

Policing in Ontario

Applicant Information

What It Means To Be A Police Constable

A career in policing is primarily about one thing: working with people to ensure public safety through crime prevention and law enforcement. Police work requires that a constable be able to build relationships in the community, showing sensitivity to and concern for the needs of people from all races, cultures and backgrounds.

The *Police Services Act* describes four key areas of responsibility for a police constable:

- preserving the peace;
- preventing crimes and providing assistance to others in their prevention;
- assisting victims of crime;
- apprehending and charging offenders and executing warrants.

In addition, a police officer is responsible for:

- referring individuals to community services and agencies;
- educating the public.

Police work is also demanding. A police constable must work shifts, including evenings, nights and weekends, at all times of the year. This is not a job that everyone will like, or can do well.

One of the goals of policing is to reflect the diversity of the communities served. This enables police services to continually improve their capability to deliver service that is effective and responsive to the needs of the community. Police services are therefore looking for men and women from all backgrounds and walks of life, including people of various races, cultures, and religions. Everyone who has a strong interest in becoming a police constable, and who feels that she/he meets the qualifications described in this information package, is encouraged to apply.

For people who are truly interested in serving the needs of the community, police work is rewarding. The job challenges you each day in complex ways. Whether you are dealing with the security concerns of a store merchant, talking with a senior citizen, or befriending a group of local kids, you will find that a police constable bears a great deal of responsibility to the public. Fulfilling this responsibility will give you a sense of accomplishment and the confidence that you are making a contribution.

Training as a Police Constable

Once you have successfully proceeded through the selection process, you will undergo an intensive standardized training program at the Ontario Police College in Aylmer. This training program is designed to provide you with an understanding of the policing role in society, give you a sound knowledge of the law and procedures, and develop your skills to deal with various situations. Throughout this training program, there will be tests and then a final examination.

Some of the subjects and activities covered in the training program include federal and provincial statutes, firearms, defense tactics, fire safety, cross-cultural training, police procedures, and crisis intervention. An important component of the program is physical fitness training in which you will be required to meet specified physical fitness standards.

In addition, some police services provide further training at their own facilities. You will be required to pass such training before becoming eligible for appointment as a police constable.

Professional development related to various aspects of policing will continue throughout your career.

What you can expect

Once you have been appointed to the rank of constable, you will progress through four classifications, from fourth class constable to first class constable. Your initial employment will include a period of probation. With good

performance and availability of opportunities, you will be eligible for promotion to higher ranks.

As a police constable, you are eligible for a competitive salary. Benefits vary across police services but they generally include paid vacation, medical and dental plans, life insurance plan, employee assistance programs and opportunities for professional development.

What It Takes To Become A Police Constable

Minimum Requirements

To be considered for a career in policing, you must meet certain minimum requirements as outlined in the *Police Services Act*. Specifically, you must:

- be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada;
- be at least 18 years of age;
- be physically and mentally able to perform the duties of the position, having regard to your own safety and the safety of members of the public;
- have successfully completed at least four years of secondary school education or its equivalent. (Note: official transcripts and diplomas will be required). Where education has been completed outside Ontario, official proof of equivalency must be obtained by contacting the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training;
- be of good moral character and habits, meaning that you are an individual other people would look upon as being trustworthy and having integrity.

In addition, you must:

- possess a valid driver's licence with no more than six accumulated demerit-points, permitting you to drive an automobile in Ontario with full driving privileges;
- have current certification in CPR and first aid by the time the offer of employment is given; and
- be able to pass a security clearance as well as background investigation, credit and reference checks.

If you have any criminal convictions under a federal statute, you must obtain a pardon. If you have 'Findings of Guilt' which have resulted in absolute or conditional discharges, the records must be 'sealed' by the RCMP. (This will be done automatically following one year if the absolute discharge is registered after July 24, 1992. For a conditional discharge, this will be done automatically following

three years if the conditional discharge is registered after July 24, 1992. Otherwise you must apply to have these records sealed.)

Competencies

In addition to the minimum requirements previously described, you must possess certain competencies. A competency is defined as any skill, knowledge, ability, motive, behaviour or attitude essential to successful performance on the job. Two sets of competencies have been identified for the job of policing: Essential Competencies and Developmental Competencies.

