surrounding the school will feel safer and the police and criminal justice system will be able to re-allocate resources for other priorities.

SROI requires that indicators of outcomes are found for all changes that are significant to stakeholders. Once evidence of change is collected, the researcher develops financial proxies or approximations of value.

An example from our SROI analysis (see below) may prove illustrative. The interviews with the SROs, the school administrators, and the students indicated that the SROs can elect not to charge a student who has committed a crime with a criminal offense, but can instead recommend the student participate in a diversion program that is designed to remedy the behaviour leading to the arrest. Diversion allows the student to avoid a criminal record. Peel Regional Police indicated that there had been 49 diversions in the five schools participating in our study from September 2015 to February 2016.

The students who get diverted are the stakeholder in this example. The outcomes associated with this diversion include the following: the student can continue their education/not drop out of school and will have the opportunity to avoid a criminal record. Two financial proxies are therefore used in the SROI calculations: the personal costs of dropping out of school and the value of never been arrested.

Evidencing the Outcomes and Giving Them Value: An Example

Stakeholder	Outcome	Indicator	Financial Proxies	Proxy Value	Proxy Source
Students who are diverted (rather than charged)	Pursue their education	Number of students in the five schools who are diverted Sept. 2015-Feb. 2016	Personal costs of dropping out of school	\$13,370	HACT Table ENV 1403
	Do not drop out of school Avoidance of a criminal life trajectory		Value of never being arrested	\$9,772	HACT Table YOU 1605

In all cases, value created is calculated by linking the outcomes experienced by stakeholders to proxies that represent the value of change that they (the stakeholders) have experienced. Value created for each outcome is calculated by first multiplying the quantity reaching the outcome under consideration by the financial proxy and then subtracting the drop-off, attribution, and deadweight values.

This step is repeated for all years where value has been projected. All the values for each outcome for all years are then added. This value is the total present value.

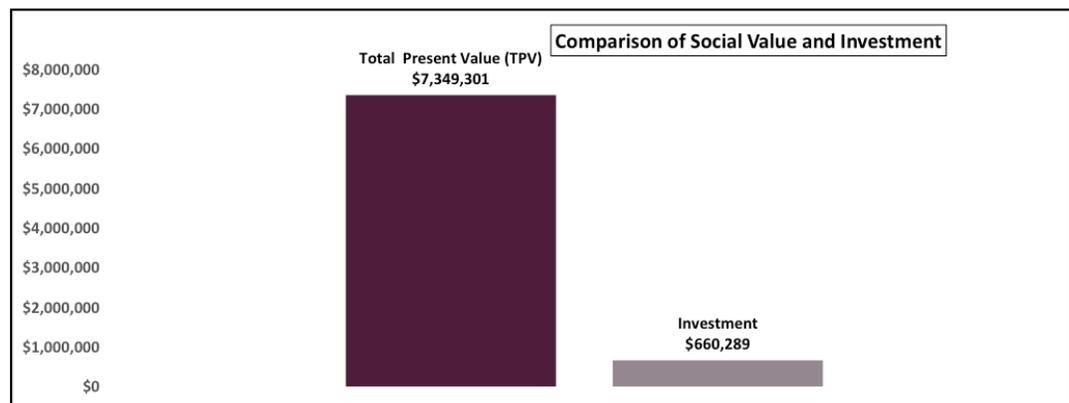
The rule of thumb with SROI is do not over claim, a rule that was followed religiously in this analysis.

Value of the SRO Program: SROI Analysis

SROI calculations determined that the social and economic return on the total investment of \$660,289, (the cost of running the SRO program in the five schools in the study) yielded a total present value of \$7,349,301.

This means that for every dollar invested in the Peel SRO program, a minimum of \$11.13 of social and economic value was created.

Value of the SRO Program: SROI Analysis for the Five Schools in the Study



This ratio represents a minimum value created as conservative estimates were selected for all financial proxy. It also compares favorably to the value created by other social programs, which are typically calculated to yield \$3 to \$5 dollars of social and economic value for every dollar spent. The social return on investment (SROI) ratio demonstrates a real value created; however, there are various outcomes that cannot be represented in financial terms, such as the fact that the workloads of the social workers and psychologist in the schools might increase as result of SROs assisting students who have mental health problems, the Peel Regional District School Board benefiting from an improvement in the quality of the schools' environment and safety, and the reduced victimization and the increased trust and positive view of the police among people living in the catchment areas of the 5 schools.

