



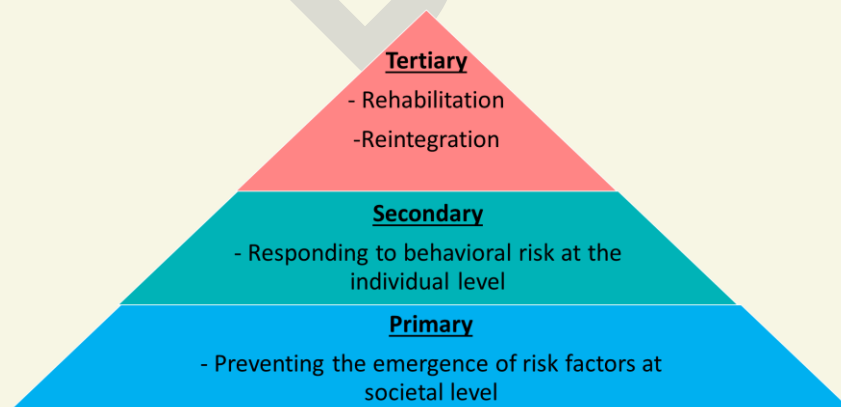
## Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV): Organizational and Program Overview

### Executive Summary

- Alberta has been heavily impacted by several different forms of violent extremism. There is a large presence of right-wing extremist groups in the province, as well as a sizeable number of anti-government Freeman-on-the-Land.
- Relative to the rest of Canada, a disproportionate number of individuals with a nexus to Alberta have left Canada to participate in conflicts abroad, notably Syria, Iraq and Somalia by joining groups like the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and al-Shabaab.
- The OPV brings together academic, community and practitioner knowledge and expertise around the problem of radicalization to violence (R2V). It operates in close coordination and cooperation with the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), the City of Edmonton (CoE), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada.
- The OPV has an existing partnership agreement with the CoE and EPS through the *Resiliency Project*, as well as partnerships with religious, ethno-cultural, and newcomer community organizations across the province.
- The OPV's current programming is designed to fill an existing gap in human service and law enforcement services by working with individuals who demonstrate *behavioral* indications of radicalization but whose actions have not yet risen to the level of criminality.
- The OPV seeks to develop internationally recognized best-practices in countering violent extremism (CVE) related to academic-practitioner cooperation, community engagement and multi-sectoral interventions. The OPV has already presented its innovative model to governments, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners in Berlin, Copenhagen, Valetta, New York City and Washington, D.C.

### What is Countering Violent Extremism?

Countering violent extremism is an emerging area of practice and policy within governments' national security and counterterrorism (CT) mandates. At its core, CVE is complementary to counterterrorism policy, and both are necessary to ensure public safety. Where CVE differs from CT is in its aim to intervene and disrupt the conditions conducive to terrorist recruitment and R2V by better addressing initial engagement and increased involvement with violent extremism.



The OPV has adopted a public health framework to understanding risk and related prevention/intervention work, where risk is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The organization focuses its research and intervention programming in the secondary space, where

behavioural indications of radicalization are present and measurable. In doing so, we can conceptualize and treat radicalization as a societal problem manifested on an individual basis, not a phenomenon associated with any single ethno-cultural community. Focusing on the secondary space also enables us to measure behavioral change in an individual and employ well-developed processes and models from other spheres of policy – namely traditional multi-sectoral crime prevention programming.

## **Who We Are**

The OPV is a diverse group of professionals with experience in CVE and other forms of violence and risk reduction. As an organization, the OPV brings community, academic and practitioner knowledge to bear on the problem of R2V.

Within its mission and vision statements the OPV acknowledges that effective CVE programming must recognize and include the concerns, inputs and leadership of impacted communities. In addition, the OPV recognizes that CVE is most effective when it engenders a multi-sectoral response that includes impacted community groups and professionals.

The OPV has created connections with community and non-government organizations across Alberta. It has developed partnerships and working relationships with the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton and REACH Edmonton. It has forged relationships with leading national and international research networks that are engaged with areas related to R2V and CVE.

## **Program Logic**

As a multi-disciplinary and community centred non-governmental organization, the OPV offers programs and practices that enjoy enhanced perceptions of legitimacy among impacted communities and key stakeholders. As no such organization or program exists in Alberta to date, the OPV will fill a noted gap in research and interventionist capability.

Expert-led, non-government organizations that work closely with impacted communities, social services and law enforcement have emerged as the most effective deliverers of second generation CVE programs and practices internationally. The OPV's programs will complement and support initiatives currently being developed by the EPS, RCMP, City of Edmonton, and Calgary Police Service (CPS).

## **Program Outline**

***Knowledge Generation and Dissemination:*** The OPV aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the drivers, dynamics, cases and clusters of different ideological forms of radicalization to violence in Alberta (e.g., right wing extremism, anti-government, Salafi-Jihadist, single issue). Through combining community-based, academic and law enforcement knowledge, the assessment will provide a holistic understanding of the phenomena. The assessment will generate two reports: a provincial threat level report and a report on CVE capacity and capabilities in Alberta. These reports will be disseminated to partnered agencies and organizations (e.g., Public Safety Canada, Edmonton Police Service, RCMP, Calgary Police Service, Government of Alberta), thereby generating critical awareness and understanding of the issue. The OPV's provincial report on violent extremism will differ from prior reporting and studies in Alberta insofar as this report will focus more on the mechanics of radicalization – how recruitment occurs, how small networks function, etc. rather than the 'who' and 'when' questions that tend to shape intelligence gathering. The two reports are intended to create the requisite knowledge for the development and deployment of evidence driven, multi-agency prevention programs. A better understanding of these mechanics

will not only inform our own programming, but also provide law enforcement and government insight to inform future investigations.

***Intervention Program Design and Implementation:*** The second phase of the OPV's program involves the design of a community-centric CVE pilot program. The pilot project, focused in Edmonton, will combine local expertise and knowledge with international best practices. It will draw on the experience and expertise of the OPV in the area of radicalization to violence and other comparable forms of violence and risk reduction and prevention (e.g., youth-at-risk, high risk youth, gangs). The OPV will mobilize its local knowledge, community and practitioner resources and broad-based partnerships to generate multi-agency capacity for CVE in the province.

***Project Evaluation and Expansion:*** The final phase of the OPV's initial program involves the evaluation of the initial pilot project. This phase will involve external evaluators and the internal experience of OPV staff who have previously conducted program evaluations. Following the completion of this evaluation, the OPV intends to expand the project to develop multi-sectoral hubs in smaller population centres in Alberta (i.e. Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge) and provide mobile intervention capacity and subject matter expertise.

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