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2008-2010 Strategic Plan Goal 1 – Reduce Street Disorder

Sponsor: Insp. John Craig

A. Reported Crime Rate - Public Disorder: reduce by further 5% over 2009

TYPE OF CALL	ACTUAL 2005	ACTUAL 2006	ACTUAL 2007	ACTUAL 2008	ACTUAL 2009	%CHANGE (08-09)		JAN- SEPT 2009	JAN - SEPT 2010	% CHANGE (09-10)
ASSIST MENTAL HEALTH ACT	715	282	302	127	160	26.0		120	156	30.0
DISTURBANCE	2393	2175	2588	2233	2397	7.3		1895	1759	-7.2
DRUGS	1211	1366	1475	1464	1034	-29.4		869	829	-4.6
FIGHT	1160	1266	1338	1301	1170	-10.1		916	813	-11.2
INDECENT ACT	132	126	136	134	161	20.1		135	118	-12.6
MAN DOWN	525	673	568	515	699	35.7		555	492	-11.4
MISCHIEF	1679	1717	1653	1845	1729	-6.3		1327	1038	-21.8
OFFENSIVE WEAPON	325	318	341	282	254	-9.9		204	182	-10.8
OVERDOSE	204	287	159	134	96	-28.4		75	75	0.0
PANHANDLER	269	240	161	163	99	-39.3		80	101	26.3
PROSTITUTION	240	159	253	97	128	32.0		91	50	-45.1
PROWLER	190	188	144	113	97	-14.2		70	63	-10.0
SIPP	2594	2851	2633	2131	1429	-32.9		1104	898	-18.7
UNWANTED PERSON	3349	4229	5482	5550	3774	-32.0		2987	2603	-12.9
Grand Total	14986	15877	17233	16089	13227	-17.8		10428	9177	-12.0

Overall there has been a 12 percent reduction in calls for service in 2010 dealing with public disorder. A significant number of these complaints are a product of alcohol and drug consumption. Almost all the call types tracked showed a decrease in volume. Only panhandling complaints and mental health act issues increased while overdose calls stayed the same. Several factors can be attributed to these reductions in calls including a continued high visibility enforcement strategy and several strategic initiatives the VicPD has been participating in within the community.

The Late Night, Great Night initiative and the Bar Watch program have assisted in mitigating the street disorder issues that have previously been a concern in the downtown core in relation to people congregating outside late night eateries and liquor premises during the late night hours (Insp. Pearce will report further on these two programs).

While 900 blk. of Pandora continues to be an area where we see a high number of complaints related to street disorder concerns, since the introduction of the recent amendment of the Streets and Traffic by-law, which regulates camping and other behaviors on several boulevards within the City of Victoria, the situation in this area has improved. We have seen a displacement

of some of these individuals to other areas of the city and members of VicPD from Patrol and the Focused Enforcement Team (FET) continue to have a high profile in the surrounding areas, assisting with wake ups, moving people along and working with area residents, businesses and service provider groups.

For several months, the VicPD has been working with the Ministry of Social Development, The City of Victoria and the downtown service providers to identify and connect with the people who were congregating in and around the 900 blk. Pandora, camping on the boulevards and sidewalks. An essential goal of this group has been to assist those who are homeless to connect with housing options and coordinate response from the social providers in the community. This initiative identified 60 plus people who were in need of assistance and so far approximately half of those have been housed. The Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team (VICOT) and Assertive Community Team (ACT) have played a significant role in this process, providing service to several people with mental health and addiction issues. Additional housing options will become available with the opening of 710 Queens Street - Queens Manor. These 36 units will be low barrier housing intended to fill a gap in short term housing alternatives for this population.

The Victoria Integrated Court has also been in place for several months, providing a more coordinated approach for dealing with a restricted group of offenders who have a history of drug and alcohol addiction, mental disorders and unstable housing. To be accepted, offenders must demonstrate a willingness to address the underlying causes of their criminal activity and must also agree to intense supervision provided by ACT and VICOT.

One area of concern for VicPD is the erosion of a long standing commitment from VIHA to create an exclusion zone in a two block radius around the 900 blk. Pandora where needles will not be distributed. This was set up originally in recognition of the significant concerns of area businesses and residents, the inclusion of a school in this area and the high number of other services already existing in that area. Over the last several months, VicPD has confirmed that needles are being distributed through a pharmacy in that area and efforts to bring this to the attention of VIHA and the Provincial Health Authority have not been successful in stopping this practice. Members of the VicPD now feel they risk losing credibility with the many stakeholders in the area if they fail to share this information with the community as they have brought forward many complaints about this practice and have been assured that this exclusionary zone remained in place.

