Policing and Schooling
Making the Connections

Report Submitted to: Association for Safer Cape Breton Communities

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This report provides an assessment of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) school-liaison policing program. We will begin by considering how school-based policing fits within the context of the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act. Next, we will review existing evaluations and research to establish best practices in school policing. Results from in-depth qualitative interviews with police and educators will then be drawn upon to assess the extent to which the CBRM initiative complies with such practices. Finally, youth crime rates in the CBRM will be compared with other areas of Atlantic Canada to quantify the relative success of the CBRM approach.

Context

There has been extensive research demonstrating that acquiring a criminal record, and particularly being incarcerated, early in life does more to entrench than reverse pathways toward future criminal activity (Brown 2006: 599; Kim, Losen, and Hewitt 2010: 4; Hirschfield and Celinska 2011). In the 1990s, the incarceration rate among Canadian youth reached an alarming high (Bunge, Johnson, and Balde 2005). Social-justice advocates reacted by stressing that Canada's rate of youth incarceration surpassed even that of the United States (US) (Canadian Council on Social Development; Canadian Children's Rights Council). "Canada was imposing custody on youth, its most serious deprivation of liberties, at four times the rate it was being applied to adults" (Canadian Children's Rights Council).

In response to this situation, the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) that came into place in 2003, emphasized redirecting rather than arresting young people whenever possible (Minister of Justice, Government of Canada 2003). It focused on prevention and reintegration strategies aimed at reducing the numbers of young people being labeled as "criminals".

Under the YCJA, police are not merely encouraged but rather required to consider alternatives to court-based prosecution of youth.

> A police officer shall, before starting judicial proceedings or taking any other measures under this Act against a young person alleged to have committed an offence, consider whether it would be sufficient, …to take no further action, warn the young person, administer a caution, …or, with the consent of the young person, refer the young person to a program or agency in the community that may assist the young person not to commit offences. (Minister of Justice 2003: 8)

Following the enactment of these stipulations, youth crime rates in Canada declined sharply (Statistics Canada, 2005).

While reducing the prevalence of incarceration is an admirable goal, it also is necessary to consider the extent to which alternatives to court processing are applied fairly and equitably. Previous research has demonstrated that discretionary legal procedures, such as those set out in the YCJA, are particularly susceptible to biased application. What has a tendency to occur under such conditions is that certain "types" of youth become more susceptible to arrest and incarceration because they are informally profiled as troublemakers and/or "beyond hope". Research, primarily from the United States, repeatedly demonstrates systematic differences in charging practices based on factors such as race, location of incident, and the suspect's demeanor (Lum 2011; Valder 2001; Schulenberg and Warren 2009: 7).

Hence, one critical question for Canadian policing following the YCJA was "how were police to make the most effective use of the powers they had been given to divert, rather than arrest and detain, youth?" When officers have had no previous interaction with an offender, there is little grounding for informed situation-specific decisions. Consequently, police are forced to rely on official records and their previous experiences. This introduces considerable opportunity for bias.

Previous research has demonstrated that the most fair, appropriate and effective diversions occur when community-based officers interact with youth on a daily basis (Schulenberg and Warren 2009: 7, 10). Positioning officers in schools offers one venue for providing such continuous contact. Even though the most serious offences are likely to occur among youth who have left school, positioning liaison officers in junior/middle schools allows for the possibility of building relationships before young people have come to the point in their lives where they "drop out".

Although schools are not the primary sites at which youth-related crimes occur, there are indications of increasing problems. According to Statistics Canada, crime at school continues to rise, and approximately one third of these incidents are assaults (Taylor-Butts and Bressan 2008: 4). Furthermore, "drug related offenses more than doubled on Canada's school grounds between 1998 and 2006" (Taylor-Butts and Bressan 2008). Approximately 20 percent of crimes reported for 12 and 13 year olds, 15 percent of crimes reported for 14 and 15 year olds, and 10 percent of crimes reported for 16 and 17 year olds now occur at school (Taylor-Butts 2010).

Research and Evaluation

Because the US strongly supported moves toward school policing in the 1990s, we now have a solid base of research evaluating the success of such initiatives. The first thing that can be said about this research is that the results are by no means consistent (Coon and Travis 2012; Theroit 2009). Depending on differences in police and school cultures, the effects of placing officers in schools can range from major increases, through no effect, to major decreases in arrests and future engagement in criminal activities (Theroit 2009; Jennings et al 2011; Thurau and Wald 2009). These differences in outcomes are primarily determined by distinctions

between preventive/reactive and restorative/punitive approaches (Bucher and Manning 2005: 58).

The major shift toward policing in American schools in the early 1990s was driven by fears of escalating violence (Day and Golench 1997). Because of their high crime rates, schools in economically polarized or poor areas were the first deemed to require police presence (Thurau, and Wald 2009: 988; Arum and Ford: 2012: 57; Jennings et al 2011: 111). Under such conditions, enforcement became emphasized as the primary objective and success was measured by the number of charges laid (Price 2009: 549; Brown 2006: 596). This approach not only exacerbated pre-existing tensions between citizens and police but also fueled civil rights complaints (Arum and Ford 2012: 59; Price 2009: 552; Bracy 2010). Many argued the presence of police in schools combined with increasingly rigid disciplinary policies to create a school-to-prison pipeline. Kim, Losen, and Hewitt (2010) describe the school-to-prison pipeline as "the confluence of education policies in under-resourced public schools and a predominantly punitive juvenile justice system that fails to provide education and mental health services for our most at-risk students and drastically increases the likelihood that these children will end up with a criminal record rather than a high school diploma" (P. 4).

This school-to-prison pipeline scenario set US school policing off to a bad start. Because police were first deployed in high crime areas, many parents and school administrators opposed the positioning of officers in their schools because they felt this sent the public message that there was something wrong with their children, their school, and/or their community (Brown 2006: 596).

At the same time, there was a growing body of literature indicating that outcomes could be different, or even the opposite, if school-based officers were tasked with a preventative, rather than reactive, mandate (Johnson 1999). When police and educators adopted a community-policing philosophy, the school-to-prison pipeline was more likely to

recede than be intensified (Jennings et al 2011; Scott, 2001; Brady, Balmer, and Phenix 2007).

Rigorous examinations of crime prevention point to the imperative of positioning community policing within a larger framework directed toward facilitating the integration of youth into our schools and larger communities, rather than further distancing them through incarceration (Brady, Balmer, and Phenix 2007). Although there are many definitions of community policing, the core consideration is an emphasis on police working cooperatively with other government departments, community organizations, and citizens to develop and reinforce conditions known to diminish criminal activity (Chappell, 2009).

