

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Annual Report to the Commissioner

2018

**WITNESS
PROTECTION
PROGRAM**

Advisory Committee

Ottawa, Ontario



Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

Executive Summary

This is the fourth report from the federal Witness Protection Program Advisory Committee to be presented, per its terms of reference, to the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

The Committee was created to have independent subject matter experts provide advice on pertinent issues. The Committee's role is to advise the Commissioner, and by extension, Program personnel, on matters related to the effective and efficient administration of the federal Witness Protection Program.

Since the Committee's inception, the Program has made a number of significant changes to its structure and operations which continue to contribute to the Program's execution of its mandate today. Three main pillars guided these changes: a focus on protectees, program independence from investigations, and adhesion to program standards.

This report acknowledges the Program's progress on a number of initiatives undertaken, such as building its resource capacity, reviewing and updating policies and procedures, completing part of its research plan, and conducting operations with a lens to ensure focus on protectees. The report also provides recommendations to continue the Program's progress towards its three pillars. Notably, the Committee has recommended the following:

- Staffing initiatives should continue to be pursued to minimize overtime and stabilize workloads
- Carefully consider occupational wellness among Program staff due to the stressful nature of the workplace and the rate of change
- Opportunities should be developed to allow the Program to communicate its presence and its role to external communities
- A careful and enforced delineation of roles between Witness Support and Witness Protection
- Continue to develop partnerships with key external domestic and international partners
- Give thought to an all-encompassing definition of a "protectee" and what it means to focus on their needs
- Obtain legal advice on the relationship between various forms of protection and between these types of protection
- Consider the impact of family law in relation to the *Witness Protection Program Act* and work to address the gap in services that might arise from family law commitments
- Examine the intercultural and gender-related contexts of protectees to ensure a more diverse approach to protection and assessment
- Continue to pursue Program independence from investigations
- Adapt to the changing nature of the Program's disclosure obligations
- Continue to advance the Program's acquisition and use of innovative tools to contribute to increased efficiency and effectiveness

Even if challenges remain the Committee commends the Program on its dedication in implementing its advice and executing a world-class program. The Committee looks forward to continuing to provide guidance and advice to the Program in the future.

Fourth Annual Report to the RCMP Commissioner from the Federal Witness Protection Program Advisory Committee

This is the fourth report from the federal Witness Protection Program Advisory Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”), presented, per its terms of reference, to the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

A. Background

While some measure of federal witness protection has been in place since 1984, the current federal Witness Protection Program (“Program”) was established in 1996 with the introduction of the *Witness Protection Program Act* (1996) (“WPPA”). This federal legislation gives the Commissioner of the RCMP the responsibility to administer the Program on behalf of the Government of Canada. The Program is responsible for promoting law enforcement by protecting persons who, as a result of providing assistance to law enforcement or providing testimony on criminal matters, are deemed to be at risk of harm. Protection is also provided to those who are at risk due to their association with these witnesses. The Program does not provide protection to crime victims unless they are in danger because of their cooperation with law enforcement and/or testimony.

This protection is achieved through measures ranging from emergency short-term protection, to full admission into the Program. Common protection services include relocation, financial assistance, counselling, and payment for certain costs associated with a change of identity. The Program is a voluntary program, and a participant may leave at any time. The RCMP may terminate the protection provided to a witness after a review process, in cases where the witness contravenes the rules of the Program, for instance by engaging in criminal activity.

The Program is available not only to the RCMP but to all law enforcement agencies across Canada, including designated¹ provincial programs. There are also provisions within the WPPA to facilitate the protection of foreign witnesses when they can no longer be protected within their own country.²

On November 1, 2014, the *Safer Witnesses Act* came into force, which instituted amendments to the WPPA. Some changes included: enabling the protection of witnesses who assisted federal security, defense or safety organizations; enhancing inter-provincial cooperation through recognition (or “designation”) of other witness protection programs; expanding disclosure prohibitions to other jurisdictions and support personnel; and enhancing the Commissioner’s authority to disclose information in certain circumstances.

Apart from the aforementioned legislative amendments, the Program has undergone numerous improvements of its own accord. In 2007, the Program had come under close scrutiny when a protectee was charged with murder while admitted. This case prompted a review of the Program by the Standing

¹ Section 10 of the WPPA allows the Governor in Council to designate a provincial or municipal program.

