

Executive Summary

# Assigning Value to Peel Regional Police's School Resource Officer Program

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In an era where the costs of policing are constantly under scrutiny from governing municipalities, the time has come for police agencies to re-evaluate the services they provide. To do this, they need to answer questions relating to the value that different activities they perform create in the communities they serve. In other words, they need to change the focus of the conversation from “what does this service cost” to “what value does this service provide.”

This document summarizes key findings from a longitudinal (2014-2017), multi-method (quantitative, qualitative, and ethnographic analysis, along with a Social Return on Investment [SROI] analysis) case study undertaken to identify the value of School Resource Officers (SROs) that are employed by Peel Regional Police and work in the service’s Neighborhood Police Unit (NPU). Of note is the application of SROI techniques in this evaluation process. SROI, a methodology that emerged from the not-for-profit sector, helps researchers identify sources of value outside of those considered through traditional valuation techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis.

Evaluation of Peel Police’s SRO program was motivated by a number of factors. First, the costs of this program are both easy to identify and significant (just over \$9 million per year). Second, it is very challenging to identify the value that this program provides to students and the community. The challenges of quantifying the value offered by assigning full-time SROs to Canadian high schools is evidenced by the fact that such programs are rare, as police services around the world have responded to pressures to economize by removing officers from schools and either eliminating the role of the SRO or having one officer attend to many schools.

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## Peel Regional Police’s SRO Program

On their web site, Peel Regional Police describe the SRO program as follows:

*“The primary responsibility of the **School Resource Officer (S.R.O.)** is to strive to create a safe learning environment at our Secondary Schools. This is achieved by forming positive partnerships with students and school administration. It is encouraged that officers use a proactive style of policing and interact with youth in a non-enforcement manner on a regular basis.”*

While the program has gone through a few iterations of its mandate over time, the core objectives are to assign sworn police officers to work in the region’s high schools with the goal of facilitating the development of positive relationships with the youth living in the region and to enhance perceptions of safety and security in high schools and the community. In that capacity, the SROs work directly with teachers, parents, and the community to ensure that the youth are either on the right path to a positive future or that they can get back to the right path.

There are 60 SROs working in the schools and school catchment areas in Peel Region. They are supervised by 8 sergeants and 4 staff sergeants. The total cost of the program is \$9,004,880 per year (excluding costs for uniforms, law enforcement supplies, etc.). The staff sergeants have other NPU responsibilities as well.

## Data That Inform our Conclusions

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 neighborhoods: 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.

SROI analysis requires the collection of a variety of indicators of value (i.e., desired outcomes of the SRO program). Value was determined in this study in a number of ways using a variety of different types of data.

### Summary of Data

	2014	2015	2016
Qualitative data (interviews data)	10 SROs	5 SROs and 5 school administrators (August), 10 school administrators (December)	29 school administrators (January-March) 8 SROs (January-March) 11 Peel police stakeholders (sergeants and staff sergeants) (March-April) 8 student interviews (April)
SRO activity data		Daily records kept by SROs working in the 5 participating high schools (September-December)	Daily records kept by SROs working in the 5 participating high schools (January-February)
Quantitative data (student surveys)		Surveyed students in Grade 9 in the 5 participating high schools in September (beginning of term) (n = 610)	Surveyed students in Grade 9 in the 5 participating high schools in March (end of term) (n = 655)
Ethnographic data		5 of 10	5 of 10

Indicator data were collected over several years and in several formats and required tremendous cooperation and commitment from the various stakeholders involved in this program. The challenges we faced when designing our study were exacerbated by the fact that the SRO program in Peel Region has been in place for more than two decades. This makes it impossible for us to calculate value using pre-post comparisons. The fact that Peel Police’s NPU program does not, however, operate in middle or elementary schools gives us another option on how to evaluate the program as it implies that students would not regularly interact with a school police officer until they began grade 9. Accordingly, in this study we collected survey data that enabled us to compare relevant student attitudes and outcomes at two points in time: (1) when the student started in grade 9 (i.e., September, 2015) and (2) at the end of the first semester of grade 9 (i.e., March, 2016).

## What do SRO's Do in the Course of a Day?

The role of the SRO involves performance of 20 different activities.