This provides a context for understanding the observed variations in evaluations. If police, educators, other government departments, and the larger community are working within a restorative justice framework aimed at keeping young people in school and out of prison, crime is likely to decline (Coon and Travis 2012: 28; Jennings et al 2011: 122; Hinds 2009). Alternatively, if any of these partners are operating under the reverse punitive mandate of pushing maximum numbers of youth out of school and into the criminal justice system, this is likely to lead to increases in criminal activity.

It is well known that the internalization of societal norms is much more effective than the threat of sanctions in deterring engagement in criminal behaviour (Hinds 2009). Because the school is one, if not the, main institution connecting young people to the values and expectations of the larger society, if children or youth prematurely separate from the education system they are much more likely to turn away from mainstream norms of behaviour. Early school leaving is one of the strongest indicators that social problems are in store for the future. A survey of incarceration facilities in the mid-nineties indicated that approximately one in three of the individuals incarcerated in

Canada at that time had grade nine or lower education (Robinson et al 1998).

Not only is early school leaving likely to lead to engagement in unlawful activity but also the incarceration that results from such unlawful activity enhances the odds of continued offending in the future (Wilson, 2013). Whereas school cultures are designed to reinforce behaviours in keeping with the values of the larger society, cultures that develop in incarceration facilities typically reinforce behaviours that contradict the values of the larger society. Thus, when increasing numbers of young people are removed from school and placed in prison, crime rates can be expected to escalate in subsequent years.

Best Practices

Existing research and evaluations point to four primary success factors or best practices with respect to community policing in schools: (C) collaboration, (A) availability, (L) linking, and (M) mending. One method of representing and remembering these characteristics could be with the acronym CALM.

Collaboration

One cannot overemphasize that policing is only one component of a much larger approach required to reduce criminal activity and build safer communities (Brown 2006: 598; Robles-Pina and Denham, 2012; Smith 2010: 2). In the final analysis, the greatest gains in social and personal well-being, and consequently crime prevention, are likely to be achieved through the development of genuinely inclusive schools and communities that utilize restorative justice practices to redirect rather than exclude youth whenever possible (Morrison 2005). The more young people become distanced from healthy productive activities, the more likely they will be to engage in unhealthy counter-

productive activities. Consequently, The International Centre for Crime Prevention (ICCP) recommends early intervention whole-school approaches as a primary ingredient of crime prevention strategies (Shaw 2004).

Availability

Deterrence is one of the most immediate and long-lasting impacts of situating police officers in schools (Johnson 1999; Jennings et al 2011: 121; Brown 2006: 598). Even when researchers report increases in disorderly conduct charges, the presence of a police officer in a school generally decreases the prevalence of serious assaults and weapons charges (Theriot 2009: 285; James, Logan, and Davis 2011: 216). Some studies also indicate students and teachers feel safer when an officer is readily available (Weiler and Cray 2011). The International Centre for Crime Prevention's 2012 report reiterates that "the benefits of prevention result in direct savings in expenditure on the criminal justice system, making investment in prevention cost effective" (ICCP 2012: 5).

Linking

One issue that is reiterated repeatedly in evaluations of policing in schools is that the success of such initiatives depends on the selection of "the right type of person for the job" (Clark 2011; Weiler and Cray 2011: 161). The most effective officers have been found to have a strong commitment to developmental rather than punitive approaches to working with youth (Jennings et al 2011: 121; James, Logan, and Davis 2011: 215). Research also shows that informal contact with school officers has a positive effect on young peoples' willingness to assist police (Hinds 2012: 18; Torres and Stefkovich 2009).

Having a police officer in a school has the potential to change both school and police cultures over time. When officers strive to implement principles of community policing and restorative justice, both they and the school personnel with whom they interact are likely to become more practiced at looking for means of addressing the

underlying problems experienced by both victims and offenders (Thurau and Wald 2009: 993 Jennings et al 2011: 121; Robles-Pina and Denham 2012: 41; Theriot 2009: 285, Torres and Stefkovich 2009).

Restorative practices aim not only to bring a just resolution to exiting conflicts but also to address the precipitating conditions out of which such conflicts have arisen (Chatterjee and Elliott 2003). In their 2012 report, the International Centre for Crime Prevention pointed out that "restorative processes, community service, mediations, and arbitrated settlements are all strategies that can be implemented and, when successful, can have a positive impact on recidivism prevention" (ICCP 2012: 17). "Successful mediations are not only gauged merely by the creation of a diplomatic agreement between the parties, but also by the healing experienced by both of them" (Chatterjee and Elliot 2003: 349).

Mending

As officers who are positioned within schools gain familiarity with students, they become more open and better positioned to successfully redirect young people's behaviours both prior to and following an incident (Thurau and Wald 2009: 993). Over time, they can reduce the frequency of patrol officers being called to schools and ease the strain on administrators who are neither trained nor hired to undertake policing.

Without an officer for support, school administrators are more likely to be pushed to the point where they just "can't take it any more". In describing why they want a police officer in their school, many school administrators feel they have neither the time nor the expertise required to detect or intervene in what the assigned officer can see as the potential for escalating problems. From both the perspective of policing and school administration, the consistent presence of an officer is critical and cannot be as effectively performed by outside officers who do not know the students or contracted security personnel

who do not have the authority of police (Price 2009; Robles-Pina and Denham 2012).

Arrest is more likely when outside officers are called to the school (Price 2009: 252). Following a comprehensive review of all school-policing initiatives in Massachusetts, Thurau and Wald (2009) reported that both school-based police and Chiefs felt...

> call-for-service officers did not possess the patience or aptitude for working with youth, or the freedom from time constraints to work through problems with students. They believed dedicated SROs [School Resource Officers] were much more inclined to resist arrest, except as a last option, and to make efforts to address the root causes of the students' problems (P. 994).

As mentioned previously, positive outcomes are most likely when offences are dealt with through restorative practices (Jennings et al 2011: 121; Robles-Pina and Denham 2012: 41; Theriot 2009: 285). While a youth who has access to strong family, school, and/or community supports may benefit from a one-time conferencing session, continuing attention is required to help those who have few, if any, family/ community supports. If such "high-risk" young people are not provided with opportunities to develop alternative futures, diversion from arrest is likely to merely postpone, rather than resolve, the problem.