² Section 14(2) of the WPPA allows the Minister of Public Safety to enter into a reciprocal arrangement with the government of a foreign jurisdiction in cooperation with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Committee on Public Safety and National Security, and spurred the program to revitalize itself around three foundational pillars:

1. A focus on protectees
2. Development of, and adhesion to, program standards
3. Independence from investigations

These pillars have been instrumental in enhancing and modernizing the Program to meet today's challenges while continuing to improve its ability to deliver its mandate. Many changes have been undertaken which demonstrate the Program's commitment to the three pillars, and they will be outlined in further detail later in this report. However, much work remains and the Program will use this report to suggest further improvements and areas for examination for the future.

B. The Committee's Role

The Committee was created in order to have independent subject matter experts provide advice on pertinent issues. The Committee's role, as per its foundational documents, is to advise the Commissioner (and by extension, the Program) on matters related to the effective and efficient administration of the Program by aiming to provide a balanced, external perspective on its processes. This Committee enhances the accountability of a Program that is necessarily discrete by acting as one of its only external review mechanisms.

Of note, the Committee is not involved in specific case decisions, such as individual admission or termination decisions, or operational details regarding protection services provided by Program personnel. Committee members are not privy to any information that would reveal the identity or location of a protectee.

The Committee's mandate is to provide advice on a wide range of issues, but not on specific operational decisions. Per the terms of reference, the Committee advises the Commissioner on:

- The function, processes, and protocols of the federal Program relative to the prescribed legislation (the *Witness Protection Program Act* [1996] and the *Safer Witnesses Act* [2013]);
- Methods developed to assist protectees in adapting to the Program, including addressing health, psycho-social and legal issues;
- Funding schemes to facilitate the provision of protection by ensuring adequate funding levels for the Program are maintained;
- Ensuring that Program standards are appropriate in order to facilitate the services required under the *WPPA*, as well as ensuring such standards are complied with;
- Any other witness protection issues that will contribute to enhancing the delivery of the Program.

The Committee may also play a role in communicating and educating external stakeholders on the roles and work performed by the Program, and in advocating on the Program's behalf as and when it sees fit. In addition to advising the Commissioner on improvements to be made, the Committee also observes and highlights when beneficial steps have been taken to ameliorate the program.

While the Committee's mandate does not specify the format in which the advice is to be provided, Committee members and Program personnel have recognized that the Committee's work lends itself well to providing advice both informally – through its discussions during its regular meetings – and in a more formal manner through this annual report to the Commissioner.

Committee meetings take place twice a year and are structured to encourage continuous debate and exchange of information among Committee members and Program personnel, while also offering up external best practices based on the specialities of the various members. Since its inception, the Committee has held nine meetings.

The Committee is comprised of the following members:

- Dr. Julia Hughes, University of New Brunswick, Faculty of Law (Chair)
- Professor Yvon Dandurand, University of the Fraser Valley, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
- Dr. David Marsh, Northern Ontario School of Medicine (Vice-Chair)
- Assistant Commissioner Michel Séguin, RCMP (retired)
- Dr. Jo-Anne Wemmers, Professor, School of Criminology, University of Montréal, International Centre for Comparative Criminology
- Dr. Stephen Wormith, University of Saskatchewan, Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies
- Assistant Commissioner Eric Slinn, RCMP Federal Policing Specialized Services (*ex-officio* member)

This is the Committee's fourth annual report to the Commissioner. It covers the period of April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

C. Committee Changes

Members commit to a four year renewable term. As such, some changes to the Committee's composition have occurred. Former RCMP Commissioner Philip Murray decided to depart the Committee at the end of his term in September 2017, and in his place, the Committee is happy to welcome former RCMP Assistant Commissioner Michel Séguin. In addition, the September 2017 meeting was Dr. Julia Hughes' first meeting as Committee chair.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the change in structure that has occurred since the last meeting. Federal Policing Special Services, previously headed by Assistant Commissioner Paula Dionne, was split into two areas. As such, the new "Federal Policing Specialized Services" is headed by Assistant Commissioner Eric Slinn, which now carries the RCMP Witness Protection Program under its remit. This was Assistant Commissioner Slinn's first Committee meeting, and the Committee looks forward to continuing to work with him in the future.