### Typology Classifying the Different Activities Undertaken by SROs

	Gather Information → Relationship Building	Use Information and Expertise → Credibility Building
Proactive (prevention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SROs walk around the school with administrators</li> <li>• SROs walk around other targeted areas where students congregate</li> <li>• Police monitor social media</li> <li>• SROs patrol the neighbourhood around the school</li> <li>• SROs conduct patrol work not related to NPU</li> <li>• SROs engage in extra-curricular activities with students (e.g., sports, charity events) and in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SROs respond to requests from members of the school's broader community</li> <li>• SROs play an educational role in their school</li> <li>• SROs act as liaisons between Peel Police and administrators in school</li> <li>• SROs use information they have gathered to prevent criminal activity from occurring (in the school and in the school's catchment area)</li> <li>• SROs engage in emergency preparedness exercises within school</li> </ul>
Reactive (enforcement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SROs participate in Problem Oriented Policing (P.O.P.) projects within their community</li> <li>• SROs pass on relevant information to other members of Peel police as appropriate</li> <li>• SROs assist other bureaus with NPU related investigations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SROs respond to criminal (i.e., drugs, robberies) and non-criminal (i.e., trespassing, liquor, fighting, suicide attempts) calls for service at the school and in the school's catchment area; in other words, they use their training and information they have gathered to enforce the law.</li> <li>• SROs deal with non-criminal critical incidents in the school (trespass, suicide attempts, criminal activity)</li> <li>• SROs spend time dealing with critical incidents at the school and in the school catchment area (behavioural and mental health issues)</li> <li>• SROs enforce federal, provincial, and municipal laws in the school and in catchment area</li> <li>• SROs attend court</li> <li>• SROs write reports/complete administrative duties</li> </ul>

### Reactive Versus Proactive Activities

Officers engage in reactive activities as a response to something that has already happened at the school or the school's catchment area. In all reactive situations, SROs undertake a variety of actions to resolve the matter effectively and re-establish a safe school learning environment. All the activities in the proactive grouping, on the other hand, are taken by the SROs to prevent a crime, avert the victimization of other students, or forestall anti-social activity.

### Intelligence Gathering Activities Versus Activities that Use Information Skills and Training

Information and intelligence gathering activities contribute to the development of positive relationships with key stakeholders while the activities that involve the use

of information, skills, and training enhance the credibility of these officers within a variety of stakeholder groups.

### How do SROs Spend Their Time?

Analysis of the activity data resulted in the following important conclusions. First, SROs spend their time in a myriad of different activities. Second, SROs spend almost a quarter of their time on administrative work (i.e., report writing, filling out property tags, lodging property, informing supervisors of cases, writing notes, assisting other officers with their packages, court package preparation, disclosure requests from Crown/Defense, email correspondence with co-workers/Crowns/ other police services, reading alerts that have been distributed, etc.). Third, Peel Regional Police SROs spend more of their time on activities associated with proactive policing/crime prevention (44% of their time) than they do on reactive activities involving enforcement of the law and/or calls for service (34% of their time). Fourth, a substantial amount of the SROs' time (30%) is spent on information gathering activities to help prevent crime. These activities also serve to enhance relationships with key stakeholders.

## The Value of the SRO Program: SROI Analysis

This research initiative had one main objective in mind: to identify, and where possible quantify, the value that Peel Police's NPU offers to key stakeholders including students and administrators working in the region's high schools, communities surrounding these schools, Peel Regional Police, and the SROs themselves. We start by articulating the value of this program as calculated using SROI analysis. We then report the main sources of value offered by this program that were identified by all stakeholder groups who participated in this analysis (i.e., areas of consensus).

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

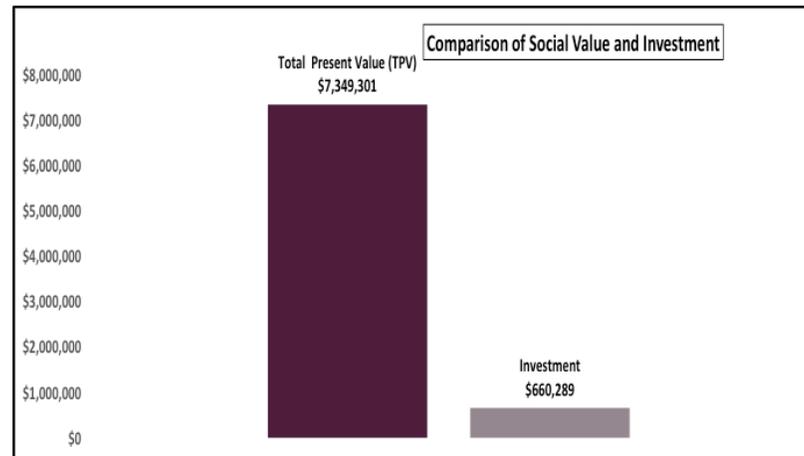
Theory of Change
Create a one-sentence statement that describes your theory of change
IF secondary schools that have safety concerns due to issues such as drug dealing, bullying/cyberbullying, assault, and theft are offered the services of a skilled full-time police officer who engages in prevention 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 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.**

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 typically yield \$3 to \$5 dollars of social and economic value for every dollar spent.

