

Why Invest*

Strategic Overview

Municipalities, who make the shift to invest in sound planning of prevention to tackle crime before it happens, will reduce crime by better allocating their own funds and leveraging funding from other orders of government, the private sector and foundations.

They are the order of government best positioned to orchestrate collaboration between municipal services, local agencies and the public to tackle the places and situations that lead to crime.

Canadian task forces and evidence confirm the "promise of prevention" - investments in tackling the causes of crime before it happens are effective and cost efficient. Two out of three Canadians agree that investments in education and jobs over police, judges and prisoners are the way to lower crime (Ekos Research Associates 2004).

Though most Canadians feel safe in cities, crime and disorder impact negatively on the quality of life of taxpayers. They influence citizens' decisions to stay in the city and use public space. They influence real estate values and business success. They put pressure to increase police budgets further.

For an average municipality of 100,000 population, the estimated annual costs of crime to victims and the public exceeds \$150 million (Leung 2004). The costs to taxpayers for policing exceed \$30 million from municipal taxes and are growing. Citizens also pay \$9 million for corrections from federal and provincial taxes (Landry and Sinha 2008).

So municipalities have much to gain from investing in more effective crime prevention.

Action for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Encourage the leadership of Mayors and city councillors to spearhead action to invest in more effective prevention of crime before it happens;
2. Find at least one dollar per citizen to plan how to "invest smartly in safety for the city" and so be able to allocate and leverage additional funds to "tackle safety successfully in the city";
3. Use these Action Briefs and their resources to guide the development of policy and programs that will mobilize key stakeholders and so harness Canadian and international experience and evidence to prevent crime.

Justification

Crime will be reduced and communities made safer if municipalities, local agencies and citizens act differently to tackle crime before it happens – invest in more pre-crime prevention.

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Municipalities that find at least one dollar per person to plan how to “invest smarter in safety for the city” will be able to allocate and leverage additional funds to “tackle safety successfully in the city” and so get better results in reducing crime effectively and cost efficiently.

Good planning means sound sustained investments, some of which may be allocated or leveraged from other orders of government, the private sector and foundations. This will get a better balance between pre-crime prevention and reactive policing and criminal justice. This means fewer crimes, less pressure on municipal taxes for more police, and better quality of life for citizens.

The Canadian public agrees that prevention is better than cure. Two out of three Canadians favour investments in education and jobs over police, judges and prisoners as the way to lower crime (Ekos Research Associates 2004).

The Challenge

Most Canadians feel safe in their neighbourhoods but municipalities face a range of crime and disorder problems which undermine the quality of life of their taxpayers and citizens as well as the use of public space and the success of businesses and real estate.

Reports from Statistics Canada show one in four adults to be a victim of a common crime in a year of which 40% are victimized more than once (Gannon 2005).¹ Statistics Canada showed two out of five school age children had been assaulted in a year – a study in Toronto (Savoie 2007) which likely would be similar or worse in other cities.

These problems affect women differently from men. They are more acute in some areas of cities than others. While the young may be often the victims, the elderly may experience more fear.

For an average municipality of 100,000, the national statistics are equivalent to 6,000 assaults on adults, 1,600 sexual assaults, and 1,800 thefts from or of cars (Gannon and Mihorean 2005). For that municipality, the costs to victims and the public for common crimes are estimated at \$150 million (Leung 2004).

In response, citizens are paying \$30 million for policing services, and rising, out of local taxes and \$9 million for corrections out of federal and provincial taxes (Landry and Sinha 2008). The cost of an additional police officer is estimated at \$100,000 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2008) and an average prison inmate at \$80,000 (Landry and Sinha 2008). The amount for community development is significant but not enough is targeted to where it would make a difference.

It does not need to be this way.

Harnessing the Promise of Prevention

Canadian parliamentary committees and task forces as well as reports from international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization confirm the promise of prevention - violence and property crime is preventable. Many of the pre-crime interventions are effective within a year or so of their implementation and they are more cost efficient than adding more police, lawyers and prisoners.

A stitch in time saves nine. Studies by the Rand Corporation confirm that a dollar invested now in parent training or stopping youth dropping out of school avoids \$7 for increased incarceration. A dollar for enriched child care saves \$17 in criminal justice costs.

Over time the costs of investing in pre-crime prevention generate dividends for Canadians who will live better lives. Taxpayers will save original costs many times over by reducing the need for policing, lawyers and corrections to respond to these crimes.