D. The Three Pillars

As indicated earlier in this report, three key pillars³ have guided the implementation of various improvements to the Program. Much of the Committee's work and discussions have been orientated by these three pillars. An explanation of the pillars is provided below, and are useful to keep in mind as context throughout the report's findings and recommendations. The following descriptions were provided in the first report, where more information can be found.

1. Protectee Focus

The Program's service delivery model now focuses on placing the protectee at the forefront of Program decision-making and actions. The protectee focus perspective aims at identifying and, where possible, addressing protectee needs to ultimately deliver on the Program-legislated mandate of ensuring the physical integrity of the protectee, as well as providing protection as defined in section 2 of the WPPA, i.e., "...to facilitate the protectee's re-establishment or becoming self-sufficient".

In more concrete terms, protectee focus means appropriate and early standardized assessments of a prospective protectee, so that the best possible decision can be made as to the suitability of the individual for admission to the Program. This results in the implementation of a corresponding strategy, articulated in an individualized plan in the case of an admission, or an alternate aid arrangement if the individual is not admitted to the Program.

2. Program Independence

The Government of Canada and the RCMP have strived to make the Program more independent from investigative interests and, in support of that independence, the Program has introduced a series of significant changes. This pillar is at the heart of the integrity of the Program and of the expectations from Government that the RCMP can and will operate a Witness Protection Program that is sufficiently independent from its investigative mandate.

Previously, the protection of witnesses was seen as an extension of the Human Source Program. A human source, especially an agent source whose identity was revealed, was at risk and had to be protected. Given the importance of human sources as an investigative tool, there had to be a system to protect them. The transition from source, to witness, to protectee, was a "natural" transition that was felt could be best handled by a single unit.

While the importance of human sources has not diminished, the protection of witnesses, as mandated under the WPPA, is now administered independently from investigative interests. Within the Witness Protection Program, the protectee or prospective protectee is placed at the forefront of decisions, while investigative/prosecutorial interests are accounted only insofar as section 7 of the WPPA mandates.

3. Program Standards

Program standards allow the delivery of witness protection services in a standardized manner to all clients, from admission decision-making to the level of assistance that is to be provided. It is not necessarily about providing the same services to all; it is about providing the same level of service, based

³ Protectee focus; Program independence; and Program standards.

on individual circumstances, to all. The application of program standards avoids inconsistent decision-making. The program standards pillar rests with clearly defined and articulated standard operating procedures that are uniformly applied by properly trained and instructed personnel.

E. Committee Observations

Keeping in mind the previous section on the three pillars, as well as relevant legislation that the Program must comply with, the Committee offers the following observations, which form the basis of the recommendations provided at the end of the report.

Resource Update

In last year's report, the Committee noted concern about the Program having a sufficient amount of staff to deliver on its mandate. The Committee's unease was due to the significant amount of overtime being reported, as well as the rapid transformation of the Program. The Committee obtained an update on the status of staffing in the Program and was pleased to hear that the Program was able to staff nearly ten new positions since the last meeting. While there was recognition that Senior Management has made Program a staffing priority and that advances have been made, the Committee still recommends that the RCMP continue down this road in order to allow the Program to reach a staffing level which would allow for stabilization of the current workload, since significant overtime is still occurring.

On this topic, the Committee recognized the challenges that employees can experience when being subject to a significant amount of change, such as restructuring, adding many new employees in a short amount of time, change in management, or changing and updating processes. Many changes were referenced in addition to the staffing update, particularly in the Assessment and Case Planning Unit (ACPU), but also within the Program as a whole. Although the Committee recognizes that Management is working hard to improve the Program by implementing initiatives related to the three pillars, reviewing and updating policies and procedures, and adding new staff, it must be recognized that this can come with a significant amount of adjustment for employees. Change management will be a challenge for the Program, which has undergone a number of modifications, such as a significant increase in the complement of staff, the establishment of a new Threat Assessment unit, the introduction of many new assessment tools, technological upgrades, and full turnaround with regard to the management team. Leadership should give thought to the rate of change and recognize that employees might require some adjustment in order to adapt to, and fully leverage, these improvements. The Committee suggests allowing prior modifications the opportunity to cement themselves by proving or disproving themselves prior to going ahead with further significant structural changes.