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



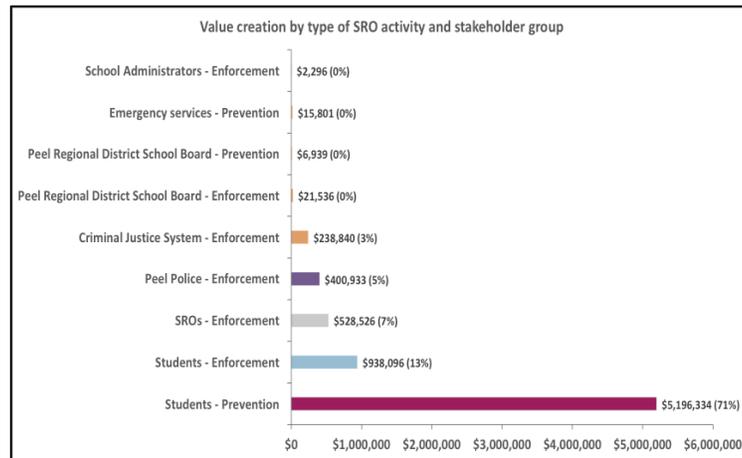
While this ratio was calculated using the data from the five schools who participated in the study, we feel confident that it can be generalized to schools across Peel Region (at a minimum). We base this assumption on the fact that we took great care to select schools that varied with respect to key 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 from what we calculated if the context is very different from that considered in our study (i.e., the schools different from the ones we studied, the communities where students live are different from those considered in this study, the SRO works part-time or covers a number of schools).

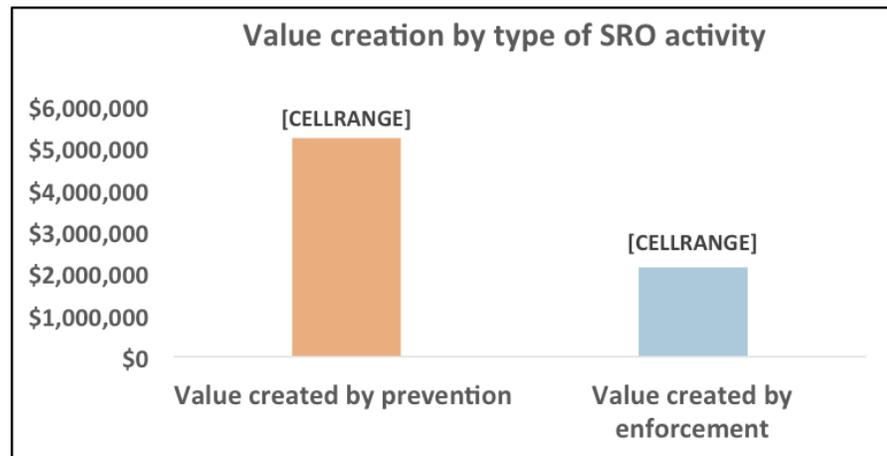
### Activities Which Deliver Value: SROI Analysis

SROI analysis shows that high school students realize just over 80% of the value of the SRO program. Students who have been victimized in the past (i.e., bullied, cyberbullied, physically assaulted), in particular, benefit from the program. Also of note are data from the SROI analysis showing that proactive SRO activities directed towards prevention offer just over twice as much value to key stakeholders (i.e., students, administrators, the community) as reactive activities linked to enforcement.

### SROI Analysis: Value Creation by Type of SRO Activity and Stakeholder Group



### SROI Analysis: Value Creation by Type of SRO Activity



## The Value of the SRO Program: Qualitative Analysis

### Value of the SRO Program to School and Community Stakeholders

The interview data strongly supports the following conclusions with respect to the value that accrues to schools, communities, and society from SRO programs such as the one implemented in Peel Region:

- The presence of the SRO in the school helps prevent or minimize property damage in the school and surrounding areas.
- The presence of the SRO in the school helps prevent students from getting injured or perhaps even dying (fights, drug overdoses).
- The presence of the SRO at the school reduces the need for the school to call 911 when something goes wrong. Additionally, the school benefits from faster police response times and an ability to deescalate problems quickly.

- SROs are more able (and more likely) to recommend diversion to students when appropriate. This gives young people a chance for a meaningful future as it reduces the likelihood that a student will get a criminal record. The diversion program offers value not only because the students are kept “out of the system,” but also because it reduces crime in the community and the costs to society associated with incarceration.
- The fact that the SRO acts as a deterrent to criminal activity within the schools and can enforce the law when necessary means that both students and staff experience a safer environment and feel more secure because of this program.
- The presence of the SRO in the school increases the likelihood that students (particularly those with mental health issues) will get the help they need from the social service and health care systems.
- SROs provide school and community stakeholders with a resource that they can easily consult if they need information or advice on matters of the law.
- SROs make it easier for students and citizens to see the police as someone they can talk to if they have a problem rather than someone to fear. This reduces the stigma community members and youth often attach to the police.
- The SRO program provides students and community members with the ability to interact with police officers in situations that are non-confrontational. This can result in increased levels of trust between these key community stakeholders and the police, which increases the likelihood these individuals will seek help from the police or share information with the police as required.
- The SRO’s knowledge of the community and the school enhances their ability to effectively investigate criminal activity in the area.
- The SROs provide school administrators with important information on what their students are doing outside of the time they are in school as well as intelligence on the law and how the police operate.
- The SROs provide invaluable support for administrations who are having difficulties enforcing school rules and managing the behavior of problematic students.
- The SROs educate students on issues of importance to this age group (e.g., cyber-bullying, drugs).