The Municipal Network

Municipalities are the order of government most able to collaborate with local agencies and neighbourhoods to identify the needs for service and so tackle the multiple causes of crime in their areas most in need. Most countries in Western Europe have realized this – Belgium for instance provides municipalities with \$5 per citizen for community safety planning and action (Barchecheat 2004).

In 2006, the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC) with financial support from the National Crime Prevention Centre invited the Mayors of 14 municipalities to delegate an official responsible for community safety to join the Municipal Network for Crime Prevention.

For the Network and other municipalities, IPC reviewed the most recent evidence and experience in Europe and North America in *Making Cities Safer: International Strategies and Practices* (2007).

Then IPC examined the current state of crime prevention in the 14 municipalities and contrasted developments with the leading international developments. In *Making Cities Safer: Canadian Strategies and Practices* (2008), the Municipal Network called for a stronger role of municipalities in prevention through leadership, more sustained partnerships, and a focus on what works and how to deliver it.

But change needs vision, leadership and knowledge of what actions to take.

Action Briefs for Municipal Stakeholders

The IPC has now developed Action Briefs on effective steps to increase pre-crime prevention in consultation with the 14 municipalities. They provide a snapshot of knowledge and experience for municipal stakeholders, such as Mayors, councillors, police chiefs, and chief administrative officers of cities or school boards.

The Action Briefs show how investment in prevention will get results and cost efficiently – less gang related homicides, less street violence, less violence against women, less violence against aboriginal peoples and so on.

They are organized around a Series 1: *Invest Smartly in Safety for the City*, which focuses on choosing the right investment, planning and so on. Series 2: *Tackling Safety Successfully in the City* focuses on solving problems common to municipalities, such as street violence, violence against women and property crime.

Series 1 – Invest Smartly in Safety for the City

1.2 How to Invest shows how to use knowledge and experience to target what works and avoid what does not work. It calls for matching increases in expenditures on enforcement with increases in effective and sustained pre-crime prevention. It talks to ways to guide and leverage funding from other orders of government, the private sector and foundations.

1.3 Take Responsibility demonstrates why and how to create or strengthen a responsibility centre – a small secretariat – to develop and foster collaboration between the municipality, school boards, the police service and non-governmental organizations. This can reap dividends in focused pre-crime prevention, including through tri-partite arrangements with other orders of government.

1.4. Plan Strategically shows key steps in developing a strategic plan to identify where current resources and new investments would decrease crime and enhance community safety and where populations, places and neighbourhoods within the municipality have special needs. It provides a basis for priorities, implementation and evaluation.

1.5 Engage the Public discusses how to engage the public in taking actions to reduce crime and enhance community safety as well as identify and enlist existing community groups that can help with crime prevention and solve their neighbourhood's problems. It shows how public engagement can enrich and sustain effective crime prevention actions.

Series 2 – Tackle Safety Successfully in the City

Investing smartly, taking responsibility, planning strategically and engaging the public are essential pillars for effective and cost efficient crime reduction strategies. These must guide and leverage funding for actions that will tackle safety successfully in cities.

2.1 Safe Streets discusses effective ways to reduce youth and young adult violence, including violence around gangs. It highlights successful violence reduction in cities in Canada and abroad. It shows specific ways for municipalities to make streets safer.

2.2 Women's Safety is often overlooked in cities. Municipal action in Canada and abroad has reduced physical and sexual violence against women as well as helped women of all ages feel safer. Municipal stakeholders must make investment decisions for safety that are more sensitive to women.

2.3 Aboriginal Peoples' Safety is a daunting challenge because of the intergenerational and acute nature of the risk factors that lead to violence. These problems cannot be solved by more police and imprisonment. The solutions lie in comprehensive actions identified in the other Action Briefs and engagement of Aboriginal leaders in using promising strategies.

2.4 Property Safety shows effective ways to reduce property crime such as theft from and of automobiles, break and enter and so on. It uses the inspiring example of the auto theft reduction in the province of Manitoba. Cooperative planning using urban design, transportation policy, policing strategy and engaging practitioners are proven ways to succeed.

2.5 Policing for Safety encourages municipalities to use their current police resources more efficiently and effectively to reduce crime. Greater use should be made of best policing practices, identified internationally, including using crime analysis to guide strategies and partnering with social, school and other agencies.

References

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Endnotes

¹ In 2004, Statistics Canada undertook a survey of 25,000 Canadians to estimate the number of Canadians who had been victims of common crimes such as assaults, sexual assaults and thefts. This showed 28% of respondents had been victims of crime. 34% of these reported their victimization to the police. The proportion of persons who are victims of crime has increased marginally over the last fifteen years.