

# Why Invest in Crime Prevention in Municipalities?

## Strategic Overview

In 2015, many countries have committed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that apply to Canada; these include targets for significant reductions in criminal violence by 2030. To achieve these targets, the SDGs emphasize innovations in implementation, including funding and measurement of outcomes.

Research shows 2.2 million adult Canadians are still victims of assault and other violence, despite decreases in recent years. One in three Canadians has been the victim of child abuse. The extent of intimate partner and sexual violence is not known for Canada, but can disproportionately damage quality of life, particularly of women. Additionally, violence disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples.

Collectively, these crimes cause victims pain and often enduring trauma, estimated to cost the equivalent of \$55 billion a year in harm.

We have accumulated strong evidence, mostly from other advanced nations, that investments in pre-crime prevention programs have been more effective in preventing crime than the standard reactive model of police, courts and corrections. The proven programs include services for youth and families, curricula in schools and innovations in the health sector. They also include proactive initiatives in policing such as problem-oriented policing.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities notes that the unsustainable increases in policing costs are “crowding out” early intervention and prevention. Reports call for municipalities to look at police as just one partner in effective ways to reduce crime.

There is public support for such pre-crime investments. Canadians prefer to invest in prevention and education instead of more law enforcement and punishment. Victims of violence want prevention more than punishment.

## Actions for Municipal Stakeholders

1. Municipalities can look to proven prevention programs to effectively reduce the cost of violence;
2. Municipalities can reduce the demand for reactive policing by investing in both social pre-crime prevention initiatives and problem-oriented “smart policing”;
3. Municipalities can achieve the violence reduction targets by 2030 in the Sustainable Development Goals by investing more in evidence-based strategies and partnerships and measuring outcomes;
4. Municipalities can improve the quality of life of their citizens, particularly by focusing on the prevention of intimate partner and sexual violence, and violence against Indigenous Peoples.

**Crime is not inevitable, it is preventable.** – Mandela, World Health Organization, 2004

**For the harm done by the offender, he is accountable, but for the harm done because we do not use the best knowledge when that is available to us, we are responsible.** – British Home Secretary, 1966

**The federal government should invest 5% of its spending on criminal justice in prevention.** – Horner Committee, 1993.



## Canada Committed to Violence Reduction Goals

In 2015, Canada along with the leaders of the advanced world agreed to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals, UN General Assembly, 2015). These goals are to be achieved in Canada by reaching numerous targets, including four of particular interest to crime prevention in municipalities:

1. Reducing violence against women and girls (SDG 5)
2. Cutting traffic fatalities (SDG 3),
3. Reducing significantly violence and homicide (SDG 16), and
4. Making Cities Safer (SDG 11).

World leaders have recognized the importance of effectively implementing strategies to achieve the targets. SDG 17 calls for much greater investment, use of evidence-based strategies, partnerships and measurement of outcomes. Since the path-breaking parliamentary committee in 1993, there is no doubt that municipalities are one key to success, but they require support from other orders of government (Horner, 1993).

## Harm to Citizens from Crime

- 1 in 5 Canadians ages 15 and older reported being victims of a common crime of theft or assault in 2014 despite some significant declines in crime (Statistics Canada, 2014).
- There are still 2.2 million victims of violence, particularly assaults, and many millions of victims of property offences such as break-ins or thefts.
- 1 in 3 Canadians were victims of child abuse in their life time.

Across the world, intimate partner and sexual violence is recognized as a significant detractor from women's quality of life. Canada has not yet chosen to focus on the extent of the issues through a national survey. The US Center for Disease Control (2010) survey showed that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men have been

raped at some point in their lives. The trauma from intimate violence leads to major health problems, such as chronic pain, digestive disorders, sleep deprivation, limited mobility, and poor physical and mental health.

Multiple sources of evidence from Statistics Canada show that violence impacts Indigenous populations disproportionately. For example, 1 in 4 homicide victims and 1 in 3 persons charged with homicide is Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2014).

The trauma experienced by families of Canadians as a result of these crimes is immeasurable. Still we know that, economically this translates to at least \$55 billion in harm to victims—the equivalent of 2% of the GDP in 2014. These estimates take into account \$10 billion in medical costs, loss of wages and stolen or damaged property. The intangible costs, such as pain and suffering and loss of life, cost an additional \$45 billion. These estimates are adapted from the estimates of harm from 2011 (Justice Canada, 2011) by taking into account the 40% reduction in property crime and 24% reduction of violent crime between 2004 and 2014.

Using the General Social Survey in 2014, for every 100 adult Canadians, there were 1.8 victims of physical assaults, 2.2 of sexual assaults and .6 of robberies. For every 100 households, there were 1.8 thefts of motor vehicles or parts, 3.1 break and enters, and 5.4 thefts of household property.

## The Municipal Interest: Invest in Crime Prevention

Canadian municipalities have an interest in keeping cities safe. The reputation of a city affects economic investment as levels of crime make a difference to house values and to whether taxpayers remain in the city.

Municipalities represent the order of government, which is best suited to identify local issues and problems and the conditions that contribute to these problems. Statistics Canada studies of distribution of police recorded data and analysis of 911 calls confirm that most common crimes are concentrated

in areas of cities with persistent poverty, familial breakdown and lack of social cohesion (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Targeting known risk factors and problem areas by implementing “smart on crime” policies and initiatives that include pre-crime prevention and problem-oriented policing would contribute to the breakdown of intergenerational cycles of violence, leading to a significant reduction in crime for years to come.