Those who develop criminal careers typically engage in problematic behaviours in their teen years or earlier (Young and Sarre 2013). While increasing numbers of young women are coming into conflict with the law, crime rates are still highest among young men (Taylor-Butts and Bressan 2008). Some studies indicate that teenage boys gravitate to police officers more than other school personnel (Thurau and Wald 2009). If a school liaison office (SLO) can mend a tear in the fabric between even a few "high risk" young men and the larger society, the savings in personal and social suffering, as well as criminal processing and detainment dollars, will be enormous. Thus,

the redirection of youth is one of the most critical roles school officers can play in impacting crime rates (Hinds 2012: 19; Smith 2010: 2).

Methodology

The results to be presented in the next section of this report are based on semi-structured personal interviews conducted between the summer of 2012 and winter of 2013. In an effort to avoid bias, respondents were not directly questioned about the aforementioned best practices; rather they were merely asked to describe their personal experiences and opinions pertaining to the presence of police in schools. The interviews ranged from one to two hours in length. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and thematically analyzed using ATLAS.ti. The interviewees included both educators and police who were involved in the original development of the SLO program and those who are part of the program today. Respondents who were involved when the project began included: the principal of the school where the first SLO was positioned, the Inspector of Schools, Chief of Police, and first SLO. Interviews pertaining to the operation of the current SLO program included: two school-liaison officers, four principals in schools where SLOs are positioned, and the current Chief of Police. Quotations from educators are indicated with an E and quotations from police are indicated with a P.

Results

This section of the report addresses the extent to which the police-in-the-schools initiative undertaken in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) is described by school administrators and police

as conforming to the best practices outlined above. Consideration will be given respondents views of the effects as well as the content of police activities in schools.

Collaboration

Because collaboration is the foundation of community policing, let us begin our examination from this perspective. As described in the research review, collaboration is important to crime prevention because the roots of crime extend far beyond the criminal-justice system.

The police chief, school administrators, and SLO involved in the original CBRM school-policing initiative, described the time as one of considerable change. On an institutional level, three junior-high schools were being amalgamated into one facility that would be positioned in close proximity to the associated high school. This move would concentrate approximately 2,000 students in one area of city. Furthermore, the students being drawn together were from different religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Pressures also were mounting in the communities to be served by this new consolidated school. Although labour markets were precarious across Canada, Cape Breton had been particularly hard hit by mine and industry closures. As increasing numbers of families found themselves without a steady source income, many parents began to travel to other parts of the country for weeks or months at a time to find work. School administrators described such heightened family and community stresses as spilling into the schools.

Because secondary certification had become a requirement for virtually all forms of employment, schools also were coming under increasing pressure to do whatever they could to keep as many teens as possible engaged in the education system until they completed grade 12. Both the Nova Scotia Special Education Policy and Education Act of the mid-nineties emphasized making education accessible to all Nova Scotia youth (Nova Scotia House of Assembly;

Nova Scotia Department of Education 1997). Under such conditions, it became incumbent upon schools to broaden their mandate from narrowly defined academic instruction to attempting to address barriers, both inside and outside the school, which might detract from students' capacities to engage and learn.

While teachers were in a good position to identify difficulties, they had neither the time nor resources to address the complex sets of social and economic issues that lay behind the most difficult behaviour problems. The SLO positioned in the first Cape Breton school in the mid nineties described teachers as working under impossible expectations. They had to be "everything to everybody". (P)

Administrators sincerely committed to providing the best learning environments for the greatest diversity of students recognized that their capacity to do so required drawing on other professionals who had not traditionally been part of the school system. When the SLO program was first developed in the CBRM, the communities being served were experiencing not only the family and employment strains described above but also increased incidences of suicide, teen pregnancy, drug use, and violence. (E) As one of the school administrators stated,

> We needed the help of other people. If they [youth] are there all day, why not have what they need? The full-service school idea spoke to us in way that just made sense. Under one roof we could bring together the educator, the social services person, the protective services person, and the health services person. You would have people there dealing with the children and you would have the capability of meeting all their needs. I was passionate about it at the time and I still am. (E)

At the same time schools were being expected to provide programming for a greater diversity of students, the police "force" was being transformed into the philosophy and practice of a police "service". (P) Officers were being encouraged to get involved in

community organizations and interact more with the public. As attention refocused on seeking to reduce rather than merely deal with crime, it became evident the most sustained long-term gains were likely to be achieved through early intervention. As discussed in the above review, research had repeatedly demonstrated that the longer young people continued in directions that fell outside the law, the more entrenched their behaviours were likely to become. If not redirected at an early age, by the time they reached adulthood they would be well positioned to join the ranks of repeat offenders. Furthermore, the successes of such early interventions were known to depend on considering not only the psychology of individual offenders but also more generally the sociology of the family, school, and community conditions out of which such offenses arose.

Because both law enforcement and education are legislated services, police as well as teachers find themselves required to respond to whatever situations arise. Unlike private schools, public schools cannot choose the students they are willing to educate; nor can police choose the areas they are willing to serve. Consequently, strains in communities become translated into strains on police as well as educators. As an end-of-the-line service provider, police get it all. "The expectations heaped on the police are quite unreal." (P)

As one school administrator indicated, once educators and police began to talk, they "seemed to be speaking the same language." (E)

> I got the picture that there was more involved here than just the law. It is much bigger than the police. I bet when the kids are having repeat problems there is more than just the police involved, there is Health and Mental Health. (P)

As indicated in the research review for this project, early school leaving is one, if not the, primary indicator that an individual is likely to be progressing toward a future of offending. Thus, inclusive educational practices and crime prevention go hand in hand. Just as exclusionary educational practices have come together to increase

crime as described by the school-to-prison pipeline in the US, so also can inclusive education and community policing come together to decrease crime.

From a larger perspective, when the SLO program was first being considered in the CBRM, the Nova Scotia government also was promoting enhanced collaboration and coordination among youth-based services and programs. Various inter-agency groups aimed at providing comprehensive services for youth had been established across the province under the umbrella of the Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC).

> Here in Cape Breton, we had the basis of the co-op movement, which was the movement to take the abilities of a variety of people and put them together for the greater good of the majority. People knew and respected each other. [Consequently, this area was able to develop] the most successful regional CAYAC. (E)

Thus, the CBRM police in the schools initiative was securely positioned within a collaborative crime-prevention framework from its inception. Rather than arising in response to escalating violence as was characteristic in the US, the Cape Breton SLO program arose as a proactive cooperative initiative aimed at preventing the increases in school-related crime known to be likely to accompany the amalgamation of diverse students from economically polarized areas.

