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**VICTORIA  
POLICE**

**CRIME REDUCTION STRATEGY  
2013 - 2015**

**November 1, 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

Victoria and Esquimalt are thriving and dynamic communities. This area has been designated as one of the most liveable regions in the world and is a major tourist destination for more than 3.2 million people from around the world each year. Victoria and Esquimalt's combined population of approximately 100,000 people does not, however, reflect the actual number of people who commute, recreate and work in this jurisdiction. Both the "core city phenomenon" as well as the inclusion of CFB Esquimalt and the Pacific graving docks means that the functional population of Victoria and Esquimalt increases significantly on work days and weekend evenings. As a result of this phenomenon, higher concentrations of criminals are attracted to the jurisdiction, resulting in an increased number of calls for service.

VicPD serves a diverse population and has a goal of making Victoria and Esquimalt the safest region in Canada by the year 2020. In order to move towards attaining this status, VicPD engaged the services of a research team from the University of the Fraser Valley to understand the scope of the problem it was facing. That research concluded that VicPD must embark upon an aggressive crime reduction strategy.

It is important to note that the Victoria Police Department generally deals with a substantially larger volume of Criminal Code offences per capita than most comparable cities in British Columbia. In fact, over the five year period from 2006 to 2010, Victoria had a per capita crime rate consistently 50% higher than the British Columbia average and generally twice the Canadian average. Furthermore, over that five year period, Victoria has had the highest crime rate among cities policed by municipal police departments, and in this regard, is surpassed only by two cities policed by the RCMP (Campbell River and Nanaimo). Moreover, Victoria has had a much higher per capita crime rate (120 offences per 1,000 population) when compared directly to other BC cities of roughly equal population, such as Saanich and Kamloops.

VicPD also deals with more serious offences than other cities in British Columbia, as illustrated by the city's high score of 124.1 on the crime severity index for 2011. Our communities' crime severity index score is considerably higher than the British Columbia average (95.1), and it is nearly double the Canadian average (77.6). Of the 240 municipalities in Canada, only 29 communities had a worse crime severity index score than Victoria and Esquimalt in 2011. This proves that there is much work to be done.

One of the five Bold Steps from our *Strategic Plan 2020* is "Enhancing Operational Effectiveness". The crime reduction strategy fits within this Bold Step.

The *Plecas Report* conducted in 2012 by criminology researchers of the University of the Fraser Valley delivered some key findings around keeping communities safer by employing a comprehensive crime reduction strategy. Reduction of calls for service generally, and not just the reduction of the crime rate, are key to the success of this plan. A problem-solving approach/philosophy is a vital component

of crime reduction both in terms of the seriousness of crime and the volume of crime. Crimes are more naturally viewed by citizens as problems, whether it is neighbourhood crime, property crime, violent crime or organized criminal networks.

The key to success is a matter of properly identifying the problems, collecting sufficient information to understand the problems, correctly analyzing the problems and then directing tactical resources to do something about the problems.

The *Plecas Report* also informed us that VicPD already has a solid track record in problem identification and problem solving. This occurs because our members are trained, skilled and adaptable to use their abilities in a wide range of situations and are able to find appropriate solutions.

The approach to enhancing our previous processes around problem solving in order to keep our communities safer should therefore take the following path:

- increased consultations with clients, stakeholders and communities to identify problems;
- timely and more effective analysis of information and the assessment of intelligence;
- greater use of partnerships beyond traditional law enforcement sources;
- solving problems through both quick and effective as well as longer term tactical responses depending on the problem; and,
- consistently demanding outcomes rather than just outputs and adopt a willingness to objectively evaluate them.

The approaches to meeting these five demands can take many forms. Knowing the identity of repeat offenders, the location of hot spots and the patterns of crime is essential. These practices are well entrenched within the department. A renewed commitment to structuring discretionary time to make high visibility patrols and checks as well as the submission of intelligence source debriefs and field checks is also required.

It is also critical, however, to better understand the links between crime, drugs and alcohol and to reassure the community by various means of social and personal engagement. We must also enter into and renew partnerships that can affect or prevent crime causation.

When offences do occur it is essential to do more criminal intelligence analysis on the offender, obtain more (and better) information from the community on the impacts, conduct better offender interviews, intensively monitor bail and court conditions, and actively liaise with prosecutors and correction officials.

When resources are finite and scarce, it is imperative to conduct proper risk assessments when determining crime reduction priorities. Issues of immediate public safety (i.e. imminent violence) will always take precedent over issues of public nuisance (i.e. panhandling). While it is recognized the broad spectrum of crime and social nuisance issues affect the community, those with the greatest

harm potential will usually receive the greatest attention. Risk assessments occur in a variety of ways: from planned and formal as a result of an in-depth investigation, to spontaneous and immediate as a result of an unfolding, critical incident.