Essential Competencies

These are knowledge, skills and abilities which a candidate must demonstrate before becoming a police officer. They are:

1. **Analytical Thinking:** The ability to analyze situations and events in a logical way, and to organize the parts of a problem in a systematic way.
2. **Self-confidence:** A belief in your own abilities and judgment, and a recognition of personal limitations and development needs.
3. **Communication:** The ability to demonstrate effective listening, verbal and written communication skills.
4. **Flexibility/Valuing Diversity:** the ability to adapt your approach in a variety of situations, and to work effectively with a wide cross-section of the community representing diverse backgrounds, cultures and socio-economic circumstances.
5. **Self-control:** The ability to keep your own emotions under control and to restrain negative actions when provoked or when working under stressful conditions.
6. **Relationship Building:** The ability to develop and maintain a network of contacts, both inside and outside the police service.
7. **Achievement Orientation:** The desire for continuous improvement in service or accomplishments.
8. **Medical/Physical Skills and Abilities:** Job-related medical/physical skills and abilities, including vision, hearing, motor skills, cardiovascular endurance and upper-body strength.

Developmental Competencies

As the name implies, these competencies can be acquired through training after a person has been hired as a police officer. However, some police services may have immediate need for specific skills and abilities which are developmental and may choose to include these in the hiring process. The following 11 competencies have been identified as developmental:

1. **Information Seeking:** The ability to seek out information from various sources before making decisions.
2. **Concern for Safety:** The ability to exercise caution in hazardous situations in order to ensure safety to self and others.
3. **Assertiveness:** The ability to use authority confidently and to set and enforce rules appropriately.
4. **Initiative:** Demonstrated ability to be self-motivated and self-directed in identifying and addressing important issues.
5. **Cooperation:** The ability to collaborate with others by seeking their input, encouraging their participation and sharing information.
6. **Negotiation/Facilitation:** The ability to influence or persuade others by anticipating and addressing their interests and perspectives.
7. **Work Organization:** The ability to develop and maintain systems for organizing information and activities.
8. **Community-service Orientation:** Proven commitment to helping or serving others.
9. **Commitment to Learning:** Demonstrated pattern of activities which contribute to personal and professional growth.
10. **Organizational Awareness:** Understanding of the dynamics of organizations, including the formal and informal cultures and decision making processes.
11. **Developing Others:** Commitment to helping others improve their skills.

Local Needs of Police Services

Apart from the competencies, police services may also require certain special skills and abilities in order to address urgent issues pertaining to the service or the community. A Local Need may be a second language, a special type or level of computer skills, prior experience in working with abused women and troubled youth, ability to relocate, etc.

The Selection Process

The selection process consists of three assessment stages and is open to all applicants who meet the minimum requirements outlined in this package. You will advance through the process upon successfully completing each stage and will be notified of your progress throughout.

The Three Assessment Stages

STAGE 1. Submit the Applicant Registration

Form and go through pre-interview assessment. This form must be submitted with the required non-refundable applicant fee. The fee is payable by *certified cheque or money order* to either the police service

which is accepting your application, *or* to the OACP-licensed private assessment firm which will assess you on behalf of those police services which prefer to contract out the first-stage assessment. A receipt or acknowledgment of payment may be provided by the agency and/or police service. Please note that you can at any one time participate in only one pre-interview assessment with an OACP-licensee (whether a police service or private firm) anywhere in Ontario.

You will be invited to undertake first-stage assessment at a designated site. For every test or assessment procedure, you must bring photograph identification with you. In order to determine your suitability for the position of police constable, you will be required to:

- ☞ **Write a paper-and-pencil aptitude test** that is designed to measure your aptitude in the following four areas:
 - **Arithmetic Skills:** measures your basic understanding of addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication.
 - **Problem Solving Skills:** measures your ability to solve mathematical problems.
 - **Spatial Aptitude:** requires that you select the shape a flat object will take when folded at predetermined lines.
 - **Verbal Skills:** measures your ability to understand the relationship between words (e.g. words that mean the same and words that have opposite meaning).