Interviews with principals and SLOs currently working within the CBRM suggest the program continues to operate within the collaborative model from which it originated. Current principals interviewed for this project generally describe the SLO as "part of the team". (E)

> Every teacher here will give you the same story, maybe not with the same words, but the same story about the value of having a police-liaison officer. (E)

"I would give [the school-liaison program] an A+ as a community partnership". (E) One of the SLOs described his introduction into the school in the following way

> They have made me feel like I am one of their own; like I was here forever, right from day one. (P)

The issues that led to the development of CAYAC in the 1990s continue to be equally if not more pressing today. As one of the principals for this project pointed out

> I think that the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and the Department of Community Services, everybody has to work together to make things a little more efficient. You know, in the business we are in we have to do so much more with so much less. (E)

> We have got to break down the barriers. We have got to have people working together. (P)

Availability

The Chief of Police involved in the original development of the CBRM school-policing program described the enforcement side of the SLO's job as being "implicit. I thought it would have a calming effect on the school." (P)

It is this preventative presence that is still the first thing mentioned by principals when asked how they feel about having a police officer in their school. In conjunction with other issues that will be discussed later in this report, the daily visibility of an SLO repeatedly was described by principals as serving an important crime prevention function. "I think the building has a certain level of peace and security and a feeling of being secure and safe when the [SLO] is here." (E)

> [The SLO] always goes out when the kids come to school in the morning, and that's really at a crucial time. It's a presence and the kids know that and it's being proactive. It just makes for a

more even keel. Same as when we go out after school, because that police officer is there, that usually sets the tone. (E)

This deterrent effect may not only make the school a safer place for those who might have fallen victim to crime but also diminish the numbers or students who are likely to come into conflict with the law. "With the [SLO] in the school, I think there is less opportunity for kids to make mistakes." (E)

The following incident described by one of the school administrators in this study illustrates how an SLO can minimize conflicts between students and the law.

> There was a time when there were cutbacks being announced provincially and students made a determination that they needed to make a statement, so they were going to march on the Provincial Building. [The SLO], in consultation with the Police Chief of the day, made a determination that if these kids were going to march, they there were going to march safely. They were going to exercise their right to demonstrate and they were going to do it peacefully and appropriately. There were a number of marked and unmarked police cars in that entire neighborhood that [the SLO] mobilized in no time flat to ensure that [the students] would be able to get to and from the location and make their statement. It always stuck in my mind. If the familiarity with that situation didn't exist, then somebody would have had to dispatch those cars for maybe different reasons, maybe crowd control which would be quite different than a surveillance to ensure safety. I would have to think that in the eyes of those kids that officer's stock went up that day. He wasn't sitting in judgment. The types of intangibles that [SLOs] bring to that environment are things that many think is fluff. But it is not fluff. It is support for kids. It enhances the safety and security of the learning environment. (E)

In addition to acting as a general deterrent, the daily presence of an SLO also was described as creating a secure space for students who felt vulnerable. One principal mentioned how, even if they did not approach the SLO, students who were experiencing difficulties tended to stay in areas where they were visible to the officer. Principals also felt more secure about the safety of students if the SLO was available in their absence. One principal talked about being reassured about student safety when the SLO volunteered to accompany students on a long-distance field trip. Another principal stressed the importance of the SLO being on the premises when (s)he was absent during the school day. "It is another level of security and if I have to be out of the building and [the SLO] is here I feel much better." (E)

Educators are the first to admit they simply are not trained in law-enforcement. The principals interviewed for this project described how on-site officers were able to deal with incidents efficiently and effectively because they not only knew the environment and students but also were well versed in the proper procedures to be followed. When charges had to be laid, SLOs did the background work that allowed for efficient court processing. One principal summed this up by saying "It takes the guess work out of it." (E)

Not all of the crime-prevention work of SLOs is focused on students. A number of principals and SLOs talked about the importance of keeping people who might lead to additional disturbances out of the school.

> The odd time it does [happen] yes, more often than I would like. You might have somebody that was out the night before and they were up partying all night. When the sun comes up they get on the move and are wandering through the property here and they might just walk in. (P)

Thus, SLOs can find themselves called upon to deal with neighbourhood as well as school issues.

Students are unlikely to concern themselves with whether or not an officer is on the premises until problems arise. After a couple of incidents at one school, students were asked their opinions about having a police officer available.

> We asked kids afterwards if they felt safer. It was the general student body who were not involved in anything but the presence of a police officer gave them the feeling of security when there was something bad happening. (E)

Consistent with results from studies reported in the research review, earlier evaluation reports pertaining to the CBRM SLO program indicated calls for outside police support declined and students felt the officer was deterring crime in the school (McKay 2006; Dunbar 1998).

> When we had our own [officer] for 100 percent of the week there was so much for that person to do. He had as busy a week as any of his counterparts who were working in the school setting. (E)

When SLOs' work weeks were later divided across two or more schools, incidents began to increase during their absences.

> I remember one time [when the SLO was at the other school] they had to call two different cars down there and that was a shame because I was at a different school and if I had been there that would not have happened. (P)

> If we ever lose this program, I can see there being more petty crime, theft, drug-related issues, you know. Even the bullying will be harder to police and probably on the rise. (E)

> This is a community. They talk about policing ratios. There are 1,000 people in this building right now. When (s)he is here (s)he is looking after a community with a ratio of one police officer to 1,000 people. (E)

> The [SLO program] is money well spent in my opinion. (E)

Well look at this way, how many times would we call cars if we didn't have [the SLO] here? How many times? I would bet you every couple of days we would be calling a squad car to the school. (E)

Linking

While the presence of an officer is likely to have an immediate deterrent effect, the long-term benefits of school policing depend on the strengths of the relationships such officers are able to cultivate. One of the school administrators involved in getting the SLO program started described relationships prior to that time in the following way:

The police department was way over there somewhere. You had no dealings with it. You hoped you didn't have any dealings with it. (E)

This sentiment was reiterated by one of the current SLOs.

In my day, you would see a cop walking and you would start running and you didn't even do anything. Back then there was not a student that would come and talk to the police. (P)

The difficulty with positioning police in such a distant punitive light is that it detracts from public willingness to report incidents and/or cooperate with police investigations. Both principals and SLOs felt the greatest long-term gains to be made from having officers in schools would result from creating a different type of relationship between police and youth. "If they see [the officer's actions] as part of what you need to do instead of somebody trying to get them, than it is completely different and leads to more cooperation." (E)

The Chief of Police who was involved in the beginning of the school-liaison program described the approach in the following way.