In addition to change management, the Committee followed up on the previous report's recommendation on occupational wellness⁴. The Committee was pleased to hear about the Program's increased consideration of employee wellness, including contacting the RCMP psychologist for regular assessments, increased training and the conclusion of multiple harassment complaints. In addition, the Committee commended the upcoming Conflict Resolution training being provided to employees, and

⁴ Recommendation 15: "For the benefit of a healthy workplace, the Committee believes there is an urgency of the part of RCMP senior management to: a) ensure that employee complaints are resolved in a timely manner; and b) explore additional staffing options." (pg. 12)

also suggested peer-to-peer support. Compassion fatigue was also noted as a potential concern for new members of the Program, particularly with regard to the impact this could have on ACPU employees as they regularly assess the needs of vulnerable and troubled clients.

The overall perspective on occupational wellness was that it is important not only for the employees, but also that this would contribute to the protectee focus pillar. This is because it affects the employees' ability to perform the work, and therefore has a direct impact on the services provided to clients. It also has the added benefit of contributing to the professionalization of the program. Further monitoring should be conducted not only to regularly support employees during the course of their challenging daily activities, but also as they navigate the numerous changes the Program is going through.

Monitoring, Research and Evaluation

The Committee would like to recognize the significant progress made on the research plan. The process maps have been completed along with Phase One of four phases of the research plan, which was to track all Program files. Completing this research has allowed the unit to statistically track the total number of clients in the program, which is a significant improvement from previous years. The next step for the research plan is to implement Phase Two, which focuses on the risk and needs profiles of clients. The Committee understands that the idea behind this second phase is to quantitatively understand the risks which will allow the Program to work towards mitigating them in an evidence-based manner.

Although a lack of resources is a continued obstacle to the regular monitoring of the needs of clients, the Committee understands that progress has been made to initiate monitoring strategies for case management teams and that the ACPU has been implementing standard assessment tools (e.g. obtaining a standardized, scientific child assessment tool for when the team is unable to access the children of protectees directly).

The Program has discussed undertaking additional research projects, such as one to examine the challenges of Emergency Protection and one to better understand refusals and regrets. However, the Committee cautioned that it would be prudent to first look at the data available for these studies in order to ensure enough information exists so that any efforts taken will result in a helpful conclusion, in particular given the data challenges the Program has had up until now. Furthermore, the Committee would encourage the research unit to share its new findings with relevant professional communities to encourage the exchange of best practices and conduct validation. This would also serve to contribute to the next observation highlighted by the Committee.

Outreach

The Committee members wish to underscore the importance of outreach by the Program. Although the Committee recognizes that this can be difficult for a Program that operates with such a high degree of discretion, some options were provided that would adhere to the Program's legislative prohibitions on disclosure while also communicating aspects of the program to the public. There are multiple methods by which the Program can provide important information about the Federal Witness Protection Program to the public and key stakeholders, such as working with RCMP National Communication Services to develop a proactive communication strategy, as well as using this annual report as a tool for outreach.

The Committee was pleased to hear about the Program's increased exchange with domestic and international partners. It hopes that the Program continues to seek out international partners, discuss

best practices with other programs, and share new processes and innovations. Additionally, the Committee continues to encourage the Program to cooperate with relevant agencies at the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal level, as well as with the private sector. Efforts to develop or renew Memorandums of Understanding/Memorandums of Agreement should continue in order to further smooth out certain processes and to better serve protectees.

Protectee Focus

Clients in the Program often have criminal histories, substance abuse issues, trauma, and/or financial challenges, making them highly vulnerable even prior to being under threat. In addition, entering the Program has a large impact on the lives of protectees, given that they have to relocate and sever contact with friends and family. It is for this reason that an entire program pillar is dedicated to focusing on the needs and requirements of protectees. The Program must be able to meet the needs of an often vulnerable population while encouraging self-sufficiency and simultaneously ensuring the utmost safety of Program members and the public.

In order to meet this need, the definition of a “protectee” and what it means to “focus on the needs of a protectee” needs to be further elucidated. In turn, this would allow the Program to further solidify its ability to achieve this goal and better support operations.