### **The Value of the SRO Program to the Peel Police**

The interview data strongly supports the following conclusions with respect to the value realized by Peel Police from the SRO program:

- The personal relationships that the SRO has formed with members of the school community (administrators, students) facilitates the collection of intelligence and information that is valuable to other units within Peel Police.
- The SRO can use their social networks to obtain information and intelligence that would have been time consuming or impossible for other police officers to acquire. The following units seem to gain the most value from the SRO’s ability to make connections and gather information: Robbery, Drugs, and Special Victims.
- The presence of the SRO in the schools reduces the pressure on the front line by reducing the number of 911 calls.

- Proactive policing in the high schools decreases the total number of investigations required.
- The actions taken by the SRO increases the efficiency of police investigations as well as solvency rates (i.e., investigations experience fewer delays and takes less time).
- The program promotes organizational learning by encouraging the development of a culture of learning with the population of officers who had been and/or are SROs.
- The positive interactions that SROs have with schools, teachers, and school boards demonstrate that Peel Police cares about the community and reinforces a positive police image within Peel Region.

### **Value of the SRO Program to the SRO**

SROs working in the NPU report, and the staff sergeants who supervise these units agree, that their job offers them many benefits that both they and the service value:

- SROs find the job personally very fulfilling as they are often able to make a real difference in the lives of students that they interact with.
- SROs appreciate and value the personal relationships they develop in the course of their work.
- SROs enjoy the fact that their job and how they behave helps help people see the police in a different, more positive light (i.e., *“we can show the person behind the badge”*).
- SROs benefit from the opportunity to engage with citizens in the community in non-confrontational situations (*“we get to work with some good people whereas on patrol we often only deal with people who have commit a crime”*). This gives them a more complete perspective of those who live in their community.
- Performance of the SRO job provides these officers with a unique opportunity to learn a wide range of skills that are critical to effective police work and career advancement. Key skills they acquire on the job include an understanding of community policing, how to conduct an investigation, how to gather intelligence, problem solving, communication, time management, and social media. They also gain a very comprehensive knowledge of the different dimensions of police work during their two years in the role.

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## **Does the SRO Program Meet Its Stated Goals?**

### **Value of the SRO Program: Increased Sense of Safety**

The data from this study provides strong support for the idea that the SRO program administered by Peel Police meets its goals of increasing students' perceptions of safety both within the school and in the school's catchment area. The fact that each of the stakeholders included in this study spoke at length during the interviews about how the SRO added value by making students and school staff feel safer reinforces our confidence in this conclusion. The fact that the student

survey data as well as the ethnographic data mirror these findings provide additional support for this conclusion.

### **Is Safety a Problem in Peel Region Secondary Schools?**

According to the SROs and the school administrators we interviewed, the answer to this question is a definite yes. Seventy percent of the administrators flagged school safety as either a serious (10%) or moderately serious (60%) issue in their school at the time the study was being done. Administrators identified several underlying issues that contributed to these safety concerns, including the socio-economic environment in their high school's catchment area, the fact that some parents do not support attempts on the part of the school to discipline their children, and mental health issues within the student body. The view of these administrators was that the presence of the SRO in the school diminishes the severity of the safety issue within their school (from serious to moderately serious) and that *"Without the SRO, we would be calling 911 frequently."*

### **Why Does the Presence of a SRO Make Students Feel Safer?**

During the interviews, a majority of students and school administrators stated that having an SRO assigned to their school makes administrators, teachers, and students feel safer when they are at school – *"just by being there."* The data identified a number of mechanisms, which help us understand why the presence of an SRO within the school increases perceptions of safety.

**Deterrence:** Every stakeholder group felt that the SRO acted as deterrent to the manifestation of criminal and inappropriate behaviour simply by being visibly present at the school and in the community. Moreover, they all agreed that it was the SRO's ability to deter inappropriate behaviour that resulted in increased perceptions of safety. Students talked about how the presence of the SRO at the school and in the community acted as a deterrent to students who bully or physically harm other students. They also felt that the presence of the SRO reduced the likelihood that students (including themselves) would behave inappropriately on school property, and engage in bullying or fighting (*"The SROS stop students from making bad choices, doing stupid things, and getting into trouble."*) Students stated unequivocally that if the officers were not in the school on a daily basis there would be more fights, thefts, and drugs in the school and more school rules would be broken.