The early rationale for SLOs was PREVENTION - Proactive Prevention. This would require strong healthy relationships between the students and the SLO. If the enforcement aspect

of the SLO was seen as the primary responsibility then building trusting relationships could have been a challenge. It was the view that enforcement would remain secondary and in the background and proactive prevention would be front and center. TRUST was key to understanding when and where intervention was needed. Enforcement up front could become an unnecessary barrier to attaining trust. (P)

This is where "having the right person for the job" as described by earlier researchers comes into play. "It requires a special kind of person, a person with a lot of empathy and feeling for the kids." (E)

Your liaison officer must be well prepared. If they bring the street mentality into the school it won't work. (P)

A set of skills that some people don't possess is the ability to work with youth. It is such a proactive opportunity for our police service. I swear it's pay me now or pay me later and the cost later is a heck of a lot more than what these guys are doing. But you have to have the right personality to come into a school and be able to hook up with these kids, and be effective, and be in and out of the classrooms and model tremendous leadership. That is what our SLO does. (E)

To be effective in relationship building, SLOs must involve themselves in activities that are meaningful to young people.

It is vitally important to have the right person for the job because it has to be somebody who's going to be around the school that develops relationships with our students. For insistence, our police officer comes to all of our sports events so he is seen as a supporter of the school. (E)

It is no good being in the school if you are not part of the school. If I was in my office here and closed the blind that wouldn't work. You have to be out with the kids and you have to be able to communicate with them. You have to develop a trust with

them and having done all of that, things do run a lot smoother. (P)

SLOs are most likely to be effective if they have a positive outgoing demeanor. Their success lies in presenting themselves as approachable and available.

> All the students know that there is a police officer in the school and pretty well everyone in the school will know me or have had conversations with me at one time or another. Not [necessarily] because they will come up to me and start a conversation but because I like to go out to the kids and let them know that I am here and I am available. I want them to know that they can trust me. (P)

> There is myself and three other teachers here that are involved in the breakfast program and we serve breakfast to maybe a hundred kids. I found that was a very good way to bridge the gap between police and the students here in the school. They love it. A lot of times, and this is the important part, a lot of times a student will come to me or to administration or to their teacher and let them know that they are having an issue. A lot of times when they come to me it is because they feel I am the sort of person that they can trust. They have seen me in the school, they have seen me in the breakfast program, they have talked to me at the breakfast program, and they have sort of built up a little trust in me and they can come to me and talk to me about these issues. (P)

> Can you think of anywhere in society where people are going to the police and searching them out to support a safe environment; to support other people being respected or not being hurt? It could be as simple as somebody not treating somebody very well or something that is dangerous, right out to criminal offenses. It could be "what do I do, here's what has happened to me?" It could be reporting a serious sexual

assault or it could be something about a student concerned with sexuality and doesn't know who to turn to. The officer ends up being a conduit from all kinds of other specialty services. (E)

One principal talked about feeling the biggest loss would be for the students if the SLO was removed from the school.

> I think their connection to a police officer would disappear. I think a police officer as somebody you can talk to or as somebody that you only see when you are in trouble are two distinct persons. I think it's really important to have that person that they can talk to, and get some information, get some guidance. (E)

While victim services are now recognized as important, it is not possible to provide such services in a meaningful way unless there is contact with victims or potential victims on a regular basis. Both police and school respondents for this project described how SLOs provide real victim supports on a daily basis.

> The kid that is being the victim knows that when he gets to school I am going to do something about it. The kids know that right, and the parents do too. (P)

Other students also will be more likely to intervene if they have access to an approachable SLO.

> They will pretty well come and tell you "Listen Johnny is going to be beaten today and I don't want to see that happen." (P)

> There always seems to be an issue here in the school and when I say issue it can be anything from a Facebook issue, with threatening conversation back and forth or it can be between students. Lots of times it is things that happen off of school property but they carry it back into the school. Once they get in the office and they get to know you and you interact with them all day long and everyday and they feel that comfort level and

they usually open up and then they talk to me. If there is anything that I can do to help one of the students here I will. I will bend over backwards for a student to help them. I let them know that and I think that is why some of them feel comfortable about coming in and talking with me. (P)

I think the biggest most important thing and it's both again for education and for policing and I think for society is our students see the police officer in the school as an asset and that is such a terrific thing to have happen. [Some] students will go to our constable before they come to the office about a situation. (E)

Many incidents can be dealt with by meeting with those involved either individually or together, depending on the circumstances.

That conversation, in many cases, is all the parent of the student who is being verbally harassed over the Internet wants. They just want it to stop. They want someone to be there, to help, and they see the police officer as that person. (E)

Such descriptions of the activities of SLOs illustrate how their continuing presence makes it possible for them to implement restorative practices that are most likely to be effective because there are opportunities for both early intervention and sustained follow-up.

Mending

As pointed out in the research review, crime rates are highest among young people who find themselves marginalized in one way or another.

Even as a young police officer, I was seeing that there were a lot of common denominators for young people who were repeatedly getting in trouble – family strife, a certain part of town where the housing wasn't quite as good, having trouble at school, drugs, more bullies around. If only we could change it. These are all wonderful people. They want the same as everybody else. We could probably change some of this. (P)

Because such family and community marginality is the context out of which much crime arises, effective crime-prevention measures are likely to come from keeping youth who are drawn from such environments engaged in the educational, recreational, and employment pursuits of the larger society.

As one officer commented,

> I think that it is very important that the police officer is in the school because the kids have someone in their school environment and this is a big part of their world and I did not realize how big a role school played in the life of a youth until I actually came here. This is their world. This is where they live and where they socialize. (P)

Outside of their families, the educational system is the first and most important connection young people have to the values, norms, and activities of the larger society. If this connection is severed, it does not bode well for their future. Rather than having the foundation required to continue their education and gain employment, youth who leave school before completing grade 12 are more likely to be set on a path toward behaviours that are deemed unacceptable or illegal by the larger society.

> Where do most of our young people gather on a daily basis? Where do they spend most of their time? In their schools. So if you get in there and you build that trust and all of these kids come in with different backgrounds and different services and you build the trust from the police end of it, I just see it moving forward. (P)

This sentiment expressed by one of the Chiefs of Police interviewed for this project clearly positions the CBRM initiative within a community-policing, rather than punitive, framework that is known to reduce rather than increase crime rates.

