

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY*

Strategic Overview

Community safety is key to municipal development and quality of life. It is assured by collaboration between many stakeholders and so is considered “everybody’s business.” It is not just the responsibility of the police or something guaranteed by current social programs and economic trends.

But it can also be “nobody’s business”. Mayors, municipal councillors, police chiefs and city managers must show leadership and determination to organize to tackle crime before it happens in their city.

They are strategically placed to mobilize all municipal services and key institutional and community stakeholders to face these challenges through efficient and action-oriented partnerships.

The municipality needs to create or strengthen a responsibility centre to increase partnerships, policies and investments that will reduce crime and enhance community safety.

For an average municipality of 100,000 population, the responsibility centre would have a dedicated staff person, some funds for planning, development and public engagement as well as a board or other procedure that would be the focus for collaboration and coordination between the different stakeholders.

Action for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Affirm their leadership and commitment to community safety and prevention before crime happens;
2. Assign the responsibility for coordinating crime prevention and community safety to a specific unit within the municipal organization and provide adequate and sustained resources for that purpose;
3. Ensure that the community and key stakeholders develop a shared vision of the challenges related to crime and insecurity, including:
 - a. the municipality, school boards, housing, social services, the police service, non-governmental organizations and neighbourhoods;
 - b. collaboration across all orders of government (including tripartite agreements);
4. Facilitate the emergence of a strategic plan, action-oriented partnerships and policies to foster collaboration and accountability;
5. Make safety a cross-cutting priority in the city in its strategic plan and service delivery, including setting goals and objectives.

* Prepared by Claude Vézina, Urban Safety Advisor

Justification

Safety in a community will result from the development of a vision shared by all stakeholders and from an integrated action strategy. This calls for strong leadership by municipal key actors: mayors and councillors, police chiefs and city managers.

Recognizing safety as a priority for the well-being of the community and for its social and economic development is the prime responsibility of local elected officials. The Mayor and councillors play a key role in the sensitization and mobilization of institutional and community stakeholders. In many municipalities, the responsibility for community safety is assigned to a senior member of the Executive Committee and

service delivery. In particular, they are responsible for the strategic planning process and for the follow up of policies adopted and decisions made by the city council.

Building Partnerships with Key Stakeholders and the Community

Developing an integrated approach to community safety requires that key stakeholders join forces with municipal leaders. Addressing the multiple causes of delinquency, violence and insecurity entails the participation of many agencies and groups, as well as a fine engineering of their efforts and resources. Different models of partnership structures have been put in place at the municipal level. They aim at:

- Providing a community perspective and creating a forum for discussions;
- Developing a common understanding of issues and a vision of the way forward;
- Identifying the components of a local strategy to address crime problems and their root causes;
- Forging action oriented partnerships;
- Mobilizing and coordinating financial and technical resources;
- Following up and evaluating global strategies and specific programmes;
- Fostering public participation and engagement.

Box 1 Mayors' Task Forces and Roundtables

Set up in 2008, the *Edmonton Mayor's Task Force on Community Safety* brings together some 27 members of the community. Its mandate is to seek answers on how to reduce crime and improve safety. It focuses on preventative rather than punitive solutions. An integrated strategy will be proposed by mid-year 2009.

In Surrey, a *Mayor's Task force on Public Safety and Crime Reduction* launched in 2007 led to the adoption of an integrated action focused on four priority areas.

Initiated in 2006, the *Halifax Mayor Roundtable on Violence and Public Safety* proposed a long-term strategy focusing on a wide range of issues. Early in 2009, the Halifax Regional Council decided to set up a Public Safety Office to implement the recommendations of the Roundtable.

to a Standing Committee of the council. Mayors in some cities across Canada have decided to address this challenge through a comprehensive process by setting up special task forces and roundtables to look at the causes of crime and violence and to recommend concrete targeted actions.

Under the leadership of police chiefs, community policing and problem-solving approaches have been initiated in many Canadian cities. These models put an emphasis on relations with citizens and on partnerships with stakeholders. City managers also have a key contribution to make to community safety with regard to the mobilization of the municipal organization and the effective coordination of

Box 2 Crime Prevention Ottawa

Set up in 2005, *Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO)* brings together the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Police Service, the United Way, the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and four school boards. Its Board of Directors is made up of 12 members and is both representative of the founding institutions and of the community at large.

The mission of CPO is to contribute to crime reduction and enhanced community safety in Ottawa through collaborative, evidence-based crime prevention. It is responsible to develop a community-wide strategic plan in this regard. A Community Forum provides feedback and advice.