Data from the student survey strongly supports the idea that the SRO program is effective at reducing the amount of bullying taking place on school property and in the surrounding area. Six months after moving from a school without an SRO to a school with a full-time SRO, the number of students reporting that they were afraid of being bullied or physically harmed by other students or by gang members either at school or during the commute to and from school decreased significantly, as did the number of students reporting that they either avoided going to school and/or skipped classes because they had been bullied or feared being bullied.

**Faster response time:** Students and administrators who responded that they felt a lot safer at school because of the SROs linked this to their belief that they could count on these officers to be available if they were needed and act quickly to stop or reduce the severity of the situation. Students felt safer knowing that the officer was “*there when the students needed them*” and was able to respond immediately when issues arose and something unsafe happened in the school. The officers themselves also felt that their presence in the school and/or in the community enabled them to act quickly to reduce the severity of crimes/de-escalate problematic situations and stated that if they were not in the schools, response time to a 911 from the school would be longer. The ethnographic data provides further support for this source of value as we witnessed an SRO assist a colleague who was dealing with a rape threat and a SRO stopping a suicide attempt.

**De-escalation:** Students, school administrators, and SROs all attributed their feelings of safety to their belief that the SRO understood the school and the students within the school and was able to defuse problematic situations or stop them before they escalate. SROs felt that they were able to prevent crime in the school and surrounding areas by using intelligence or information that they had gathered to intercept and stop crimes from happening. They also felt that they were able to intervene early with youth and help guide them towards more positive behaviour. They felt that if they were not in the schools on a full-time basis the number of preventative interventions undertaken with high school students in the region would decrease as there would be fewer resources within the school to prevent the escalation of misbehaviour (i.e., no one to “*nip things in the bud*”). The ethnographic data reinforces these impressions as the researchers observed a number of occasions where the SROs dealt with assaults.

### Consequences of Feeling Unsafe

The above data draws a strong and compelling link between the SRO program and enhanced perceptions of safety for students and administrators. But what value does feeling safer in a high school with a full-time police officer provide to these two important stakeholders (and by extrapolation the community and Canadian society)? The data from this study is unequivocal in this regard. Five months after becoming a student at a high school with a full-time SRO, the students who responded to our survey were significantly more able to concentrate, in better mental health (i.e., reported less anxiety, stress, and feeling depressed), less likely to report difficulties sleeping, and less likely to think about harming themselves or others. Given the data showing that these students who feel safer are also less likely to skip class, miss school, and be thinking of dropping out we also expect that students who feel safer are also more able to take advantage of the learning opportunities offered in the school.

While follow-up analysis determined that some groups realized more value from the SRO program than others, it is important to note our comparison of the Time 1 and Time 2 data determined that all students, regardless of their gender, regardless of whether or not they have made contact with their SRO, regardless of whether or not they have been arrested/stopped by the police, and regardless

of whether or not they have been victimized, indicated that they felt significantly safer at school and less stress and anxiety 5+ months after exposure to the SRO program than at the beginning of the semester (i.e., when they had no exposure to the NPU program). These findings support the following conclusion: all surveyed students realize measurable benefits from the presence of SROs in their school. That being said, the data also indicate that students who have been victimized (i.e., bullied, physically harassed) can expect to gain the most benefits from the presence of police in high schools.

The students we interviewed offered another benefit of feeling safer: better academic achievement. They reported that they would prefer to go to a high school that had a full-time SRO because the presence of the officer gave them an increased ability to focus on their school work without distraction from feelings of insecurity.

Also noteworthy are the data showing that half of the administrators we talked to stated that they personally felt stressed or anxious at work because they felt their safety or security was compromised and one in five mentioned that concerns about their safety and security at work sometimes made it difficult for them to get a good night's sleep. These individuals also noted that having the SRO in the school helped alleviate their stress.

### **Value of the SRO Program: Facilitating Positive Relationships**

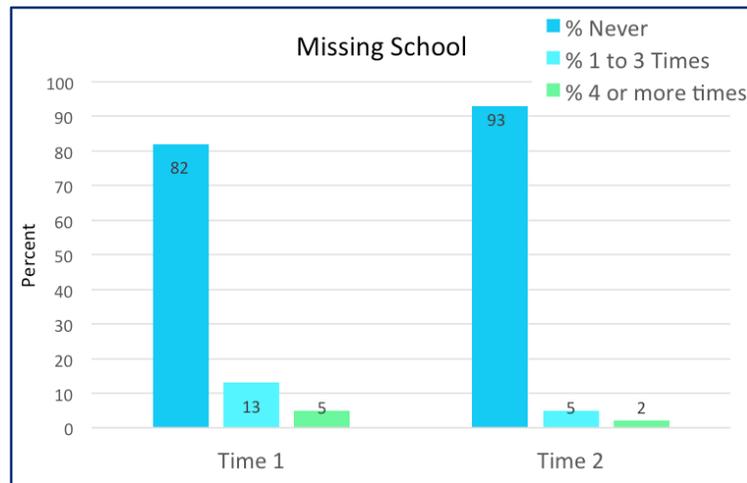
All of the stakeholders we consulted agreed that the relationships the SROs develop with students and the community add tremendous value. From the students' point of view, the data supports the idea that the relationship they form with their SRO increases their faith in, and trust of, the police and provides a resource that students can tap into when they need advice, help, or information. In fact, the survey data showed that a substantial number of students (one in ten of the Grade 9 students in both our Time 1 and Time 2 samples) indicated that they had turned to their SRO for help when they had a problem. Also noteworthy are the survey data showing that the students in our sample relate to the SRO at their school in a different (and more positive) fashion than they do to the police in general and that their views of the NPU program became significantly more favorable over time. This supports the idea that students who have more exposure to the police in a non-confrontational environment (i.e., SROs working in a high school) are more likely to form positive relationships with the police and see beyond the stereotypes of police that are common in our society.