Because the school-to-prison pipeline has been such a major issue in the US, I asked the principals involved in this study if they felt more young people were being charged as a consequence of having an SLO in their school. Although the wording was slightly different for different principals, the unanimous response to the school-to-prison pipeline question was "That couldn't be further from the truth." (E)

> Absolutely not, in fact, I would say just the opposite effect on youth. Instead of the first interaction you have with a police officer they are arresting you and you are being charged, the [school liaison] officer is a support. So, just the opposite, the students see the officer as support. I like that more than anything and I absolutely think it's going to pay huge dividends in our communities in the future. [There] is a whole generation of kids that have come through high school who have seen a police officer in just that role. (E)

Because the CBRM SLO initiative aims at "putting youth back on the right track," it focuses on reaching out to all young people, regardless of their circumstances. Right from the beginning, those who were involved in the CBRM school-policing initiative saw the importance of working with young people who were experiencing all different types of difficulties. "Wouldn't it be great if you had a police officer who knows kids and could identify at-risk kids." (P) "The SLO would need to develop a rapport with the youth, and particularly with young people who had special circumstances." (E)

This is where restorative and punitive approaches to justice most distinctly part ways. Restorative justice aims to identify and correct the social conditions that lead up to youth getting into trouble rather than considering the teenager completely culpable for his/her crime and therefore personally deserving of whatever punishment is considered appropriate. The following quote from one of the originators of the Cape Breton school-policing initiative illustrates how this philosophy was built into the program from day one.

These aren't aliens that are coming in committing these crimes. These are our children. What are we doing wrong? (P)

Police officers positioned within, rather than called to schools, are better able to practice restorative justice processes because they can: connect with marginalized youth, de-escalate altercations when they arise, get to the roots of problems, facilitate meaningful reconciliation, refer to support services, and provide follow-up.

Because many youth who leave the school system before completing grade 12 are drawn from marginalized home environments, truly inclusive education, and the long-term gains in crime prevention with which it is associated, requires connecting with young people whose parents are disconnected. The development of such connections depends on the prior key to success – availability. As one principal put it, "If you don't spend time day in and day out, you can't build relationships." (E)

> A police officer coming into the school to do a program, which I believe [they have in other areas] and we had in the past, is nothing because the relationship doesn't develop. It's like presenting a talk on drugs in the schools. It is a nice assembly and it doesn't go anywhere. In all honesty it doesn't. We know students who are involved heavily in the drug trade. We know students who have real drug problems. I know a lot of them. [The SLO] would know even more. Our [SLO] is outside every morning where the Rocks and all the smokers and drug users are, to talk to them and have them talk to him. So, one, they are not doing drugs then, and two, it's a positive interaction… Somebody is talking to those kids everyday "look get yourself to school, you can't come to school under the influence." Somebody is talking to that student. Can you imagine if that student has never heard somebody say that? And there is no one there to say it. Those things pay such incredible dividends. This is one of the most cost-effective things you could possibly

do in a school. There is a whole group who will only talk to the [SLO]. (P)

Relationships with "high risk" students have the potential not only to help more students stay in school and away from the streets but also to de-escalate conflicts when they arise. Incidents are likely to worsen the longer they are allowed to continue. Therefore, the reduction in response time made possible by having officers positioned in schools is likely to prevent those involved from digging themselves into increasingly serious difficulties. When fights do occur the SLO "is certainly a good presence to have, [when (s)he appears] they separate themselves, you know the kids separate themselves." (P)

> The way it used to be, the police would eventually make their way here. Sometimes there were more pressing things to do than a call from the school if there was an assault. (E)

> So if a police officer was not in the school for sure it could easily escalate into something at the school here or after school or out in the community. A lot of times when there are two people involved it can snowball into more people and several people and you have even bigger issues and more problems to deal with. (P)

School liaison officers also are better positioned than outside officers to reason with and calm the youth involved.

> If they [outside officers] have to be called – they don't know the students. Our SLO gets to know them. If someone has a short fuse he knows that. It makes a difference for the student because they know him. He knows the scenarios. He can resolve it so it doesn't become a big problem. (E)

> We had a number of volatile situations in the school. Some people say it is because of the stature of the police officer that people calm down but it's also the fact that that officer previously had a relationship with the student. [That student]

might have gotten into a serious conflict with another student in a fight or an assault but the relationship [with the SLO] prevented the situation from escalating to a level where there might be charges, people leaving in handcuffs. When officers have to be called to the school the process sometimes is going to be an actual court case. Sometimes they are going to put it in for restorative justice. That whole process costs time, money, and resources. I would say in a lot of cases this is avoided now because [the SLO] prevents it [from happening] or from going to the next level. (E)

Even after an incident has occurred, there are still opportunities for redirecting youth if a police officer is available and knowledgeable about the situation.

While not all youth can be reached, more could be set in the direction of law-abiding adulthood if they received appropriate attention and compassion early in their lives. School liaison officers are known to have provided this attention and compassion to some young people. [The SLO] had the bullies coming to [him/her] or the tough kids coming to [him/her] and we found out they weren't so tough because we heard some of their stories." (P)

Some kids you didn't even know were living on the streets, were kicked out of their homes and didn't even have a meal for two days. And the police are reaching out to Community Services and getting things done for these individuals. That's the stuff nobody sees that's not recorded in a file or as a crime stat. When you're dealing with those issues, especially the ones brushing with the law, that's crime prevention at its best. What would it eventually cost if there was no intervention? (P)

These supports that are in place are saving some kids. I really believe that. Some kids are going down a path that is destructive and it's the break. (P)

Following a restorative justice philosophy, SLOs are often involved in resolution-based conferencing sessions.

> We will always get the other party that is involved in this in and we will interview them. Interview them separately and if they are in agreement we will try to get them together. Most of the time we like to keep everything in house, we do not like to bring our issues out of school and into the police office, if we don't have to… Maybe nine times out of 10 we can do that through intervention and communication with them. (P)

These in-school meetings and discussions give students

> time to reflect. The more we can do that, the better we are going to be as a society. They are going to be positive members of society. Somebody who has given a kid a break and supported them is going to be a linchpin for something that is more positive in the future, and liaison officers give our kids a tremendous leg up. (E)

> [We work with students in] the most constructive and positive way that we can. Keeping in mind that they are still youth and everybody makes mistakes, especially the youth. So it is important that you don't shut the door on them even though they make mistakes. You have to have an open door and you have to keep working at them and working at them and someday you see that ray of light. (P)

> And these are students that have a multitude of issues. We have students that couch surf, students that have serious issues, that have family issues, that have serious drug problems, that are involved in crime. They are more likely, as strange as it seems, to go to the police officer than the administration of the school with an issue. (E)

> I would hate for someone to think but it's another cost. Well I am telling you that I don't think it is. It is a cost saving.