☞ **Write a communication test** after reading a scenario and organizing important facts to reconstruct what happened. You are tested on your ability to organize information in a clear, coherent and comprehensive manner.

☞ **Engage in a medical/physical skills and abilities test.** Specific standards are outlined below:

- **Vision:** Uncorrected Visual Acuity should be at least 6/12 (20/40) binocularly (both eyes open). Corrected Visual Acuity should at least be 6/6 (20/20) binocularly. There are additional minimum requirements regarding refractive surgery, farsightedness (hyperopia), colour vision, depth perception and peripheral vision.
- **Hearing Standards:** Normal hearing at frequencies of 500 to 4000 Hz measured by audiometer.
- **Physical Fitness:** Pass all components of the Physical Readiness Evaluation for Police Constable (PREP) test, which includes:

✓**Pursuit/Restraint Circuit**, will be evaluated by completing as quickly as possible a 25 meter circuit four times (total distance = 100 meters) while wearing a 9 lb. soft weight belt that simulates wearing a full equipment belt. During each rotation, a set of stairs are climbed and on the second and fourth rotation, a 4 ft fence is scaled. Following completion of the circuit, the participant completes pushing and pulling on the “body control” simulator, performs two “arm restraint” simulations, then drags a 150 lb. rescue dummy a distance of 15 meters.

✓**Aerobic Shuttle Run**, evaluated by running back and forth over a 20 meter course in time with tape recorded signals. The time to cover the 20 meter course is shortened progressively until you are unable to maintain the pace.

Notes:

- For more information regarding the PREP test, contact your local participating police service or the OACP-licensed assessment firm.
- Before you can take part in the PREP test, you must submit a completed PAR-Q & You/PARmed-X questionnaire which identifies any personal health risks associated with participation in strenuous exercise. As well, you will be required to complete and sign a PREP Participant Consent Form. Blood pressure will be measured when you arrive for testing. Applicants over 40 must complete PARmed-X form with their family physicians prior to the test date. Note: these forms must be submitted with the Registration package.
- Applicants who have unacceptable performance on any of the vision or hearing assessments will be referred for further examination by an appropriate specialist.

☞ **Perform a video simulation**, if the preceding tests have been successfully completed. You will view on a TV monitor, scenarios representing what police constables experience on the job. You will then respond as if you were speaking to the people in the scene. Knowledge of police procedures is not required.

STAGE 2. Seek a panel interview with any police service that subscribes to the OACP Constable Selection System, after successfully completing the first stage. During the interview, you will be required to demonstrate that you possess the competencies required to be a police constable, and that you meet any identified organizational needs of the police service. Should you be called for an interview (with one or more police services), you will be required to complete a Pre-Background Questionnaire while waiting to be interviewed. You may also be required to complete and submit an Applicant Registration Form and other documents either prior to or after the interview.

STAGE 3. A thorough background investigation, credit and reference check will be conducted if you are selected to progress beyond the interview stage. You will be required to complete a personality test, and may be invited to an interview with a psychologist.

The police service will then conduct an in-depth review of all the information gathered to reach a decision about your application. A job offer may then be made to you, conditional upon your obtaining a medical clearance. At that time, a medical evaluation will be conducted to determine your medical suitability for being hired as police constable. This consists of a medical history questionnaire and a comprehensive physical examination.

If an offer of employment is confirmed, you will be required to undergo a probationary period.

Additional Notes

- **Self-Assessment Questionnaire:** Before submitting an application form, you should complete the Self-Assessment Questionnaire to evaluate your suitability to be a Police Constable. Do not return the questionnaire.
- **Applicant Survey Form:** It is necessary to collect data in order to evaluate the test instruments of the selection process for fairness. This type of data collection is a normal part of professional human resources practice, especially in the development and evaluation of selection tests. Completion of this form is strictly voluntary and all information provided will be kept confidential.
- **Applicant Registration Form:** Please remember that by submitting the Applicant Registration Form, you are confirming that you meet all the minimum requirements for becoming a police constable as outlined in the Police Services Act. Please note that it is your responsibility to research which police services are hiring or accepting the Applicant Registration Form.