

WHITEHORSE BUSINESS CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

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Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The impact of crime on businesses and in the community can be substantial. Crime and the perception of crime can negatively affect a company's ability to operate successfully.

“While estimating costs associated with business crime can be difficult, the impact and costs of crime committed within and against businesses are not shared by that sector alone. Increased expenditures on the criminal justice system for the taxpayer, higher prices for the consumer, lost revenue for government, higher insurance premiums for clients, increased fear in the community, job losses for employees, increased closures affecting the viability for surrounding businesses and a decrease in property value are examples of incalculable costs that go beyond the direct impacts of business crime.”¹

CRIME AND DOWNTOWN WHITEHORSE BUSINESSES

In fall 2005, a series of break and enters against businesses occurred in Whitehorse. In response, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce approached the Yukon Department of Justice about this issue and work on this strategy was initiated. In spring 2006, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce hosted a “Partnering Against Crime” workshop. Businesses, stakeholders, RCMP and government representatives attended and discussed the impacts of crime on the business community and the associated costs due to theft, vandalism, and fraud. As a result of this workshop, a Steering Committee was formed to develop a Whitehorse Business Crime Prevention Strategy (WBCPS) with the following partners: Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce; Yukon Government Department of Justice—Crime Prevention and Policing, Yukon Government Department

¹ Capobianco, Laura. (2007). “Sharpening the Lens: Private Sector Involvement in Crime Prevention”, International Centre for the Prevention of Crime.

of Health & Social Service—Youth Justice, RCMP “M” Division and the City of Whitehorse.

In fall 2007, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of the Business Crime Prevention Strategy Steering Committee, received funding from the Crime Prevention Victim Services Trust Fund to hire a Crime Prevention Coordinator. Over the course of two months, the Coordinator consulted with approximately sixty businesses and organizations in the downtown² area about their concerns on crime. Additionally, statistics on reported crime in the downtown area, for the years 2005—2007 were analyzed to identify business crime occurrences.

Dialogues with Whitehorse Business Owners - Perception of Crime

A number of informal dialogues were undertaken in order to obtain information and confirm the perceptions of crime related issues within the downtown business community. A cross section of businesses, organizations, and offices within the downtown sector were interviewed³ and, at the same time, were provided information on the background of the Whitehorse Business Crime Prevention Strategy, its committee members, and general activities.

Interviewees were asked about their experience of criminal activity and its impact as well as their perceptions regarding police response and other crime-related concerns facing the downtown area. All expressed interest in participating in a strategy to address the issues and work towards a long term plan to reduce crime in the downtown core.

² The Steering Committee has agreed that the downtown area includes the area from the S.S. Klondike to the Chilkoot Centre and from the escarpment to the river.

³ The interviews were not limited to Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce members and some organizations were not interviewed due to their lack of availability or non-response when originally contacted. The interview process began November 20, 2007 and ended January 23, 2008. A total of 58 businesses and other interested organizations were documented during this process.

A summary of the crime-related concerns of participating business owners is reflected in Table A. This table indicates the percentage of interviewees that described an activity (whether criminal or not) that they believed to be a factor or influence in crimes against businesses. The table represents activities that were mentioned by 10% or more of interviewees.

Table A: Perception of Crime Activities from Business Interviewees (Winter 2007-08)

Graffiti	36%
Personal Safety	34%
Substance Abuse (alcohol & drugs)	31%
Loitering⁴	31%
Shoplifting	19%
Panhandling	19%
General Vandalism	17%
Youth Loitering⁴	14%
Drug Trafficking	10%

Other activities listed by less than 10% of participants in the survey included, in descending order: internal theft, break & enter, theft, fraud, youth consumption of alcohol, youth crime, professional crime⁵, and prostitution.

Participants confirmed their views that issues such as vagrancy, shoplifting, panhandling, and alcohol abuse were long standing, while graffiti, substance abuse, personal safety, and youth loitering were more recent. Concerns over personal safety resulted from issues of panhandling, loitering, and substance abuse.

Interviewees indicated that they didn't have a good understanding of policing activities and the criminal justice system. Businesses recognize that they have a role to play in crime reduction along with the police, justice, and governments, and are supportive of

⁴ Loitering and Youth Loitering - An act that that may be perceived as a crime by respondents but is not a crime according to the Criminal Code of Canada. However, it may be felt to impact businesses in a negative manner.

⁵ Professional Crime – the interviewee referred to this as sophisticated crime such as pin-pad-swapping at the retail level.

participating in an effective crime reduction strategy. Better communication between all parties is needed to narrow the gap between the perception of crime and the reality of crime.

Reported Crimes against Downtown Whitehorse Businesses (2005-2007)

Making sense of crime statistics is a challenging task, particularly in northern Canada where the population base is small and even one new crime can increase crime statistics significantly. Much of our information on crime comes from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) which describes crime rates based on a population base of 100,000. As such, due to our population, even small changes in the number of incidents in Yukon will result in large overall percentage changes in the statistics.