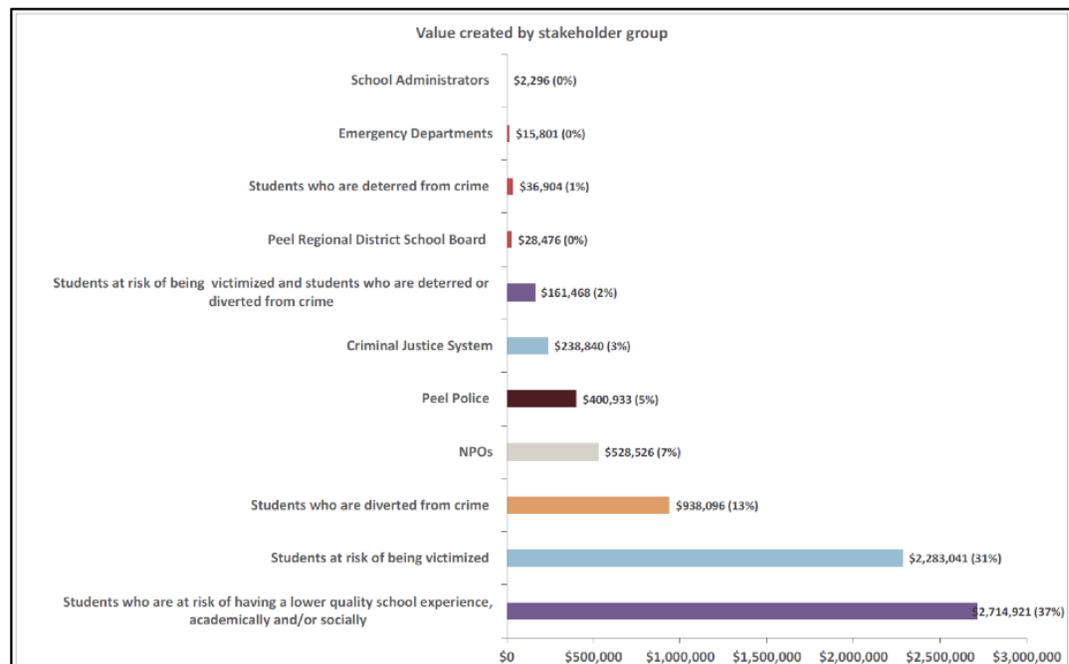
While this ratio was calculated using the data from the five schools who participated in the study, we feel confident that it can be generalized to schools across Peel Region (at a minimum). We base this assumption on the fact that we took great care to select schools that varied with respect to key socio-economic indicators that are likely to impact the value of this program. The diversity of the schools in our sample also suggest that a SRO program like the one administered

by the Peel Regional Police will also add value in other communities. That being said, the ratio can be expected to differ if the context was quite different from the schools in our study (i.e., there were some factors that made the schools different, the communities where students live different) or the job of the SRO was different (i.e., the SRO was assigned to many different schools)

Students Gain the Most Value from the SRO Program

Who receives the greatest value from the SRO program? The answer to this question is unequivocal: the student. As shown below, just over 80% of the value of the SRO program is to the students, particularly those who have been victimized (i.e., bullied, cyberbullied, physically assaulted). Also noteworthy are the data showing that students who are diverted also achieve value from the SRO Program.

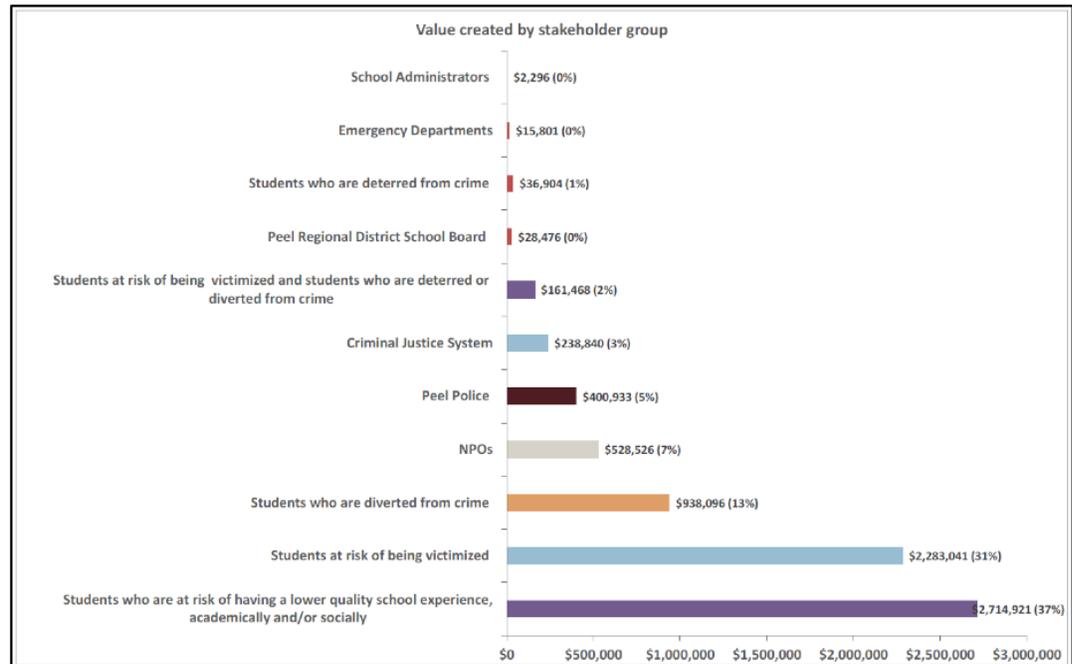
Value of the SRO Program by Stakeholder Group



