

5. Policing

Governments, businesses, organizations and community members each have significant power to affect the wellbeing and prosperity of our city. Those who work on the frontline in communities recognize that there is infinitely more potential for achieving common goals when work is done collaboratively. The aim of this section is to encourage more effective collaborations between Winnipeg's safety and crime-prevention stakeholders and to ensure that our collective tax dollars are spent wisely.

Why is change needed?

Spending on policing goes up considerably every year; we saw an 8.6 per cent increase this year. A full 26.65 per cent of total revenue goes to this department alone. Nonetheless, Winnipeg's most recent crime statistics and recidivism rates demonstrate that there is need for improvement to local public safety efforts. Winnipeg is routinely plagued with the distinction of being Canada's murder capital, ranking second behind Thunder Bay in 2012. Similarly, according to figures released during the province's budget approval process nearly 71 per cent of adults convicted of crime in Manitoba currently reoffend within two years, while our youth reoffend at a staggering two-year rate of 90 per cent (Winnipeg Free Press, 05,7, 2011). Sadly, our corrections facilities and justice system are not addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour.

Combined, Winnipeg's police and paramedic services constituted 44.5 per cent of the city's 2014 operating budget. For an investment of this magnitude there is a reasonable expectation that public safety will improve and indicators such as recidivism and the volume of emergency calls in-queue will decline. Yet it is clear that many of our city's current public safety concerns are not being settled by strengthening law-enforcement or investing in faster emergency response times.

To address violence and crime in our communities, we have to prevent crime through social development — by providing the requisite social infrastructure, for example — and address the root causes of crime, which involves complex social, economic and cultural factors. As more money is spent on policing, there are fewer resources available to address other services that contribute to safe and healthy communities. This is not sustainable for municipalities, or for property taxpayers.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Report on the State of Canada's Cities and Communities 2013."<https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/The_State_of_Canadas_Cities_and_Communities_2013_EN_web.pdf>.

Crime prevention through social development

If a teenager joins a gang or a child is forced into the sex-trade we know that the crimes they are committing are acts of survival and that no amount of law-enforcement will cause them to change course. The lingering shadow of colonialism continues to segregate our city and the powerful hand of poverty takes away opportunity, leaving many community members isolated and vulnerable. In this context, any effort to improve safety must include a significant investment in preventative and restorative measures that address root causes of crime such as isolation, family instability, poverty, racism, lack of opportunity, and lack of positive mentorship. Other sections in this budget offer concrete recommendations to address these root causes of poverty and crime.

Winnipeg needs a strong, well-trained police force and we need to support our police service members in the essential and difficult work being done on behalf of our collective wellbeing. But we also need to spend our limited tax dollars wisely and achieve common goals by managing our expenditures well and adapting our efforts to local need.

City of Winnipeg's priorities

The City of Winnipeg is positioned to provide significant infrastructure to preventative and restorative efforts but we are not seeing this priority represented in current operating budgets. More investment is required for community centres or libraries in inner-city neighbourhoods, where there is a high number of single-parent households and other vulnerable residents. Similarly, our investment in affordable public transit, rental-housing revitalization, addictions and mental health treatment, and after-school programming for youth is inadequate.

Comparisons

Winnipeg falls short in the degree to which public safety mechanisms are prioritized, funded and integrated to address the needs of the communities they serve. To prevent crime and reduce recidivism, Winnipeg can learn from recent efforts in Chicago and Edmonton, where the public safety efforts of different levels of government have been integrated to include strong, effective police working together with restorative corrections mechanisms and prevention-focused social programming. Similarly, Edmonton's recent investment in integrated community programming and restorative justice have paid noticeable dividends in crime rates over the past five years (see text box for reference).

Edmonton has also taken steps to reorganize policing efforts so that highly trained, highly paid officers are not saddled with work that can

In 2008 Mayor Stephen Mandel created a 25-person taskforce on Community Safety. The Mayor directed the taskforce to address the root causes of crime and provide suggestions that would make a lasting difference. Recommendations focused on investing in youth and children, driving change in the coordination and delivery of programs to reduce crime, and seeking out and developing community leaders who support and promote a preventative approach to community safety.