Other areas of concern during this year have included the area around Store and Fisgard Streets, Douglas and View Streets, Reeson Park, the West side of the Johnston Street Bridge, local beaches, Kinsmen Park and the Skateboard Park on Esquimalt Road.

To address concerns in the downtown core, the Focused Enforcement Team has started an initiative where pairs of Bike and Beat team members are assigned to specific areas, where they are responsible for building contacts with the business and residents in that area. They work with the people in these areas to identify and resolve concerns related to public disorder. The number of SIPP arrests continues to drop and this can be attributed in large part to the changes that have been occurring with supervision in the jail and revised policy. Members of VicPD also continue to seek alternatives for those they encounter in an intoxicated state. The FET members have the flexibility to target areas where concerns arise and have initiated several strategies for

dealing with public disorder complaints in the areas identified above. These include flooding the area with a highly visible police presence, using undercover operations to purchase drugs, setting up observation points, and working with the Community Resource Officer (CRO) to find long term solutions. Our Traffic Section has also been deployed in strategic locations to establish roadblocks and do enforcement where street disorder is occurring.

The Youth Section is now staffed with two members and has been successful in reducing public disorder involving youths. The West Division deployed members on mountain bikes during the summer to patrol the local beaches, parks, residential and business areas. In cooperation with the CRO in that area, the West division members assisted by patrol resources, dealt with several concerns in Kinsmen Park and the skateboard park in Esquimalt. In both cases, there have been long term reductions in reported problems in these two areas.

B. Increase number of drug arrests by 5% over 2009

DRUG ARRESTS	2009	2010	% change (09-10)	Grand Total
FOCUSED ENFORCEMENT TEAM	203	253	24.6	456
ALL VICPD except FET	289	260	-10.0	549
Grand Total	492	513	4.3	1005

Street level drug enforcement continues to be a strategy employed by VicPD to reduce public disorder issues. The FET leads the way with this as it is a significant part of the team’s mandate. The Strikeforce Unit and Street Crime Unit assist the FET with some enforcement strategies downtown, but also conduct investigation and enforcement of drug files in all other areas of Victoria and Esquimalt. Overall drug arrests are up 4.3% over last year.

As enforcement continues on a number of levels, including uniform presence, undercover “buy and bust” operations and observation points used to identify targets, the street population using and selling drugs becomes more sophisticated and as a result, more difficult to catch and charge. In some cases, officers interdict a drug deal or find a person in possession of drugs but are not able to establish enough evidence for a charge. In these cases the drugs are seized and destroyed without charges being laid. These instances are not captured in the statistics provided above.

To provide an idea of what the street drug culture is currently like in Victoria, I have included some bullet points created by the Beat Section NCO and well recognized drug expert, detailing what his members are seeing on the street.

- Crack cocaine remains the preferred Central Nervous System (CNS) stimulant in Victoria. Approximately 6 to 8 years ago crack surged ahead of powder cocaine – a pattern consistent with many other urban centers in North America.
- Because crack is smoked, the users feel an intense rush, then a severe crash. The urge to repeat the use of crack is very strong and so addiction can take hold quickly. Thus we are seeing many of our local habitual criminals spending all day smoking crack or committing property offences to fuel the addiction. Crack is our biggest problem drug and this is unchanged for several years.
- Most calls for service from the public that deal with public drug use or somebody “wacked out” or “flailers” can be attributed to crack. These people are so over stimulated that they haven’t slept in days and then they attract a lot of attention when the public see them flailing about.
- Despite crack’s popularity, there are still some hard core drug users who prefer to inject powder cocaine. The high is less intense, but lasts longer. Powder cocaine can be found but crack is more common. Since crack can’t be injected, users are buying it when that’s all that’s available and using mild acids (like lemon juice) to convert crack into an injectable (water soluble) form.
- Heroin remains the most popular depressant drug, this is unchanged for several years. The preferred method of ingestion remains Intravenous injection. Many heroin users are encountered downtown – they are noted for their “on the nod” appearance, wandering around in a daze or slumped into alleys and doorways. Many claim to be on methadone, but are clearly using heroin and stimulants to “subsidize” the methadone. The heroin addiction certainly accounts for some property crime – our users report that the fear of withdrawal is a powerful motivator to commit crime.
- Recently heroin seizures have been made where the heroin was preloaded into syringes in 100 mg doses. The syringes are placed back in the wrapper and carried about. The dealer will attempt to pass them off as needles only. Only under close inspection would one notice that the wrapper has been opened and the heroin is preloaded in the syringe’s tube.
- Prescription narcotics are growing in popularity as an alternative to heroin, if it cannot be found, or for some people prescription narcotics are preferred to heroin. We are seeing the illicit sales of Tylenol 3, MS Contin (morphine), Dilaudid, Percocet / Percodan and Oxycontin. The effects of most of these are identical to heroin.
- Though its use seems to have stabilized, there remains a core group of people who use methamphetamine – often with heroin. Interestingly because meth has many severe side effects, the hard core users are often the worst in appearance and health. We have seen some users deteriorate over the last couple of years at an alarming rate that is not matched by crack use.