The views of the school administrators are very like those offered by the students. Of note are data showing that 100% of the administrators that we talked to indicated that they trusted the officers assigned to their school enough to talk to him or her about problems that are occurring in the school as well as to ask him or her for personal advice. The school administrators working in the five schools in the study agreed that the SRO program allows school police officers to become part of school community and establish trusting relationships with students, staff, teachers, and administration.

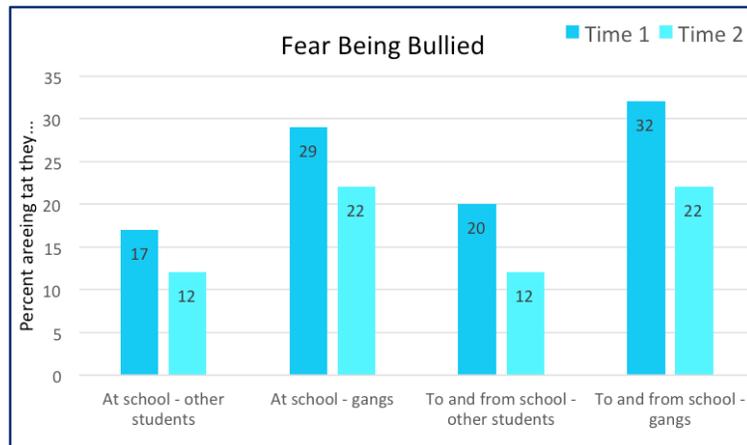
The ethnographic study provided additional data that reinforces the idea that, by interacting with young people in non-threatening circumstances, the SROs are creating positive impressions of police that contrast with the many negative examples of policing that are communicated through the media and the anecdotal experiences of dissatisfied community members.

**Data from the Student Survey Illustrating the Value of Peel Police’s SRO Program**

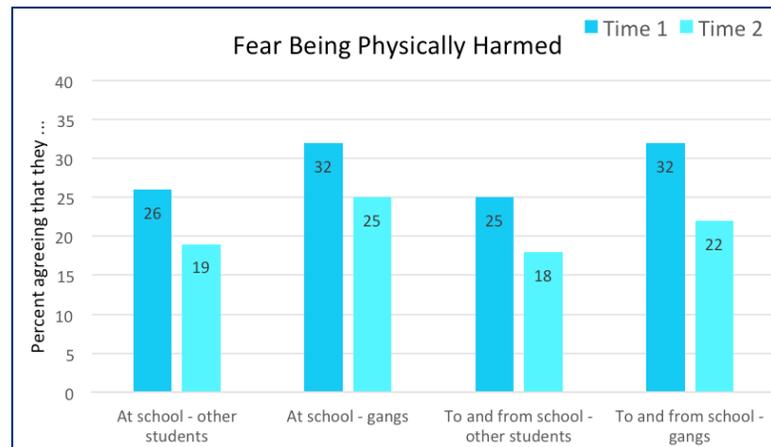
1. The Likelihood that Students will Miss School Because of Bullying Decreases Over Time



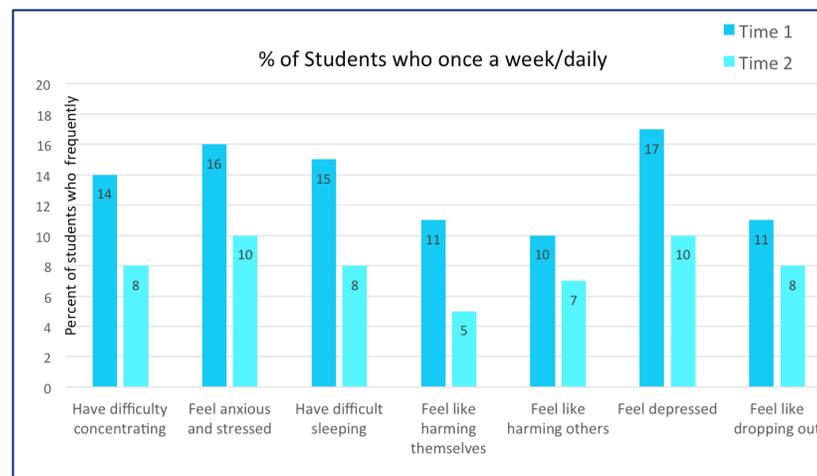
2. Students’ Fear of Being Bullied Decreases Over Time