City of Edmonton. REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities. Edmonton: , 2013. Web. <http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/reach-edmonton-council-for-safe-communities.asp&xgt;>.

be done more effectively and for less money by less specialized public employees.

The Winnipeg Police Service

For the WPS to have success in preventative efforts, they must engage in substantive and strategic problem-solving with communities and

Social workers, bylaw enforcement officers and other civilians can respond to some calls, and take over such matters as school visits, catching loose dogs, answering house alarms and other minor incidents. They could deal with bylaw complaints, some mentally ill people, panhandlers and false house alarms.

“Editorial Law enforcement must adapt to new era of fiscal restraint.” *Globe and Mail* 21 mar 2012, Online <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/law-enforcement-must-adapt-to-new-era-of-fiscal-restraint/articles535382/>>.

follow through on the community policing discourse of our current Chief of Police. Like Edmonton, Winnipeg's police service must introduce new mechanisms that will allow front line officers to focus on the work they are trained for and not on the administrative, clerical, social work and health focused efforts they are currently saddled with.

Recommendations

In 2013, \$174,000 was spent on a widely criticized outside review of the WPS. The report was so poorly done as to render the results useless (Santin, A. Winnipeg Free Press 10,30, 2013). We recommend that a similar amount be dedicated to a more meaningful exercise, and call upon community, all levels of government and local public safety stakeholders to create a long term, integrated strategy for improving the safety and well-being of our city.

The narrative within communities and among the agencies of justice needs to evolve to engage all of society to work together to reduce crime... The police can play critical roles in this discourse, but they are only a small part of a larger system. The implications for the future are considerable — police agencies that fail to work in whole-community teams risk failing to contribute to the solution of significant social problems.

Canadian Policing in the 21st Century: A Frontline Officer on Challenges and Changes (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013, by Robert Christmas)

This strategy should be based on a collaborative approach that tightens our collective social fabric, addresses root causes of crime, places appropriate value on preventative and restorative measures, and continues to support the essential

law-enforcement work of the WPS. These consultations and planning will be the backbone of an integrated public safety strategy.

As part of the integrated strategy, and to ensure that expertise is supported and public dollars spent efficiently, we ask the City of Winnipeg to support WPS members in determining for themselves the role that the WPS should play in improving the safety of our city. As our city's best trained, best funded mechanism for enhancing community safety, the WPS is currently outfitted more for responding to emergency calls and enforcing the law than addressing root causes of crime. Is it reasonable to expect that one agency will excel at solving murders and stopping armed assailants while also working one on one with single mothers, hosting after school programs for at-risk teens, and addressing the trauma and marginalization of our most vulnerable populations? These skills are not interchangeable and it places far too much responsibility on WPS membership to expect success from such a divergent mandate.

The WPS must be supported to either focus on current strengths or to incorporate a significant prevention mandate into its efforts. In either scenario, our hope would be to see the police budget frozen at current levels over the coming years and significant funds raised through tax increases and other means to support a wide array of preventative and restorative initiatives, either within or external to the WPS.

It is also crucial that police and communities collaborate to improve safety and living conditions. The Winnipeg Gang Action Interagency Network (GAIN), a committee of over 25 organizations, consulted with 42 youth involved in Inner City programs about gang issues in Winnipeg. The youth identified four reasons young people join gangs: to make money; to escape home and family problems; to be protected against bullying or the threat of violence; and for a sense of belonging (Fast, 2013:6). Based on the youth feedback, interviews with stakehold-

ers and a review of gang exit strategies across North America, GAIN is developing a gang exit program and strategy for Winnipeg. This comprehensive strategy will address the problems of youth involvement in gangs and will require adequate long-term investment to be successful (Comack et al. in Fast, 2013). The AMB will seri-

ously consider the GAINS strategy to ways the City can support this comprehensive approach to reduce youth gang involvement.

Expenditures

- Multi-stakeholder integrated community safety strategy: \$200,000