

## Invest Smartly\*

### Strategic Overview

Investing taxpayers' funds in effective crime prevention is smart if it reduces crime by using more of what works and less of what does not.

Municipalities can use the evidence and local planning for prevention to counter balance the costs of reacting to crime after it happens. The issue is how to use the evidence about what works.

There are Canadian municipalities and other stakeholders who have experience in putting what works into practice. They have identified where gaps exist in programs for populations and places known by municipal stakeholders to be criminogenic. They have engaged the public.

So municipalities can harness more of the evidence and experience on what works to get effective and cost efficient crime reduction in several different ways:

- Building on municipal expertise and innovation in policing and in community development and social inclusion;
- Learning from other municipalities from coast to coast who are establishing city wide strategies to tackle crime problems.
- Using the expertise of two unique centres in Canada who bring together evidence on what works and knowledge on how to put it into action;
- Getting support from Federal and Provincial governments who are investing in crime prevention and community safety strategies;

#### Action for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Make decisions on expenditures guided by knowledge of what is – or is not - effective and cost efficient in reducing crime as well as local priorities and plans (see Action Briefs on *Take Responsibility*, *Plan Strategically* and *Engage the Public*);
2. Follow the 2008 resolution of the Big Cities Mayor Caucus (of FCM) to match increases in spending for policing with increases in sustained investments in effective crime prevention planning and action<sup>1</sup>;
3. Develop key policy makers and practitioners in the city through conferences, coaching and training so that they are knowledgeable on what works and how to harness it – and benefit from the experience of other municipalities, experts and tool kits;
4. Work with all orders of government to recognize the key role of municipalities in pre-crime prevention and establish tripartite arrangements.

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## Justification

The major challenge is how to use scarce resources so that crime is reduced beyond what is determined by socio-economic trends and policies. It is a question of balance between pre-crime prevention and post crime reaction. It must be based on evidence as to what works to get effective and cost-efficient crime reduction.

Municipal leaders and some members of the general public confuse crime prevention with policing. Keeping crime rates low requires a balanced approach between housing, youth agencies, schools, police and others to tackle known risk factors – often in a concerted way. It is much more than just enforcement. It is much more than broad social policy over which municipalities have little control.

Mayors and city councillors must provide leadership to make the shift to use scarce municipal resources more smartly so that the expenditures reduce crime before it happens - balancing increases in expenditures on pre-crime prevention and on post-crime reaction. It is also about leveraging and focussing funding from other orders of government, the private sector and foundations.

### But What Should Leaders Do to Invest in What Works?

One answer is to turn to reports by parliamentary committees, the World Health Organization and the United Nations. The accumulation of evidence about what works and how to deliver it seems daunting but is extensive and used too little.

Canada has two unique centres of expertise who are committed to sharing that knowledge with policy makers and practitioners.

**The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC)<sup>2</sup>** provides for international exchange of knowledge and experience between governments and organizations about what works. It has a compendium of national and local crime prevention strategies as well as evidence-based strategies to make cities safer for women. It has ways to cope with disorder such as drug use and prostitution.

**The Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC)<sup>3</sup>** develops and brings together scientific knowledge and experience from authoritative sources so that Canadians will enjoy lower rates of crime and victimization. IPC has garnered the most recent Canadian and international knowledge on what works to reduce crime in a journal published annually and written for Canadian policy makers and practitioners – *IPC Review*. Waller has also written a short book on the Truth about Reducing Crime – Less Law, More Order - to provide politicians, concerned citizens and taxpayers with reviews of what does not work, what works, and how to implement what works.

It works with a group of national organizations including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Victim Resource Centre, the John Howard Society, the Canadian Council on Social Development and the Caledon Institute on Social Policy to reach a consensus on evidence based ways to get results by *Building a Safer Canada*.

## The Action Briefs

The Action Briefs go further. Experts have taken this knowledge and turned it into briefs that identify concrete steps. They have benefitted from the insights and experience of the Municipal Network. They are available to help further.

The cover to the Action Briefs provides other suggestions as to where municipal stakeholders can turn for help. They can contact the founding members of the Municipal Network to learn from their successes and challenges. For additional material on inspiring programs in the 14 municipalities as well as details of contacts see the IPC website ([www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)).

Important tool kits on tackling safety successfully have been developed in Canada, particularly for municipalities. The best way to access these is by organizing seminars and training courses for executives and practitioners.

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments are committed to investing in effective crime prevention. The **National Crime Prevention Centre of Public Safety Canada (NCPC)** provides national leadership and funds multi-year programs that support effective and cost-efficient ways to prevent and so reduce crime by addressing known risk-factors in high-risk populations and places.

Their program was overhauled in 2008 to focus on multi-year programs based on evidence and collaboration that can be evaluated to demonstrate the achievement of results. They can fund multi-million dollar programs over 5 years. Their website ([www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/index-en.asp](http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/index-en.asp)) provides information that could be useful in adapting and testing proven and promising strategies such as the comprehensive Boston Gang Prevention Strategy, Quantum Opportunities, SNAP, and Youth Inclusion Projects.

Two Provincial governments have become inspiring pioneers of new policies but others are organizing to tackle safety more successfully.

The **Safe Communities Secretariat of the Alberta Government (SafeCom)**<sup>4</sup> orchestrates collaboration between nine social development and enforcement ministries to reduce crime and enhance community safety by developing and funding a major three pronged strategy of prevention, treatment and enforcement based on evidence about what works. Increases in pre-crime prevention matched increases in enforcement.

**Ministère de la sécurité publique of the Québec Government**<sup>5</sup> adopted the first provincial policy on crime prevention in Canada in 2001. Their vision is to reduce crime through inter-ministerial collaboration, municipal partnerships and planning, research and training, and so on.

