

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT FIVE-YEAR TRENDS FOR CANADA

The global community has experienced a series of crises, with COVID-19, supply-chain issues, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine all sending shockwaves throughout the world. The situation will probably deteriorate further in the next five years, as the early effects of climate change and a global recession add their weight to the ongoing crises. Recent experience has raised the important question of how adaptable and ready RCMP Federal Policing is to new and unexpected crises.

Based on open source information from 2022-06-06 to 2022-10-30, the following scanning exercise identifies shifts (signals of change) in the domestic and international environments that could have a significant effect on the Canadian government and the RCMP.

Open source, foresight material, horizon scans, and environmental scans from law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and private entities both domestic and international were consulted.



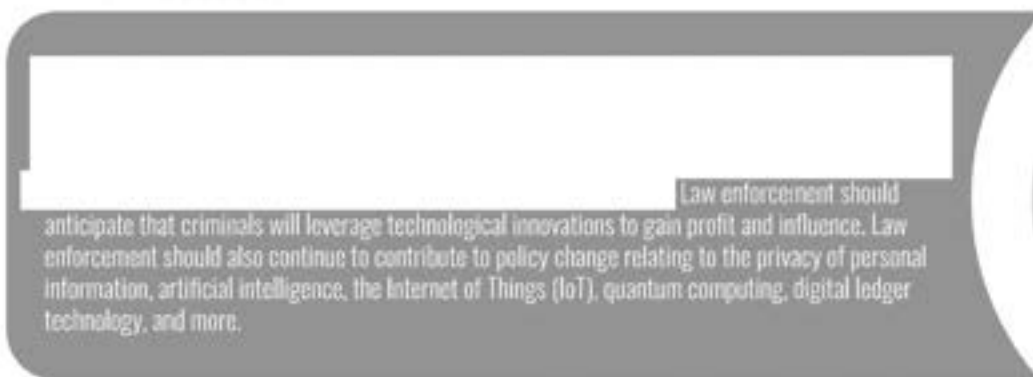
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As a result of the scanning exercise, six overarching considerations are presented here for decision-makers, which are then followed by a more detailed outline below. While evaluating strategic advice and making choices for the organization's long-term success, decision-makers should:



Law enforcement should expect continuing social and political polarization fueled by misinformation campaigns and an increasing mistrust for all democratic institutions.



Law enforcement should anticipate that criminals will leverage technological innovations to gain profit and influence. Law enforcement should also continue to contribute to policy change relating to the privacy of personal information, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), quantum computing, digital ledger technology, and more.



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Over the course of the next five years, environmental scientists expect that increasingly violent and even concurrent storms, worsening drought, floods, and persistent heat waves all over the globe will reduce the global output of a variety of commodities. Law enforcement should anticipate that these destructive weather patterns will affect all facets of government, including damage to critical infrastructure, increasing pressure to cede Arctic territory, and more.



Emergency management planning should be considered by law enforcement decision-makers to ensure continued levels of service delivery. Capacity building through the attraction and retention of qualified staff remains a challenge to law enforcement.



As the climate crisis intensifies, extreme weather events will become more frequent, increasing the likelihood that they will occur concurrently or at the same time as other major crises that require the deployment of agency resources.



The geopolitical, economic, social, technological, and environmental shifts presented here are complex and continue to evolve. They can disrupt or redefine law enforcement work and operations in unexpected ways. Both minor and major shifts have the potential to cause multi-faceted disruptive change across the organization.



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Canada is facing a wider array of complex environmental challenges than at any point in its history. Most significant among these challenges are the effects of climate change, which will impact all facets of government. In the near future, there will be extreme weather crises that will likely happen in close succession or even concurrently. Over the course of the next five years, environmental scientists expect increasingly violent storms (including hurricanes and tornadoes), worsening drought, floods, and persistent heat waves, which will likely have a disproportionately adverse effect on indigenous settlements, since many of them are located in areas that are warming faster. These will not only damage critical infrastructure,

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE DEVASTATION

Destructive weather patterns and the associated environmental degradation are wreaking havoc in areas close to the equator, and especially on islands. Pressure is quickly growing for wealthier nations like Canada to share the severe and increasing burden associated with climate change. In addition to monetary funding, governments may be expected to provide aid in the form of supplies, personnel, and/or expertise.

ARCTIC

Canada's North is getting hotter at least three times faster than the global average and will experience significant change over a shorter timeline than other parts of the country. Shrinking polar icecaps are providing access to untapped raw materials and new paths for transportation. This new opportunity for profit is causing several countries to expand their territorial claims in the area.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Extreme weather events and drought will reduce the global output of a variety of commodities, causing greater scarcity in developed countries and increasing competition for resources.



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In the words of Emanuel Macron, we are about to see "the end of abundance." Economic forecasts for the next five years and beyond are bleak. It is always unclear exactly how economies will perform, but this period of recession will likely have a negative impact on the social and political world as well.

POPULAR RESENTMENT

The coming period of recession will also accelerate the decline in living standards that the younger generations have already witnessed compared to earlier generations. For example, many Canadians under 35 are unlikely ever to be able to buy a place to live. The fallout from this decline in living standards will be exacerbated by the fact that the difference between the extremes of wealth is greater now in developed countries than it has been at any time in several generations.

EROSION OF TRUST

The past seven years have seen marked social and political polarization in the Western world

PARANOID POPULISM

Capitalizing on the rise of political polarization and conspiracy theories have been populists willing to tailor their messages to appeal to extremist movements. Authoritarian movements have been on the rise in many liberal-democratic nations

BIG DATA

Through such mechanisms as social media, the Internet of Things, and biometric identifiers, big data is and will increasingly be available on a scale that is difficult to quantify. Access to this data will allow private entities to develop the means to exercise undue influence over individuals and populations at an unprecedented level.



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Some of the emerging technologies most likely to have an impact on Canadian governments within the next five years include: artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and digital ledger technology (e.g. blockchain).

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence (AI), the use of evolving computer algorithms to help computers, vehicles, robots, and other machines perceive, reason, learn and plan, is expected to have a significant impact on government operations in the coming five years. AI will enhance and assist decision-making by helping coordinate operational resources, finding patterns in vast datasets, and boosting productivity in a wide range of endeavours.

One especially concerning use of AI for the next five years is the deepfake, and in particular the deepfake of important and famous people.

QUANTUM COMPUTING

It is possible that quantum computing will be available within the next five years.

BLOCKCHAIN

Blockchain is a data-storing structure currently used in virtual currencies such as Bitcoin. Blockchain technology will enable and enhance other emerging technologies like AI, machine learning, additive manufacturing, and autonomous vehicles. Blockchain systems record transaction data on a ledger that is distributed (i.e. there is no central trusted authority – all nodes (users) in the network hold and maintain a copy of the data set); immutable (i.e. once added to the ledger, transactions cannot typically be undone or altered); and agreed to by consensus (i.e. transactions can only be added to the ledger with the approval of specified nodes in the network). The advantage of blockchain systems over other databases is that they can operate securely without centralized oversight and control (i.e. zero-trust).



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In the wake of COVID-19, Canada's governments have normalized operating during a respiratory pandemic. But the damage to the economy and to the social fabric of the nation is ongoing, and there is an established opposition to existing and potential public health measures and other restrictions. According to an influential Duke University study, there is more than a ten percent chance of another pandemic spreading within the next five years (Marani, Katul, Pan & Parolari, 2021).

Emergency preparedness planning remains key to the ability of government institutions to provide continued service.

NEXT STEPS



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