Explicit to responding to the five demands above is the ability to have effective intelligence gathering and analysis capacity. More intelligence analysis capacity is immediately crucial for VicPD. Beyond that, the tactical responses to problems are relatively straightforward but central to success.

It is important to remember that there is no finite or absolutely conclusive way to create specific results of any crime reduction strategy. The absence or reduction of crime can be attributed to many factors, including demographic and economic variables. Also, there is no way to account for the situation that arises when a criminal plans to commit an offence but does not, due to increased police presence or attention. However, it is generally accepted that an overall reduction of reported crime can be an indicator of success, especially when those reductions occur within a geographic area that has been specifically targeted with a crime reduction strategy. For these reasons, the goals noted further in this report do not include specific target numbers or percentages.

In summary:

- repeat offenders must be targeted including rigorous monitoring of their court/bail conditions to prevent further commission of crime;
- crime patterns must be targeted through processes of analysis and/or investigation so that they can be disrupted as early as possible. Early recognition and disruption of crime patterns is vital for reducing multiple crime sprees which can impair the vitality of neighbourhoods;
- hot spots, particularly areas where anti-social behaviour occurs must be targeted with high profile police visibility; and,
- preventative measures must also be “targeted” by involving other government, non-government and social service agencies to benefit from organizations which are actually more effective in dealing with offenders, rather than only relying on an arrest and process approach.

## CRIME REDUCTION GOALS

Three categories of crime have been identified that will allow us to tailor our crime reduction efforts and resources: violent crime, property crime, and public disorder. As outlined below, each category calls for a unique strategy and associated key performance indicators.

### ***VIOLENT CRIME***

Violent crime has a devastating impact on the victims, witnesses and the community at large. Some members of the community are at an increased risk of being victims of violence, such as the marginalized, sex trade workers, those who suffer from addictions, mental illness, domestic abuse or who are homeless. With Victoria and Esquimalt having a high concentration of licensed premises,

there are far more police incidents involving people that are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Investigating many of these incidents can be very resource intensive and time-consuming.

It is also a common occurrence for local criminals, and those from out of town, to frequent various licensed premises in our jurisdiction. Many of these criminals are associated to gangs and organized crime groups and impulsively engage in serious acts of violence. The Bar Watch program is a police-friendly tool that is able to identify patrons inside each licensed establishment and is meant to keep gang members, their associates, drug dealers and anyone else who may have been prohibited based upon a previous encounter from entering a licensed premise.

Many of these individuals and groups are known to the police. The goal will be to aggressively pursue them. This means monitoring their activities, dedicating appropriate resources for investigation and ensuring the appropriate charges are laid against them where warranted. Our long-term goal is to change or significantly disrupt their behaviour so we can suppress the violence.

Intelligence and information will be channeled through the use of a crime analyst to the Operations Council to identify persons or groups and/or problem premises where a propensity to violence may exist. The goal will be to disrupt violence through smaller and more frequent intelligence-led projects.

## KEY STRATEGIES

***Our goal is to suppress and reduce violent crime by engaging in the following key strategies:***

- Use the Focused Enforcement Team, Patrol Division officers and the Late Night Liquor Task Force to provide high visibility in and around licensed premises to reduce the number of violent incidents;
- Develop and execute street level enforcement projects that target areas, problem premises, and/or persons responsible for violent crime;
- Target known gang members, their associates and other violent offenders to disrupt, suppress or prevent them from engaging in criminal activity and acts of violence;
- Prioritize drug operations towards known gang members and their associates;
- Promote continued participation of the Bar Watch program – prevent violent criminals from gathering within our jurisdiction and placing others at risk;
- Conduct court order compliance checks on chronic violent offenders (curfew checks);
- Investigate all violent criminal acts in an effective, comprehensive manner that utilizes multi-faceted investigative strategies;
- Where appropriate, communicate violent incidents and police response to the public to promote public education to assist in prevention; and
- Continue to interact positively with the marginalized population so that they feel comfortable in reporting crime allowing police to stop the victimization.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Conduct an annual comparison of the Crime Severity Index with the goal of reducing it to the provincial average by 2020;
- Conduct an annual comparison of violent crimes with the goal of achieving a reduction in these crimes each year; and
- Focus on organized crime activity, ensuring that we strive for a “zero presence” of established gang organizations in our area.