C. Increase number of referrals by police to IMCRT: 5% increase over 2009

	2008	2009	2010	% change (09-10)
Total Calls (first 6 months*)	1270	1510	1580	0.5
Police Only				
Victoria			238	
Saanich			197	
Oak Bay			11	
CSPD			1	
RCMP			56	
Total	307	483	503	4.2*

Statistics were not available for the period up to the end of September; however they were obtained for the first six months of the year. In comparison with the same period year over year, there is an increase of 4.2 percent in total police referrals. The relationship between the Integrated Mobile Crisis Response Team (IMCRT) and the police is continuing to strengthen and police departments throughout the region continue to utilize their services regularly.

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Focused Enforcement Team - 2010 Summer Action Plan

The mandate of the Focused Enforcement Team (FET) is to:

- maintain high visible police presence and enforcement in the downtown Core, as well as identified problem areas; and
- assist the Uniformed Services Division (USD) with reducing police call load.

The Summer Action Plan was created to further identify specific issues and strategies to address these concerns, using a high visible police presence in the downtown core, as well as parks and beaches that see an increase in problems during the summer months. In 2010 several offences were identified as ones that the FET (Bike, Beat and Traffic section) members would focus on for the duration of the summer action plan which ran from June -September.

FET SUMMER ACTION PLAN 2010					
Tickets Issues by VicPD	June	July	August	September	Total:
Chattel	10	10	7	8	35
Consume Liquor in Public Place	108	262	84	89	543
Disobey Traffic Control Device	14	27	39	30	110
Drive w/o Undue Care and Attention	17	23	4	5	49
Electronic Device While Driving	37	33	32	29	131
Erect Shelter in Park	14	9	53	9	85
Fail to Display "L" or "N"	26	77	27	19	149
Fighting in Public Place	4	3	4	1	12
Intoxicated in a Public Place	41	75	43	94	253
Minor in Possession of Liquor	3	45	4	1	53
No Drivers Licence	39	63	36	33	171
No Seatbelts	39	26	35	23	123
Open Liquor in Vehicle	15	21			36
Red Light	11	14	8	11	44
Ride Bicycle on Sidewalk	36	31	16	17	100
Ride Bicycle w/o Helmet	82	107	62	45	296
Solicit Person in Vehicle	16	6	5	3	30
Trespass on Enclosed Land	106	112	55	91	364
Urinate	14	27	9	14	64
Total for June - September for Department:					2904*

* 2343 (80%) of these tickets were given out by FET members.

Focused Enforcement Projects

- Undercover drug operations targeting street dealers took place in several areas of the downtown core with the assistance of the Strikeforce Unit and were very successful in deterring drug activity and obtaining red zones for the individuals involved.
- Douglas and View Street area was targeted in response to several complaints of youth dealing drugs in that area. Several strategies such as observation points, surveillance and increased highly visible patrols were undertaken resulting in several arrests.
- Reeson Park saw a group of people who were dealing drugs and using violence and intimidation to gain status in that area. Zero tolerance enforcement, surveillance and observation points were utilized to identify and arrest those involved.
- The West side of the Johnston Street Bridge became an area for some of those people who had been forced out of the downtown core to congregate and deal drugs and intimidate people moving through the area. FET members worked with city park crews to trim up some of the shrubbery in the area so there were fewer areas for these people to conceal themselves. Frequent highly visible patrols coupled with strict enforcement discouraged this as an area to stay.
- FET members have been working closely with the VICOT officers to refer people to the teams they work with. The FET members and VICOT officers exchange information about people in the downtown core on a regular basis leading to a more consistent approach to working / dealing with them.
- FET members have worked with the CRO to have businesses and property owners who are affected by people sleeping or loitering post no trespass signs. Where these exist, the FET members issue trespass tickets and can move to a long form information compelling individuals to court if required.
- The FET members regularly patrolled the area beaches during the summer months. A strict enforcement of the liquor laws in the early part of the summer resulted in significantly less problems and complaints this year. This enforcement campaign was supplemented by members of the West Division and Patrol.
- The Traffic Section worked flexible shifts and targeted specific locations throughout the summer, based on complaints from the public and areas observed to have public disorder issues. In addition, they have been utilizing the Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) purchased earlier this year, resulting in a significant number of hits for people who are driving with no drivers license, prohibited from driving and a host of other traffic offences.