An Alternate Aid Arrangement (AAA) is one way in which the Program can protect clients and can be less impactful on an individual’s life. Throughout the January 2018 meeting, the Committee discussed the legal interpretations and ramifications of AAAs as it relates to Parliamentary intent and the *WPPA*. Concerns with the increase in the use of AAAs were raised, due to their somewhat unclear status within the *WPPA* and the fact that they reroute resources intended for protectees towards those who are technically not in the program. Although AAAs provide the Program with a certain amount of flexibility in their operations, they must be used only in a way that is authorized by the Act and that allows the Program to continue to fully deliver on its original mandate. It must, once again, be underscored here that the pillar with regard to program standards refers to the ability to provide a standard level of services based on an individual’s unique circumstances, and not based on a generalization of needs.

The Committee also thought it important to clearly distinguish the Program from other witness services. For example, one service which may be seen as similar to witness protection, but which is in fact very distinct from it, is the concept of Witness Support (formerly, “Witness Management”). Witness Support is used by the RCMP to maintain witnesses and ensure they appear in court to testify against accused persons. All persons in Canada are required to testify if subpoenaed, including those under threat. However, some witnesses require additional support or monitoring given their potentially challenging circumstances, such as an inability to pay for transportation to Court, or a drug addiction. Although Witness Support encompasses a number of different services (such as counselling, drug rehabilitation, assistance with transport to and from court, etc.), it does not include protection from threats.

These services are regularly provided by investigators throughout the RCMP and the various municipal and provincial police forces that operate in Canada, but currently, there is only one formalized Witness Support unit present in the country. Despite the fact that Witness Protection and Witness Support are two very distinct areas, the two are in danger of overlapping simply because they both deal with witnesses as a whole. As such, the Committee noted two main questions with regard to the development of Witness Support: First, what is the implication of this type of service and how (if at all)

will the Program extend assistance to any Witness Support units that arise?; second, where is the delineation between the protection mandated by the *WPPA* and the services provided by Witness Support? The Committee would like to discuss these questions further at the next meeting in order to clarify some concerns that overlapping support might undermine the relationships between protectees and Program Coordinators, as well as the independence from investigators.

Separate from Witness Support, the Committee also voiced its concerns about one particular group of clients, who currently tend to find themselves in a gap between protection requirements and legal obligations. In particular, some potential protectees are unable to qualify for admission to the Program due to their obligations in family court. As an example, a mother might be unable to relocate due to a custody agreement that requires her and her child to be within a certain distance from the father. Family law challenges are legitimate problems that have nothing to do with the need or willingness for protection but can often be incompatible with the legal and personal realities embedded custody issues.

Further highlighting the unique needs of each protectee and their dependents are the intercultural and gender-related dimensions of delivering the Program. There is a strong psychological component to running this program, as evidenced by the aforementioned vulnerabilities that clients and potential clients might experience. As such, the Committee notes that the Program must be sensitive to different contexts and social constructs present in their daily activities. This sensitivity should not only be observed by Program staff, but also encompassed within the tools used to administer the Program. As a suggestion, the Committee encouraged the Program to conduct a cultural assessment at the beginning of a client's interaction with the Program. Currently, some cultural questions are asked at the beginning of an assessment, but the Committee would like to see something more comprehensive than what is currently included, in order to be able to capture more of the nuances present in cultural contexts. However, the Committee would also like to note that the Program has, over time, increasingly paid attention to these challenges and note the progress made to date.

Obtaining and Maintaining Program Independence

The purpose of the requirement for the federal Program to maintain independence from investigative activities and units is to enhance the integrity of this Program. In reality, achieving this independence is a delicate and complex process. Senior Management has been diligent in understanding the requirement to maintain this independence, as well as in introducing new measures to further maintain or solidify this pillar.

All discussions on various types of protections should continue to be done with the lens of independence from investigative functions. The Committee also noted, once again, its particular concern with regard to the distinction between Witness Support (formerly "Witness Management"), which is provided directly by investigative units and does not include protection from external threats, and Witness Protection, which is the formal, legislatively-mandated program.

Disclosure

A number of landmark cases on this topic have made their way through the courts, including a Constitutional challenge on the *WPPA*'s section 11 prohibitions on disclosure, which provide clear limitations on the disclosure of a protectee's information for security reasons. Further prohibitions included in section 11 include the inability to release the means and methods of protection that the

Program utilizes, as well as the identities of persons who provide protection, or provide services to clients. However, there are times where certain information must be divulged upon orders from a court.⁵ When this happens, Program personnel must comply with court orders while also continuing to adhere to its protection standards to maintain the safety of the witness. There are some cases and legislation that have outlined the Program's ability to act in these instances.