## PROPERTY CRIME

The impact of property crime is often underestimated. We recognize that property crime continues to be an ongoing concern and major issue for our residents. Aside from being expensive for individuals and businesses, it also leaves people feeling violated and unsafe. Unfortunately, the frequency with which property crime occurs has left many feeling that there is no hope of change.

The strategic utilization of VicPD resources in combating property crime will be enhanced in 2013. The spearhead of this approach will be through the creation of a Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) and an additional crime analyst. The CRU, through intelligence led analysis will identify and prioritize chronic and prolific property offenders and ensure they are targeted and taken off our streets. Our goal remains to continue to maximize our intelligence gathering and making it a critical part of how we do business.

We also recognize that some people who commit property crimes are dealing with addiction issues. We will continue to work closely with the Vancouver Island Health Authority and the provincial government for the creation of additional services and supports. We will also continue to utilize the VICOT and IMCRT roles to find alternative ways to develop more comprehensive solutions to these problems.

Through crime preventions programs, community awareness programs and targeting chronic and prolific offenders, the combined efforts of the VicPD and the public will help reduce property crime.

## KEY STRATEGIES

***Our goal is to reduce property crime by engaging in the following key strategies:***

- Increase our crime analysis capacity to analyze crime trends and patterns, read arrest reports, link criminals to crime patterns, track their movements and disseminate the information to front-line officers in a timely manner;
- Have our patrol officers continue to direct resources to identified “hot spots;”
- Target known chronic and prolific property offenders;

- Use the Operations Council process to identify weekly priorities and targets and direct all resources to this focus;
- Conduct court order compliance checks on property offenders (curfew checks);
- Develop stronger partnerships with local pawn shops and second-hand stores, taking action against those that are known to deal in stolen property;
- Publicly promote VicPD's array of crime prevention programs aimed at combating property crime;
- Enhance the use of our Reserve Constables and Volunteers towards community service through crime reduction activities that directly support this strategy; and
- Continue to explore new and effective ways of communicating with the public and keeping them informed with respect to public safety issues, crime trends and crime prevention tips.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Reduce property crime to within the provincial average within 3 years;
- Reduce the number of substantive (new) offences committed by serious repeat property offenders while they are on bail or other forms of pre-trial release; and
- Increase public satisfaction around public safety issues, crime trends and crime prevention.

## PUBLIC DISORDER

Residents of all neighbourhoods in both municipalities should feel safe walking in their neighbourhood and throughout their business cores. Unfortunately, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, aggressive panhandling and other factors contribute to areas of our jurisdiction where police need to provide special attention and enforcement. If left unchecked, public disorder crime can diminish the quality of life and lead to a diminished sense of public safety. Street-level drug dealing also impacts many neighbourhoods and results in a decrease of public safety. Among other things, these drug dealers prey on the marginalized and homeless population. They are a menace and can negatively impact the sense of community safety in a neighbourhood very quickly.

Once again, the Analysis and Intelligence Section plays a critical part in identifying crime areas and locations where resources are required to reduce disorder. This information is prioritized and shared with all front-line uniform resources so a visible presence can be provided, further intelligence can be gathered and arrests made where warranted.

## KEY STRATEGIES

**Our GOAL is to reduce public and street disorder by engaging in the following key strategies:**

- Work in partnership with the Downtown Victoria and Esquimalt Business Associations to more quickly and effectively receive information on crime and disorder concerns and respond better;



- Enhance a partnership with the Bar and Cabaret Association and advise them specifically of our new goals in relation to crime reduction in this project;
- Working in partnership with the DVBA and Esquimalt Business Association, ensure the timely removal of graffiti from public and private property;
- Work in partnership with City and Esquimalt By-Law officers to reduce the number of nuisance property complaints and calls for service in relation to them; and
- Coordinate liquor enforcement through the Late Night Liquor Task Force, Patrol and FET officers, including working in partnership with Liquor Inspectors and the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch in dealing with bar and liquor disturbance offenders.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- Reduce instances of graffiti crime and ensure that all major graffiti offences are removed from public view within 72 hours;
- Reduce complaints of liquor and street related noise/behaviours around licence premises and late night food service outlets; and
- Be able to affect a nuisance property response protocol to any target location identified as such within 72 hours.

## CONCLUSION

This crime reduction strategy outlines VicPD's objectives, key performance indicators and highlights an action plan for significantly reducing crime and improving public safety in Victoria and Esquimalt over the period 2013-2015. Through increased public involvement along with regular evaluation of key performance indicators over time, we will be ideally positioned to adjust and refine the application of this crime reduction strategy for the benefit of all residents of Victoria and Esquimalt.