Coordination through a Responsibility Centre

Assigning the responsibility of coordinating community safety to a specific unit within the municipal organization is a key element of success. It is essential to be able to follow up and to effectively implement strategic orientations, policies and priorities. These responsibility centres, ideally reporting to senior management, have the mandate to:

- Support the partnership structures in place and build strategic alignments with municipal elected officials, city managers and other stakeholders;
- Be a focal point for sharing strategic information and making the links between programmes and projects;
- Contribute to the analysis of crime and insecurity issues and trends;
- Provide strategic and technical support to the development and implementation of municipal strategic vision, community safety policies, action plans and projects;
- Develop strategies to mobilize financial resources;
- Develop indicators, monitor implementation of action plans and projects, report on the progress made to municipal authorities and other stakeholders;
- Design communication strategies and tools.

Box 3 City of Montreal

The urban safety programme is coordinated by the Social Development Division. It includes Tandem, a crime prevention programme at the borough level initiated in 1982, social mediation and street gangs. This central unit works in close cooperation and provides support and coordination to the boroughs, other municipal services and a wide range of external partners.

16 boroughs are participating in the Tandem programme. Small teams of prevention advisors are in place in each borough. 18 community organizations have been contracted out to implement local crime prevention plans. In 2007, close to 2,800 activities were undertaken and more than 100,000 people were reached.

The *Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities* adopted in 2006 includes a whole chapter dedicated to safety. The Montreal Urban Agglomeration Council has also adopted, in 2007, a *Policy for a Peaceful and Safe Environment* with local partnership committees under the leadership of elected officials.

Box 4 Waterloo Regional Municipality

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council was established in 1993. It is a division of the Regional Chair's Office and has the goal "to increase community safety by making crime prevention everyone's responsibility". It brings together 39 members representing municipalities, police line agencies, community organizations, citizens, etc. The Council provides connections between the partners and focuses on communication, public education, partnership building and evidence-based problem solving.

The Region provides core funding for the Council, allowing for additional corporate sponsorships. A team of six professionals is in charge of developing, coordinating and implementing the work programme and priorities. Among them, the Executive Director plays a key role in relation to strategic planning, political interface, liaison with stakeholders and resource mobilization.

One of the objectives of the *Waterloo Region Corporate Strategic Plan 2007-2010* is to improve community safety by reducing and preventing the risks that contribute to crime, victimization and public insecurity. The plan is monitored annually by Regional Council.

Anchoring Community Safety in Municipal Government

While planning for the future, municipalities examine trends, opportunities and challenges related to many demographic, social and economic factors. However, community safety is rarely taken into account and examined thoroughly while looking at these future perspectives. In general, there is mention of the wish to maintain a safe environment and to provide good police services but the analysis of the challenges related to crime and insecurity is often limited and the will to achieve greater safety in the coming years is not translated into specific goals.

On a more day-to-day basis, Canadian municipalities put forward multiple responses to reduce and prevent crime. These include community policing, safe urban design, programmes for youth at risk, support for community organizations, urban renewal, mediation and public awareness campaigns. Most of those initiatives call for partnerships with different stakeholders.

The challenge for municipalities is to provide a coherent orientation through an integrated strategy and the coordination of the different municipal services and agencies. One option is the development of municipal policies on community safety, similar to the ones adopted for the family, recreation and community development. These policies put together all the pieces of the municipal vision and intervention and provide a framework for efficient partnership and coordination.

Box 5 Edmonton Strategic Plan 2009-2018

The Plan includes safety among the relevant factors to consider. Specific three-year priority goals have been set:

- Reduce and prevent crime in transit, downtown and communities;
- Reduce litter, graffiti and vandalism in target areas;
- Improve community engagement.

By integrating crime reduction and prevention in their strategic planning and by developing community safety policies, municipalities can:

- Respond pro-actively to the needs of the community with regard to safety;
- Foster a long-term commitment by the municipality and the other stakeholders;
- Mobilize city council and senior management around clear objectives aimed at improving community safety;
- Choose the most relevant preventive actions according to evidence-based criteria;
- Integrate the interventions of the police with those of other municipal services for a more efficient delivery at the neighbourhood level;
- Provide a sound basis for strategic and financial partnerships with the other orders of government.

Box 6 Quebec City Urban Safety Policy

This policy, adopted in 2003 after a large consultation aims to foster public engagement in crime prevention, awareness campaigns and evaluation of the quality of safety. Specific interventions include:

- Work sessions with community groups and local partnerships;
- Citizen-driven programs on urban safety;
- Training of municipal staff on safe urban design.