Disclosure of Program material has been requested as part of the Crown's obligation to provide (*Stinchcombe*) disclosure. Consistent with the right to make full answer and defence, the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Stinchcombe*⁶ ruled that the Crown is required to provide the defence with any and all evidence that might be related to the case, regardless of its impact on the Crown's case. It stated that the purpose of the "fruits of the investigation" are in fact not to secure a conviction, but rather "to be used to ensure that justice is done". Crucially, *Stinchcombe* disclosure does not include disclosure of third party records.

In 2016, the decision in *R. v. Vader*⁷ concluded that, although the unit providing protection was in the RCMP, the Program was deemed to be a third party and thus not part of the Crown's disclosure obligations due to the Program's ability to very clearly demonstrate that it was separate from the investigation itself. As a result, if the defence wishes to seek disclosure of Program materials, they must proceed by *O'Connor*⁸ application. To succeed, two requirements must be met: first, the defence must prove that the documents are likely to be relevant to the case; and second, the judge must review the documents and approve their disclosure if the balance between the right to defence and the right to privacy favours disclosure.

Disclosure cases are highly resource-intensive for the unit, and take away from the Program's ability to deliver on its primary mandate of protecting witnesses; this strain on resources is all the more concerning given the current context of limited resources. WP Coordinators end up conducting the disclosures as there are currently no permanent legal resources in the Program. In addition, the Program has seen a significant increase in the amount of disclosure requests; they noted that in 2017 they had experienced the highest volume they had ever seen, and it is unlikely this volume will decrease. In response, one employee was brought on assignment and another S/Sgt joined the Program to assist in processing disclosure requests. The Committee is apprehensive about the significant pressure being placed on Program staff with the increase in disclosures, and would like to see further efforts made to alleviate this pressure, either through innovative staffing, additional tools, or otherwise.

The Committee was also concerned about inconsistencies in disclosure rules and procedures. For example, recently, the Program received a request to have a WP member testify in court. A legislative solution to pursue a rule-based process for disclosure was suggested; this may be accomplished through an amendment to the *WPPA*, the *Canada Evidence Act* or the *Criminal Code*. As a first step, the Committee stated that this solution would require an examination of its effects on public interest privilege. Further discussion with the Department of Justice was recommended in order to benefit from their expertise and come up with an equitable solution that respects the intent of all relevant witness

⁵ Section 11.2(2)c of the *WPPA* makes provisions for very specific exceptions to disclosure prohibitions.

⁶ *R. v. Stinchcombe* [2001] 3 S.C.R. 326

⁷ *R. v. Vader* [2016] ABQB 505

⁸ *R. v. O'Connor* [1995] 4 S.C.R. 411

protection legislation (including, but not limited to, the *WPPA*, the *Safer Witnesses Act*, the *Privacy Act* and the *Canada Evidence Act*).

Given that this is currently a major challenge for the Program, the Committee will continue to seek updates on developments related to disclosure issues and particular cases that affect the Program's work.

Technology and Tools

The Committee has previously highlighted its apprehension of the Program's lack of use of its Resource Centre⁹. After recommending that the Centre's value be monitored to ensure its effectiveness and frequency of use, it was determined that the Centre is now being used cost-efficiently. With the addition of new Coordinators – which are staff who have personal contact with the protectees – use of the Resource Centre will continue to increase. In addition, the mandate of the Resource Centre has changed, and as expected, an increase in use has followed. As a result of these improvements, the Committee notes its satisfaction with the progress of this item.

The use of relevant technologies to standardize the Program, as well as make it more efficient, is still one major area where the Program can continue to advance. The importance of technology on the functioning of the program is evident in its ability to contribute to its professionalization. One significant advancement that the Committee would like to recognize is the Geographic Information System (GIS) that is currently being implemented. GIS is designed to capture, analyze, manage, and display various types of spatial or geographical data. In relation to WP, this geo-mapping function has the capability of providing a visual representation of protectees as well as providing analytics on the Program's success in various locations. As such, the Committee commends the Program for continuing to advance the implementation of this tool.