An analysis of crimes reported to the RCMP in the Downtown Area over the past three years provides background in understanding both what types of crimes are reported, how the RCMP responds to these crimes, and an understanding in the difference between what business owners see and believe to be happening as contrasted with calls received by the RCMP.

The RCMP statistics indicate that there has been an increase in certain crimes over the past two – three years. These crimes include offences under the Liquor Act, mischief up to \$5000, mischief over \$5000, and drug trafficking. On the other hand, there has been a decrease in crimes such as shoplifting and theft from a motor vehicle.

The caution about small numbers applies to any interpretation of these crime statistics, yet it appears there may be some changes with respect to crimes reported to the RCMP over the past two years. These changes may be due to actual increases in crime activity or the changes may be influenced by other factors, such as more focused policing and changes in government legislation and activities.

Initiatives to Respond to Crime in the Downtown Whitehorse Area

Over the past two years, the partners to the Strategy have developed a number of initiatives in response to criminal activities in Yukon, including the Downtown Whitehorse area:

The Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan developed by the Government of Yukon, takes a collaborative, coordinated approach to the problem of substance abuse in the territory. The Plan provides a framework to support a number of actions to address the crime and social disorder (often associated with substance abuse) that diminishes the quality of life for all Yukoners.

The Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI) began in the spring of 2007 and seeks to lower crime rates, reduce the fear of crime, and reduce the impact of anti-social behavior on the quality of life in our communities. It allows the RCMP to focus on prolific offenders, crime hot spots, and the causes of crime through evidence-led approaches to targeting, offender management and crime prevention through integrated justice partnerships and crime analysis. With a priority on drug and alcohol related crimes, the CRI includes a dedicated team of RCMP supported by a Crime Analyst.

The Street Crime Reduction Team is part of a larger coordinated effort that was developed under the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan. With the support of the Government of Yukon, RCMP "M" Division developed and implemented the Street Crime Reduction Team, dedicated to street-level drug and alcohol related crime enforcement and prevention. The team consists of six police officers, a criminal analyst, and a communications strategist.

The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act was passed by the Yukon Legislature in the spring of 2006 as a commitment towards protecting the family and creating safer communities. As part of the implementation of the Act, the

Department of Justice has established a SCAN office and hired investigative and administrative staff. The office can receive complaints about unsafe and illegal activities, including drug-dealing and use, bootlegging, solvent abuse and prostitution.

The Anti-Graffiti Task Force was a one month pilot project that cleaned up 52 graffiti sites during the summer of 2007. The Department of Justice provided funding to the Blue Feather Youth of Today Society to partner with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. As a result of the project's success, the partners are committed to supporting an anti-graffiti summer program in 2008.

The Youth Achievement Centre (YAC), operated by YG Department of Health and Social Services, Youth Justice is located at 501 Taylor Street in the south end of the downtown core. YAC strives to enhance youth potential by providing a safe, structured, and engaging program environment that promotes and develops levels of trust, respect, and responsibility. YAC offers various recreational, life skills, work experience, and educational program activities during the day, after school, and early evening throughout the year to high risk adolescents from 12 to 17 years of age. Activities are reviewed on a quarterly basis to meet the changing needs of youth, family and community.

The Northern Safety Network, established by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the Construction Safety Association and the Workers Compensation Board has expanded its mandate to deal with safety and crime prevention issues in the work place. The Chamber has also worked with the partners in this initiative to create a crime prevention check list for businesses and has been active in networking with the business community to bring a higher profile to crime prevention needs.

The City of Whitehorse, Bylaw Services Department has the objective of ensuring a safe and healthy environment for the citizens of Whitehorse by enforcing City of Whitehorse bylaws, providing public education and relations with schools and community associations, and providing animal control. The City of Whitehorse is currently undertaking its *2008 Biennial Citizen Survey* to measure the public's perceptions about crime and safety. The survey results will help to steer the City's strategic priorities in this area.

The Controlled Substance Properties Bylaw is a crime prevention oriented bylaw that seeks to reconstitute homes used for grow-op operations.

The City of Whitehorse, the RCMP and the Government of Yukon are also involved with *crime prevention committees* and *groups* such as:

- Crime Prevention Strategy Steering Committee
- Whitehorse Area Policing Advisory Committee
- Crime Prevention Yukon
- Safer Cities
- Citizens on Patrol.

THE WHITEHORSE BUSINESS CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Strategy has been developed collaboratively by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, the RCMP, the City of Whitehorse, and the Government of Yukon Departments of Justice and Health and Social Services. The Strategy emphasizes the development and maintenance of strong partnerships, effective communication and an approach to crime reduction that focuses on reduction of opportunities for crime.

Implementation of this Strategy over the next 3 years (2008—2011), will result in:

1. **Reduced Crime Opportunities**
2. **Increased Crime Reporting**
3. **Narrowed Gap Between Reality and Perception of Crime**

Annual assessments and reports on the strategy will be provided to all partners and stakeholders.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

To develop sustainable downtown business and community partnerships that identify business crime issues and support effective crime reduction approaches.