## Building on Municipal Expertise in Policing

Some services of police departments do indeed reduce crime and enhance safety but this is much less than is believed because so much of the costs of policing are allocated to responding to 911 calls. Much of current resources are dedicated to emergency response, particularly for priority calls, traffic enforcement that saves lives and injuries, and investigations that take violent and persistent offenders off the street (National Research Council 2004).<sup>6</sup>

Canadian municipalities have a long track record of innovations in policing. Neighbourhood policing models that use problem-solving approaches are among the most effective of those that have been tested. Nevertheless, the standard Canadian approach has seen police costs grow to over \$10 billion, of which a rapidly growing proportion is paid by municipalities - 56.6% in 2006 (Beattie and Mole 2007; FCM 2008). With incentives from the federal and some provincial governments to hire more police officers, the costs to municipalities will grow and so the proportion of local taxes going to policing will increase – thus decreasing what can go to other municipal services. So how police resources are used is critical.

### Building on Municipal Expertise in Community Development and Social Inclusion

Consistency of parenting, exclusion of youth from the mainstream, youth dropping out of school, no outreach to youth to involve them, abuse of alcohol and drugs, mental illness and a lack of positive adult role models (mentors) are just some of the risk factors that predispose young persons to crime (Farrington and Welsh 2007; Waller 2006).

Municipalities play a role in tackling these risk factors through neighbourhood support programs, integrated urban renewal strategies and coordinated service delivery. Social and economic inclusion is the focus of programs targeting children and youth, women, immigrants, Aboriginal Peoples and the elderly. Complex issues such as intercultural relations and management of diversity, social housing, food security and homelessness are addressed through comprehensive partnership approaches.

Some Canadian municipalities directly or indirectly tackle risk factors, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, through programs proven to reduce crime (Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence; Waller 2006):

- public health nurses help parents raise their children more consistently
- pre-school programs provide positive structure for children
- breakfast programs send children to school with basic food and after school programs provide assistance with home work
- community centres that provide services such as conflict resolution
- preventive strategies to avoid abuse of alcohol and other drugs

### Increasing Investment in the Promise of Pre-Crime Prevention

A growing number of Canadian cities are going much further by establishing city wide strategies to tackle the crime problems as in Europe. These strategies bring together municipal services, school boards, citizens and others to prevent crime before it happens. Among these are Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and the Region of Waterloo.<sup>7</sup>

In these cities, the municipality has established a permanent structure to increase investment in services that tackle risk factors. The City of Montreal has an extensive service that organizes programs to reduce vulnerability to break-ins, youth involvement in gangs, violence reduction in high crime neighbourhoods, feelings of safety for women on streets and so on. The annual investment in these services in both Montreal<sup>8</sup> and Waterloo Region<sup>9</sup> exceeds \$2 per citizen. Ottawa invests close to \$1 per citizen.<sup>10</sup> These actions:

- prevent the development of youth gangs

- encourage high crime neighbourhoods to take charge of actions to reduce prostitution, drug trafficking and vandalism
- reduce violence against women
- enable citizens to feel more secure on the streets

While we cannot prove cause and effect, Montreal and Waterloo Region have invested in crime prevention for more than a decade and enjoy lower rates of crime and violence than most other municipalities (Dauvergne 2008).

If Canadian cities are to succeed in reducing crime cost-efficiently through pre-crime prevention, then municipalities must take on this unique role. This will require other orders of government to confirm the mandate and allocate funds as in success stories in Europe.<sup>11</sup> It will require agreements between all three orders of government – tri-partite arrangements – which build on municipalities' ability to know local problems and solutions.

### References

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### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The Federation of Canadian Municipalities *Resolution on National Action to Prevent Crime and Enhance Community Safety* was adopted at their 2008 Annual Conference and is available from <http://www.fcm.ca/english/View.asp?mp=472&x=926>.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime and to access resources and publications, see <http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Institute for the Prevention of Crime and to access resources and publications, see [www.ipc.uottawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uottawa.ca).

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Safe Communities Secretariat of the Alberta Government (SafeCom) and to access resources, see <http://justice.gov.ab.ca/safe/default.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the Ministère de la sécurité publique of the Québec Government and to access resources and publications, see <http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/prevention/index.asp>.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to estimate exactly how much of policing services are devoted to reacting to 911 calls, investigating crimes, enforcing traffic laws, and engaging in problem oriented policing activities in Canada. A study for the US National Research Council of US policing organized in similar ways to ours shows that 62% of policing resources go just to reacting to 911 calls, and 20% into the detective function.

<sup>7</sup> See *Making Cities Safer: Canadian Strategies and Practices* for detailed descriptions of these municipal strategies.

<sup>8</sup> For complete information on funding for crime prevention initiatives, see the *2009 Ville de Montréal Budget* available from [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/service\\_fin\\_en/media/documents/budget-2009-a.pdf](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/service_fin_en/media/documents/budget-2009-a.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> For complete information and to view the Regional Municipality of Waterloo 2009 Program Summary on the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council, see *Regional Municipality of Waterloo 2009 Base Budget Book*, available from <http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/region.nsf/8ef02c0fded0c82a85256e590071a3ce/0f739b6a071347648525750f00664734!OpenDocument>.

<sup>10</sup> For complete information and to view the financial report, see *Crime Prevention Ottawa 2007-2008 Action Report*, available from <http://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/uploads/cpo08-layout7-e-web1.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See *Making Cities Safer: International Strategies and Practices* for detailed descriptions of successful municipal government initiatives in the United Kingdom and other European countries.