Everything I see in situations that occur here where without a police officer somebody would be leaving in cuffs. Somebody would be leaving because there is not that extra person. There is not that liaison who can talk somebody down and we can only go so far without that. (E)

The other thing is they are on the street on a Friday night and they are about to get in trouble and [the SLO] says "look guys you are heading down the wrong road, you are going to get yourself in some real trouble" and they calm down. Without that officer who has had that relationship with the students there is no one. There is no break. That behaviour is going to continue to develop down that track. There is no one. (E)

Like I say, I think that in the last two years we sent maybe three people to court, that is amazing - maybe three. It is not jamming that youth court system up. It is not jamming police up, you know. It is not tying patrol guys up on a regular basis. I can guarantee you on a regular basis [without and SLO] they would be there [at the schools] five days a week. (P)

Both police and school administrators spoke about the long-term gains that were likely to accrue from early relationships between students and police officers.

I can't believe the benefits for policing. When that constable goes back out on the streets in the summer when he leaves this, he has developed a relationship with over 800 students here plus the students [at other schools]. That pays tremendous dividends in community policing from then on. It is a whole generation that has grown up thinking that this person is an asset. They are not just a police officer on the beat. They are an asset in the community. They are someone I know and they are someone I can go to. (E)

That is a big thing. I really think that the biggest gain to a police liaison officer is that you have created an inroad into supporting youth that never existed before that gives tremendous gains to those youth that they interact with and to community policing. I can't stress enough how much I believe it is a gain for community policing. It is creating such an incredible gain. Just think of the very volatile situations that police officers go into on a regular basis. It could be domestic violence, it could drugs, and it could be a break and enter. Knowing the name or knowing somebody connected with the student or the individual makes all the difference in the world. I have heard from officers what an advantage it is in calming things. (E)

As SLOs become better known to the community through students, they find themselves with increasing opportunities to act as advisors to parents as well as youth. Numerous respondents for this project mentioned that parents come to the SLO when they are worried their son/daughter is heading in a problematic direction.

Parents got comfortable and started coming in because their kids were comfortable talking to the police about their problems. The parents were coming in talking to the police about their problems. That's how I think the interactions started, and it developed from there. (P)

What alternative does a parent have without a liaison officer, if their child is involved in drugs? (E)

Even though schools are trying to provide more inclusive educational opportunities, their mandate is still first and foremost education. The mandate of policing, on the other hand, is first and foremost public safety. Thus, having a police officer who is trained to focus on safety in the school, directs more immediate attention to crime prevention.

Right now the officers at the schools work very closely with the youth health centres. The officers at the schools work with

children that are in crisis. I can't count the number of kids who were suicidal, having family issues; they deal with all that stuff. (P)

What people don't know is how many kids got their life turned around. You will never be able to calculate the millions of dollars that would be saved in directing your kids, certain kids, earlier, compared to the money that will be spent later on. (P)

The proper inventions are early on. You will save a barrel of money. (P)

At the end of the day, we are all serving the same people. It means everybody in the community. We have to rise above and make sure we are inclusive. (P)
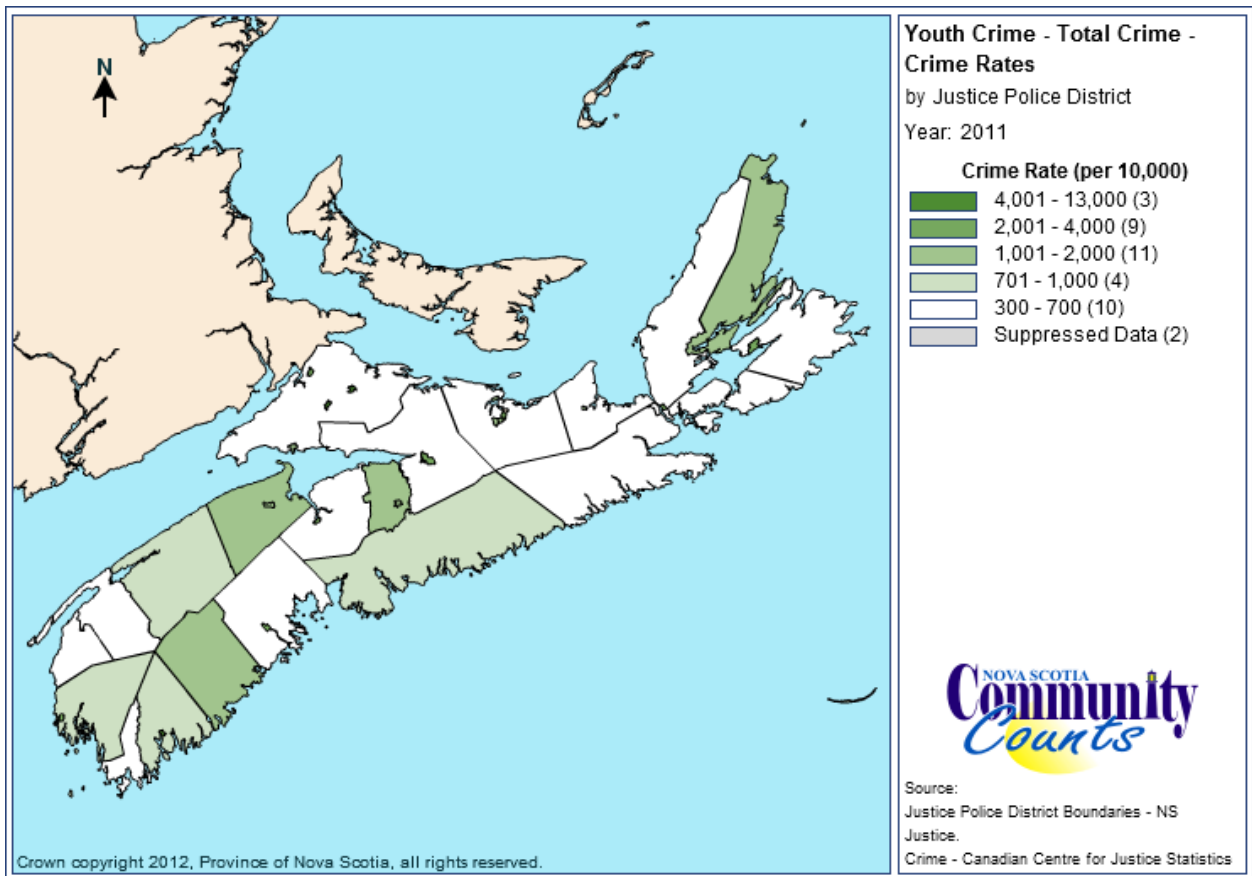
If you think you're not going to need police officers to arrest people and for the public safety aspect, you're wrong. You're always going to need that part of it. But we also need the other part - the social support network. You can't arrest yourself to public safety. You can't arrest your way to stop crime. I mean police will never stop arresting because that's a safety aspect but you also need to do the crime prevention part. You have got to do the prevention and the enforcement parts. They just go hand in hand. The more prevention and education you do on this end the less enforcement you have to do on the other end. They all come into play for producing healthier safer communities, and you have always got to be reassessing it. (P)