### 3. Students' Fear of Being Physically Harmed Decreases Over Time



### 4. Students' Mental Health Improves Over Time as Do Learning Outcomes



## In Their Own Words

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, along with the schools that they serve, believe in the program and support its continuation:

### Quotes from Grade 9 Students

*"I was bullied like throughout last year and that was a big issue for me. Like all of Grade eight... this school is a lot safer compared to all the other schools..."*

*"Would you talk to the police? Absolutely. My friends who go to schools where there are no police have a pretty different view though...like the police"*

*are bad and they don't want to have any communication with them...here it's more like, they are like your friends, you speak to them if you have any problems..."*

*"They make me feel safer walking home...because the kids see them around and it stops them from bullying me."*

*"Teachers and admin make me feel safe, but the police add an extra measure of safety because like I feel like they can enforce the rules...Teachers can't do what they [the police] can."*

*"... students take the rules more seriously because the police can enforce them...it really does give me a feeling of safety when I can see them... and nervous when I can't."*

*"I like how like their presence affects other students and how students think twice because students are like...Oh if I do this then this will happen, and then it makes them realize that whatever they're about to do is a negative decision and they do the right decision instead of the wrong."*

*"I feel like they enforce the rules and like people realize how serious they are...I feel like...their presence like affects other students' choices...They think twice about trying to sell some marijuana or steal so and so's cell phone."*

*"...having the police at the school helps all of us, but especially victims of bullying...it means you don't have to be a victim..."*

*"I can focus on my studying and long-term goals without worrying...[ cause I know they are here."*

### **Quotes from School Administrators**

**[value]** *"Without the SRO, we would be calling 911 all the time."*

**[value]** *"Yes, the value is they know the kids, they understand community needs, and they really work hard to work for the kids and not against the kids..."*

**[relationships]** *"the collaboration is excellent.... The SRO understands the culture of my building and can advocate to their hierarchy for help. Also, the kids understand who they are and respect them so it makes it more collaborative. Because the students understand who the SRO are and often have a better relationship with the SRO than they would with the general police that would come in if we called 911."*

**[relationships]** *"So what is good about the program? For the kids, I think a lot of students in our area specifically are raised to be fearful of police authority, so it's nice for them to have that opportunity to build that relationship with an officer and to feel that sense of safety.... For our community, again I think it's nice for them to see that we have a liaison in our building who's trying to develop that relationship and that rapport. For myself, there are so many ben-*

*efits to it, it's just... it just makes it so much easier because we're dealing consistently with the same team, and instead of constantly just calling the police to investigate a matter that might come up and be more reactive, I think now we can be more proactive, and that's the difference I think it makes."*

**[relationships]** *"I am a strong advocate of this program and I would be very upset if they were to pull it out of the school because it would be doing a disservice to the youth of today. We are a society that has a positive policing presence but how do we get our youth to understand it if they are coming from immigrant backgrounds that don't have a positive view of policing. How then do we teach them that police can have a positive presence? We have to introduce it somewhere before these youths become adults."*

**[value of diversions]** *"it offers the opportunity for early intervention and deterrence for those students that have made mistakes but are willing to change their ways"*

**[safe schools]** *"I'm basing my answer on 15 years of administration in seven different schools that have had SRO officers. It just... it makes life easier. It's a connection, it's a peace of mind ...and I think they make kids feel safer just knowing that they're connected to schools... people feel better knowing that there are police around if you need them."*

**[safe schools]** *"... the fundamental thing we believe in Catholic schools is a safe school is a school where kids can learn -- that's the fundamental. It doesn't matter what you're teaching kids - if they're not safe, they're not going to learn jack and the SRO increases this sense of safety."*

**[mental health]** *"Yes, I mean, again, we know that for our young people their mental health is not getting better. In fact, we're seeing more and more young people in mental health crisis so, again, being able to have someone to do wellness checks, to be able to accompany to the hospital. We're also seeing, again, cyber stuff is not getting better. I mean there is more awareness but having officers to liaise and to interrupt that where we can, is huge."*

## The SRO

**[challenges of the job]** *"I think one big challenge is connecting with the kids because there's a lot of kids just through watching like music videos and watching TV...there is just a lot of negativity about the police on TV...they don't like police. So you kind of try to break that barrier, and try to build positive relationships with them and show them like we're here for them, we're here to help."*

**[relationship building]** *"build a rapport... be consistently present at the school and its events and put the effort in as it takes time...every day. Just keep going in...just keep trying to talk to them. Like you're not going to win over every kid, but you put the effort in. You're at the school every day, you're walking the hallways, you're connecting with them.... I think that's all you can do is just keep trying."*