F. Recommendations

Over the many hours of discussions between and amongst Committee members and Program personnel, numerous suggestions and comments were made. Although not all of it may be considered formal advice, it may still have provided useful and actionable guidance for the Program's progress. The Committee would like to again acknowledge the Program's receptiveness and willingness to accept its comments and move forward on the issues that were discussed.

The Committee uses this report to provide more formal advice, recommendations, and support on what it sees as significant elements to continue the fruitful evolution of the Program. The Committee hopes that these recommendations will be given consideration and found useful to the Commissioner. It should be noted that many of these recommendations will continue to carry over for many years, given their complexities and the time and resources required to fully implement them. Nonetheless, the Committee has acknowledged, throughout the report, that much progress has been made and that a number of previous items can be considered concluded.

The recommendations are as follows:

⁹ A secure, covert location where protectees and their families may receive protective and support services from the Program.

1. The Program should continue its efforts to stabilize the current workload and minimize overtime by continuing to move forward with its staffing initiatives.
2. The Committee urges the Program to consider the occupational wellness of its employees, particularly in two key aspects:
 - a. Although the Program is continuously striving to improve – and has done so significantly – the rate of change should be monitored in order to allow employees to adjust to the different structure, processes, staff, and tools.
 - b. Due to the difficult environment in which Program employees work, staff should be monitored to ensure psychological wellness and to minimize compassion fatigue in order to retain the protectee focus.
3. The Committee commends the Program on its completion of Phase One of its research plan. The Program should continue to implement its research strategy and keep the Committee apprised of its progress.
4. The Committee commends the Program’s progress on developing international partnerships and hopes that this will continue. The Program should continue its efforts to strengthen partnerships with other relevant organizations, including with international partners, to exchange best practices and therefore enhance its ability to focus on protectees and improve its processes.
5. The Committee suggests that the Program develop opportunities to communicate its presence and its role to external communities, as permitted by the *WPPA*, in order to engage Canadians on the positive hard work being done by the Program. The Committee particularly supports the idea of developing a proactive communication strategy and looks forward to its execution.
6. To avoid the duplication of processes, the Program should carefully delineate its role in relation to the population being tended to by any relevant Witness Support units. Consideration should be given to the Program’s relationship with Witness Support activities and staff, as well as the delineation in the services provided by each of the two areas.
7. The Program should further define who a “protectee” is, and what it means to focus on their needs. This will allow the Program to concretely identify ways to move towards this goal, as well as to better measure its progress.
8. The Committee has requested the Program to follow up in two key ways:
 - a. First, to obtain legal advice on the relationship between the various forms of protection offered by the Program; and
 - b. Second, to qualitatively examine the reasons behind the provision of different kinds of services to different clients.
9. The Committee urges the Program to consider family law in relation to its processes and its legislative mandate, in order to address the gap in services to this particular group of clients who may require protection but are restricted by their Court-ordered commitments.

10. The Program should further consider the intercultural and gender-related contexts of each protectee and potential protectee. This would be done by expanding the relevant portion of the assessment phase and continuing to conduct research on the Program's client base to inform its ability to consider cultural contexts in its everyday operations.
11. The Program should continue to maintain its independence from investigative functions.
12. To attend to its Court-ordered obligations, and to alleviate the pressure on its operational staff, the Program should consider the changing nature of its operations by obtaining a solution to its increasing work on disclosures while adhering to its stringent legislative prohibitions. This can be done by:
 - a. Introducing a legal resource to deal solely with disclosures and/or;
 - b. Pursuing a legislative solution to create consistency in disclosure rules for the Program and/or;
 - c. Cooperate with the Department of Justice to obtain their expertise and develop a solution to this resource-intensive issue.
13. The Committee would like the Program to continue to advance its acquisition and use of innovative tools, including new technologies, to contribute to professionalizing the Program.

G. Concluding Remarks

The Committee is very encouraged by the major improvements that have been undertaken in the past year. Although it is important for progress to continue, as not all of the reforms have been achieved, the Committee believes it is important to recognize the significant effort that has been made in ensuring the Program adheres to its three pillars, its legislative requirements, and its overall policing mandate. The complexities of this program make progress challenging, but it is encouraging to see that Program staff and management continues to substantially acknowledge the recommendations put forth by the Committee. The Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the Program in providing sound advice for the beneficial advancement of this Program and to continue to serve the safety of Canadians.