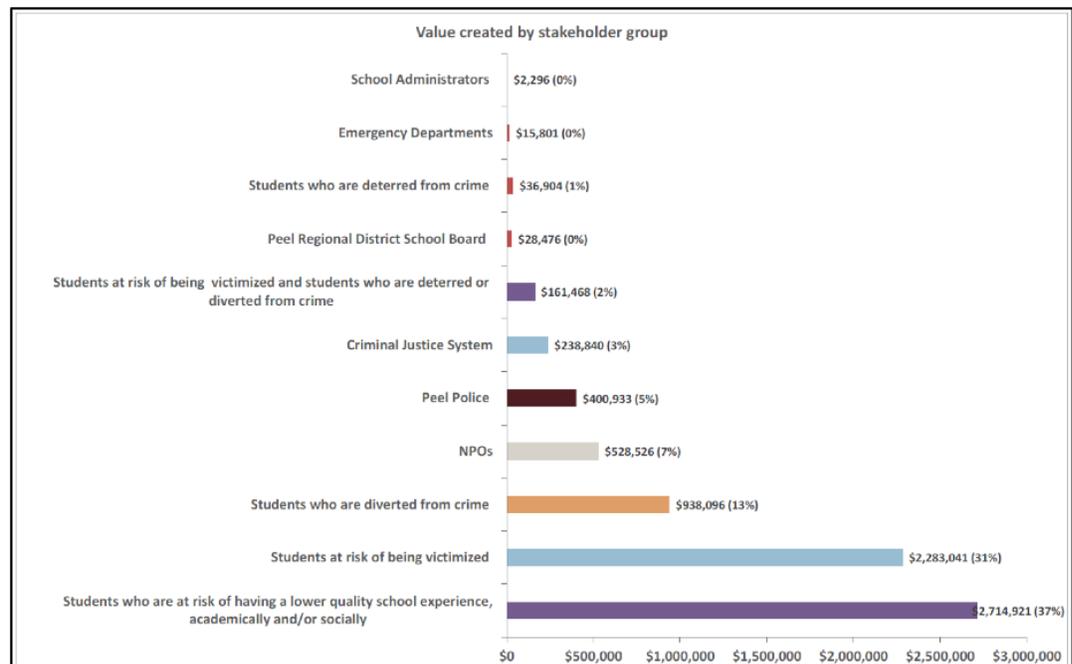
The value created through each outcome for each stakeholder group was added up, resulting in a total value created for each stakeholder group.

Also important are our findings with respect to the value of having proactive and preventative policing activities as compared to enforcement. Our calculations show that prevention offers just over twice the value to students as enforcement and supports the need for such a program in high schools where youth can benefit from exposure to officers with this type of focus.

Value Creation by Type of SRO Activity and Stakeholder Group



Value Creation by Type of SRO Activity (in the five schools in the study)



Finally, while the above data is compelling in its own right, we believe that the following quote illustrates in quite a poignant manner why Peel Regional Police believe in the program and support its continuation:

“There is so much need in communities right now. Early intervention and social interaction with young offenders give the program the most value... you know...when I’m interacting with an 18 year and 20-year-old that’s been involved in, some pretty serious crime and stuff like that or you know, he’s got himself in a bad place or hanging with a bad crowd, it’s pretty difficult to get those guys back on track, right? I really do believe that if you’re going to change society...the earlier the intervention component of it the better. These early interactions, give it (the SRO program) the most value. It’s not perfect but we have a much better chance of saving somebody, early on than we do much later, right? It’s a much bigger uphill battle. Once they’ve already played in the mud puddle and they’ve got some dirt on them, it’s tough to wash it off.”