**[relationship building]** *“Yes, I think the best way to deal with it is talking to them and reaching out as much as possible and reassuring them that you’re not out there to arrest them. You’re not looking to arrest kids... you’re not... You don’t benefit from that. You’re actually trying to help them out.”*

**[relationship building]** *“I guess, I would hope at some level that it breaks down, like, any negative beliefs about the police, about us being, like, assholes or, like, authority junkies and stuff like that and...that they can approach us for things and the incidents or ten years down the road when something happens to them or they witness something that they wouldn’t normally call the police, but they would because they believe just that we can be trusted... because they remember us.”*

**[deterrence]** *“Just our mere presence in the school...just that alone. I mean, who knows how much we deter just from that? How much bullying or criminal offences and misbehaviors do not happen because of us just being there.”*

**[rewards of the job]** *“Yes. There’s a lot of kids that when we look at last names...you know, their one brother is in jail for first degree murder, their other brother is in jail for drugs and guns, and their cousin and step dad and ... this and that. I mean, they’re all so closely tied to a lot of people who are in bad spots. They’re either dead or doing hard time. Just I think for me, its those tough kids.... If you can crack that nut...it’s connecting with them. Helping them with their problems. Being somebody that they feel they can approach you...I think that’s the most rewarding part is helping that kid and making a difference in their life, as cheesy as that sounds.”*

**[value of diversions]** *“...we dealt with this kid who could easily be charged for a criminal offence. If he was dealing with somebody, just like an officer on the street, he’d likely be charged, but we have the ability to sit down with him, take the time and work it out with him and maybe work out a plan that doesn’t include a charge. And when the year ends and we haven’t run into that student again in a negative way, I’d say that’s pretty rewarding.”*

**[value of diversions]** *“If that same assault had happened on a bus or in public, he would likely have been charged criminally...as it is he won’t have any consequences other than penalties imposed by the school. So because we know what the school’s doing...and we know the background on the suspect... we decided that a criminal charge would probably not be in the best interests of him or society...”*

**[value of diversions]** *“And we have an investment in these kids, too. Like XXX.... He’s a good kid, and he’ll... I mean, if he can figure it out he’ll probably be pretty successful in life. Like he’s a smart kid, he’s charismatic. He’s got a lot of things going for him, but if he didn’t have somebody who was invested in him, who wanted to see him succeed from a police point of view, I mean, he’d probably already have a handful of criminal charges. You know, he’d be fighting an uphill battle already. Where at this point he’s made it this far with,*

*you know, a clean record, and we are working to make sure he gets out of high school without one, so.... It depends on him. But he's a lot better off that he's got officers in school who know him and can work with him..."*

### Senior Officers

**[the role of the SRO]** *It's their responsibility to oversee their high schools, assist with general events, give school lectures and deal with any criminal activity that takes place in or around the school, this also includes the neighboring area. They also identify at risk youth and attempt to work with the school to prevent them from entering the criminal justice system. Again they also look after issues that arise in classes and parks surrounding the school that may be affected by students travelling to and from the school.*

**[relationship building]** *"...with the multicultural component comes the first generation and new immigrants to the country who, you know, a lot of the immigrants come from countries where policing is not respected, it's not professional, and it can be very corrupt, absolutely, and very oppressive to society. So its important that the officers develop relationships, get their trust...you know, they've never experienced anything different, they just see police through their experiences before they came here."*

**[a good SRO]** *"I think that, just the empathy level that these officers develop for you know, our victims, and the community concerns, I think it's easier to become a little disconnected from the community when you're just running around from call to call. And I think the fact that these guys have to engage with the community, it provides them with a better insight into how to deal with the concerns of the public, and...I would say they probably generate a lot less complaints, because they don't become crusty habituated cynics...like oh no, not another accident, kind of thing. And it's like...there's a greater sympathy level because they've had that community involvement, and they feel that connection."*

**[a good SRO]** *".. hey have enough common sense to realize that not everything has to be dealt with by a hammer, that you can if you get in there early enough, you can head off a lot of these issues before they escalate."*

**[faster response time]** *"First and foremost, it frees up the front line response officers from having to attend schools. There's a number of calls for service at schools, at senior schools and high schools, for fights, for mischiefs, for swarming around the school. The SRO looks after most of these issues... so that helps to free up my front line to deal with other issues within the community."*

**[prevention]** *"The problem with law enforcement in general, is the measurement of what you prevent. Crime prevention has always been one of the biggest things that law enforcement struggles with, right? This program delivers on the prevention piece."*

**[deterrent]** *“If you can identify a kid that’s struggling or having some issues and you can hopefully find out what they are, and you can get them back on the right track or keep them from falling off the rails, so to speak, and getting involved in crime, then that’s the primary mandate.”*

**[value of diversion]** *“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 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.”*