We have now come full circle back to emphasizing collaboration. The most pronounced gains in crime prevention are likely to come from the capacity of service providers to work together to address the larger community problems out of which crime arises. Because the roots of crime are so broad and deep, seeing crime prevention as "some else's problem" or "some other department's responsibility" is counterproductive. It is important to recognize that it is everyone's

problem and everyone's responsibility if real changes are to be set in motion and sustained. "We have all got to start working together." (P)

Crime Statistics

In comparison to Nova Scotia as a whole, CBRM continues to have all the conditions that place communities as risk for high crime rates: comparatively low levels of education among adults, high rates of unemployment among adults and youth alike, and a high percentage of families living in poverty (Nova Scotia Government). Yet, despite these "risk" factors, youth crime rates in the CBRM are among the lowest in the province (Nova Scotia Government).

Youth Crime - Total Crime - Crime Rates
by Justice Police District
Year: 2011

Crime Rate (per 10,000)
- 4,001 - 13,000 (3)
- 2,001 - 4,000 (9)
- 1,001 - 2,000 (11)
- 701 - 1,000 (4)
- 300 - 700 (10)
- Suppressed Data (2)

Source:
Justice Police District Boundaries - NS Justice.
Crime - Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

In comparison to other urban centres in the Atlantic Provinces, the CBRM youth crime rate is the lowest for violent crime and second only to Saint John's for property crime.

Police Reports of Violent Crimes for Youth per 100,000 Population Age 12 to 17
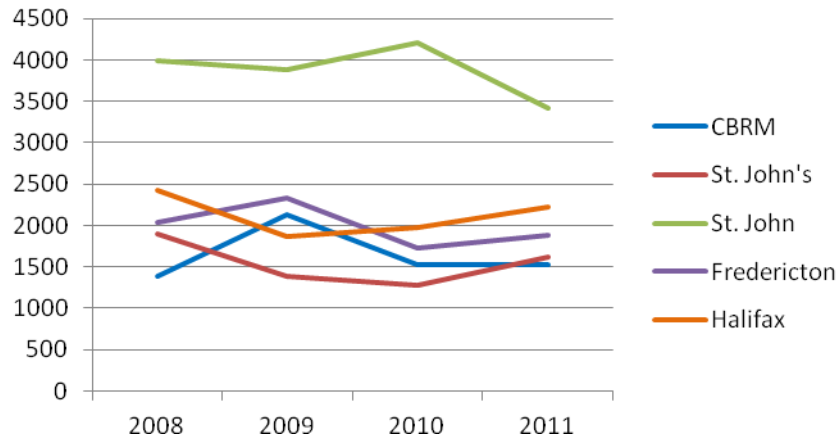
Source: Canadian Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

Police Reports of Property Crimes for Youth per 100,000 Population Age 12 to 17
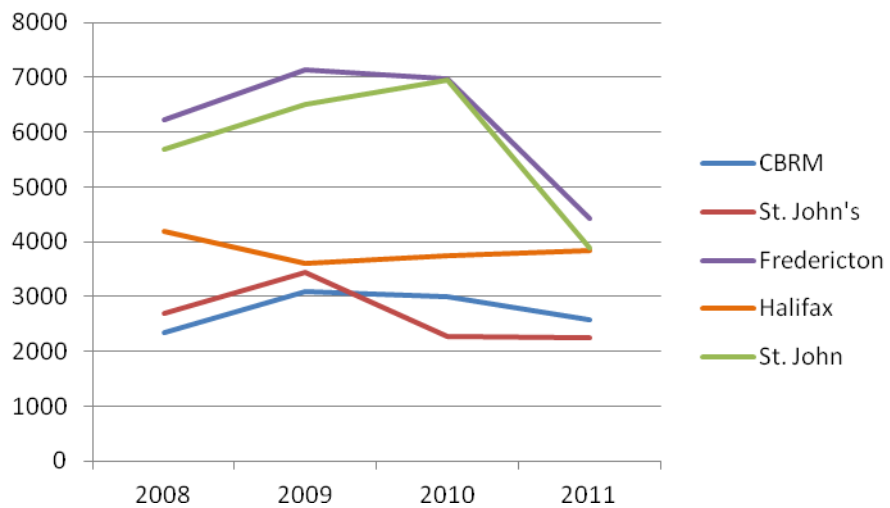
Source: Canadian Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of this report, we can draw the following conclusions:

- ✓ The outcomes of positioning police officers in schools depend on the school and police cultures within which they are operating.
- ✓ While punitive approaches to policing deal with problems in the short term, long-term gains in crime prevention and community safety depend on addressing the underlying conditions that give rise to and perpetuate crime.
- ✓ Community-policing and restorative-justice approaches move beyond conflict resolution to address the larger community conditions known to give rise to crime.
- ✓ The CBRM initiative was designed and continues to operate within a community-policing and restorative-justice model.
- ✓ Crime statistics comparing the CBRM with other areas of Nova Scotia and across the Atlantic Provinces indicate this model is making considerable inroads in minimizing youth crime rates.
- ✓ With adequate resourcing, the CBRM is well positioned to continue to move even further in the area of crime prevention.

On the basis of materials presented in this report, I would recommend that the CBRM serve as a demonstration site for the implementation of a cooperative community policing model that would include but not be limited to school-based policing. Because the origins of criminal behaviours are so far reaching and entwined, it is difficult to achieve demonstrable reductions in crime through narrow short-term programs. Rather, all research points to the need for continuing comprehensive collaborative approaches. Given the lengthy history of collaborative crime prevention work in the CBRM as described in this report, this

municipality is well positioned to carry what have already proven to be comparatively successful initiatives even further. Under the leadership of the current Chief of Police in conjunction with the Association for Safer Cape Breton Communities, a carefully planned and evaluated crime prevention project in the CBRM has the potential to be instructive for coordinated policy development across other parts of Nova Scotia and Canada.

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