VISION

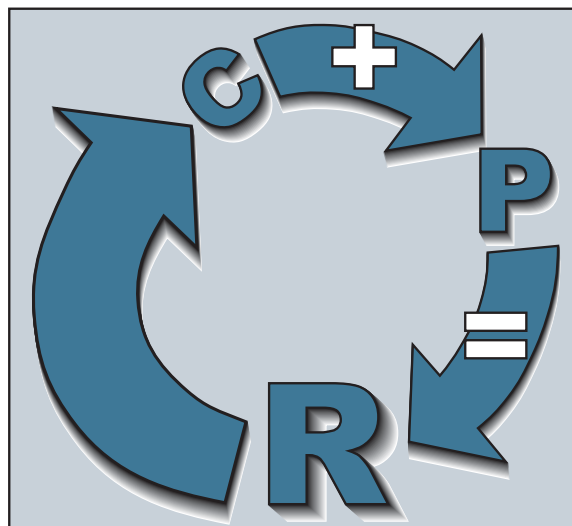
To sustain a safe, healthy, prosperous and inviting downtown business community for all that work, live and visit.

GOALS

The Strategy has been developed through a **CPR Model**:

Communication + Participation = Reduction.

- **Communication**
 - Develop a shared understanding of what business crime is, how it impacts businesses, and how it can be reduced.
- **Participation**
 - Actively work together to develop, implement and assess crime reduction initiatives.
- **Reduction**
 - Reduce the impact of crime against businesses.



CPR

COMMUNICATION + PARTICIPATION = REDUCTION

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>Communication</p> <p>Develop a shared understanding of what business crime is, how it impacts businesses and the community, and how it can be reduced.</p>	<p>Create an effective flow of information between businesses, governments, and law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>Identify business crime issues and bridge the gap between the perception and reality of crime.</p> <p>Inform the business community about current or planned crime reduction programs utilized by the RCMP, City, Yukon Government and other organizations.</p> <p>Inform businesses and the community about how the RCMP prioritize and respond to crime.</p>	<p>Crime Reduction Forums The forum would provide information and seminars specific to crime reduction initiatives, training and information. Organizations would display their crime prevention products and service.</p> <p>Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Electronic Networking Program A proposed business database tool that may have applications for information distribution and surveys.</p> <p>Business Crime Prevention Newsletter A regular newsletter distributed via the WCC networking program and a regular media release.</p> <p>Media Releases A coordinated media initiative by all partners specific to crime reduction initiatives, success stories and events.</p> <p>Business Crime Prevention Web Site The site will contain up-to-date information, news and links to crime reduction documents, training and suppliers. Viewers can make inquiries and provide comments specific to crime reduction.</p>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
<p>Participation</p> <p>Actively work together to develop, implement, and assess coordinated crime reduction initiatives</p>	<p>Partners will coordinate opportunities and tools for businesses to report crime.</p> <p>Partners will develop coherent responses to increased crime reporting.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for businesses to communicate on crime issues.</p>	<p>Crime Reporting Initiative Through a targeted and mass media communication approach, raise awareness of the need and benefits of increased crime reporting by businesses. (e.g. incidence log, tent card information product) Continued support of this initiative through the media, newsletter, and WCC networking tool</p> <p>Surveys & Questionnaires Surveys and/or questionnaires will be used to determine the crime issues and perceptions affecting businesses. They can be used to measure the effectiveness of crime reduction initiatives and the gap between perceptions and realities of crime.</p> <p>Annual assessments and reports will be provided to all partners and stakeholders.</p>
<p>Reduction</p> <p>Reduce the impact of crime against businesses</p>	<p>Provide businesses with crime reduction information, techniques, training, and skills.</p> <p>Develop and promote specific crime reduction initiatives.</p>	<p>CPTED Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is based on the premise that the design of our environment directly affects our behavior. CPTED enhances safety by altering physical design with guidelines on surveillance, territoriality and lighting.</p> <p>Provide an introductory one day seminar in spring 2008 and a certified four day program in the fall of 2008.</p>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
Reduction <i>cont.</i>		<p>Anti-graffiti Program Work with youth organizations to provide a graffiti hotline, graffiti cleaning, mural/retail painting, employment opportunities, and a downtown beautification program with a creative/artistic approach.</p> <p>Business Alert Program Using the WCC networking initiative, provide business with email and electronic fax alerts of potential crime threats, known criminals or persons of interest in the area, important crime reduction news, information on crime reduction events.</p>

Through implementation of the goals, objectives and actions, the Strategy will build a safer business community and reduce the associated costs and impacts of business crime.

Proposed Schedule of Activities

Review chart on next page.



**WHITEHORSE
BUSINESS
CRIME
PREVENTION
STRATEGY**

Whitehorse Business Crime Prevention Strategy Schedule

- Programs
- Management
- Events