## Potential Savings from Investment in Prevention

Municipalities would be able to save tax dollars by investing in proven prevention practices. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2015) and other such institutions have analyzed the social returns from different investments in prevention initiatives. Typically, they analyze the reduction in harm done to victims separately from savings on policing or health costs. Below we outline some examples of returns on investment:

Name	Description of Programs	RO1\$*
Mentoring Program	Supports vulnerable youth (Waller, 2014)	\$4
Stop Now and Plan (SNAP)	Teaches avoiding violence (Public Safety Canada, 2013)	\$4
Perry Preschool Programme	Provides enriched pre-school (Heckman et al., 2010)	\$7
Life Skills Curriculum	Avoids substance abuse (Washington State I. P. P., 2015)	\$18
Cardiff emergency room analysis	Targets violence prevention (CDC; Florence et. al, 2014).	\$82

\* Return on \$1

## City Wide Strategies

There are a number of cities that have successfully implemented initiatives that have achieved large reductions in crime within a relatively short time-frame. The Winnipeg auto

theft strategy, for example, resulted from an investment of \$52 million that saved taxpayers \$30-\$40 million a year over several years with lowered insurance premiums and lower theft of motor vehicles.

Name of City	Focus of City Wide Program	Crime reduced
Boston (Kennedy et. Al, 2004)	Public health and proactive policing	63%
Glasgow (VRU, 2016)	Violence reduction strategy	50%
Minneapolis (Blueprint, 2011)	Youth violence	62%
Winnipeg (Linden, 2015)	Auto theft	75%

(See Action Briefs 3 and 4 for more detailed explanation)

## Costs of Reactive Policing to Municipalities

The Federal Canadian Municipalities (FCM, 2015) has noted that the unsustainable increases in police and public safety costs to municipalities are “crowding out” early intervention and crime prevention initiatives. Costs of policing in Canada are rising at a rate of 43% higher than inflation in the last decade (Fraser Institute, 2014). Currently, \$8 billion or 60% of the \$13 billion expenditures spent on policing in Canada are paid by municipalities.

In the last five years, numerous Canadian reports have analyzed and commented on the economics of policing including the Ontario Drummond Report (2011), and Public Safety Canada (2015). The Council of Canadian Academies published the most extensive study of policing in Canada to date, titled “Future of Policing” (2014). The report brought attention to changes in the crime and policing environment stemming from technological advances and the rapid growth in policing expenditures. It noted that there was no evidence that increased spending reduced crime. The conclusions recommend professionalizing policing by improving collaboration and

partnership skills and municipal governing of policing as part of public safety—meaning police act only as one partner in crime reduction efforts.

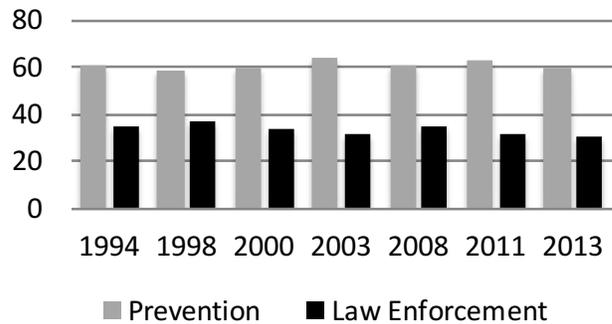
Ontario's Minister of Community Safety has called for 21st century solutions to social problems instead of the reactive 19th century police model. Estimates are that 50% to 60% of police resources are devoted to responding to 911 calls. While experts differ on the proportion of these calls that require a trained and armed police officer, many of the calls are for social disorder matters that either could have been avoided through up-stream prevention or should be referred to other agencies.

Two recent Presidents of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have emphasized that police cannot arrest their way out of crime problems. Dale McFee, the Deputy Minister of Justice for Saskatchewan, is one of those chiefs who has developed a province-wide program entitled "Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime". The first component is a system to divert problems of conflict with the law to a more appropriate agency, such as mental health or social services. The second component is to invest in tackling social problems through a Centre of Responsibility (COR). This is one example of how police can work in partnership with community agencies to prevent violence.

## Public Support for Prevention

Public Support for Prevention polls repeatedly show that the public favours investing in prevention. The poll that shows this most consistently over time is the Environics Institute survey (see graph). It uses the question: "As you know, governments today are limited in the amount they can spend in all areas. When it comes to crime and justice, do you think the major emphasis should be on 'Law enforcement', which includes detecting

## 60% of Canadians prefer crime prevention to law enforcement



crime and punishing law breakers or 'Crime prevention'; which includes education and programs to prevent crime and reduce risks."

In Canada and many other advanced nations, large scale surveys undertaken by government statistical agencies ask victims whether they report their victimization to the police and if so why. Though Canadian data have not been analyzed, analysis of the U.S. survey shows that more than 50% of victims of violence report, because they want to prevent the crime from happening again and less than 20% report to get the offender punished. These underline that victims want prevention over punishment.

In Canada and many other advanced nations one of the most in-depth analyses of public expectations from government in relation to crime was undertaken by the Crime Reduction and Community Safety Task Force in Alberta in 2006. The focus groups they organized discussed public perceptions of the causes of crime. The findings indicated the public prefer investing in tackling risk-factors and building protective factors rather than investing in police and punishment. For instance, they identified tackling inconsistent and ineffective parenting, problematic substance use and lack of activities for young people as more important than punishing. Their conclusion: while we need law enforcement and criminal justice, we must go beyond them and implement initiatives that tackle the causes of crime from the roots.



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