
Round Table # 8 – Kootenay

June 8, 2012

We want to thank all of the participants in the Kootenay roundtable for taking the time to share their ideas, identify issues and discuss possible solutions to prevent and respond to criminal activity in their communities.

Roundtable Format

A total of 36 people attended the eighth BC Policing Plan roundtable in Cranbrook on June 8th, 2012. Participants included local government and community representatives, victim services, community support organizations and policing agencies. The goal of the roundtable was to capture constructive input from participants towards defining priorities and solutions on policing, crime prevention, and public safety in their community and for the province. To that end, participants were divided into groups and engaged in four different cafe-style discussions throughout the day, including:

1. Problems with and Responses to Criminal Activity
2. Police Core Responsibilities
3. Policing and Crime Prevention Resources
4. Crime Prevention and Public Safety

Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from the group discussions:

Engaging the community through initiatives such as restorative justice, community court and community circles programs are an effective form of localized justice that encourages community support. These programs allow the community to play a role in developing programs and initiatives to address local problems. Engaging the community in working with police to identify problems and contribute their ideas to developing solutions generates positive results. This helps to educate and engage the public on what they can do to help policing efforts and enhance public safety. Effective relationships are developed through strong communication among police, community, and governments at the provincial and federal levels.

Rural areas face unique challenges due to the large geographical area, infrastructure, sparse population, and the diverse roles and responsibilities that law enforcement is expected to play. To combat these challenges, a solid information gathering process is needed to ensure that key issues are accurately identified by the community ensuring available resources are being used effectively. Limited police resources and often inaccessible services could be further mitigated through enhanced use of community or

volunteer led initiatives and crime prevention through environmental design. Traditional metrics such as case burdens and calls for service do not take into account the geographic size of rural policing jurisdictions and the differences in resources available to police in rural areas as compared to urban policing detachments/agencies.

Education for children and youth through programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Sexual Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP) to support crime prevention and awareness are effective in rural communities. Police involvement in schools helps raise awareness, make connections and promote community policing. The recruitment of youth into organized crime needs to be addressed more effectively.

Increased resources for social services are needed to address the current situation where police are required to act as all things to all people, taking away from their core responsibilities. Support services managing mental health issues, poverty and personal wellbeing would not only support police, but also address the root causes of crime in the community. Social support for domestic violence, safe home programs and outreach providing extra resources helps to prevent crime from reoccurring.

Explore expanded roles for others on the law enforcement continuum to ease the demands on police officers. Examples included by-law officers, auxiliaries, reservists and sheriffs.

Support innovative strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness such as integrated specialized response and case management teams for calls involving domestic violence, and mental health issues; the new impaired driving legislation; and the use of reservists to cover leaves and seasonal demands for increased policing.

Support from Provincial government on recommendations voiced by municipalities. The Province should take a leadership role in defining core policing responsibilities in the province. A cost benefit analysis needs to be conducted to determine if programs and initiatives should be implemented at the community, regional, or provincial level. Federal and provincial levels of government need to consider the impacts on local governments when implementing policy changes.

Summary by topic

For each topic, participants were asked to identify key issues, solutions and priorities.

1. Problems with Criminal Activity and Responses for Criminal Activity

Issues:

- Crime that goes unreported
- Criminals moving between different jurisdictions

- Drugs and alcohol abuse and addiction
- Drug trafficking and associated violence
- Domestic violence
- Impaired driving
- Organized crime and the recruitment of youth into organized crime
- Property crime such as minor thefts and vandalism
- Civil disobedience and public disorder
- Repeat and prolific offenders
- Weapons related crime
- Bullying and cyber bullying
- Mental health issues and homelessness
- White collar crime

Top Priorities:

- Greater focus on identifying and rehabilitating repeat offenders to free up resources in the legal system
- Increase capacity and support for the court system by adding additional resources
- Focus community education programs on youth
- Need stronger political leadership and endorsement
- Support health and personal wellbeing initiatives that address the root causes of crime
- Infrastructure and facilities need to be in place that complement the justice system by providing adequate social services in support of marginalized members of the community
- More community involvement through Integrated Case Assessment Teams (ICAT)
- Ensure police are aware of, and able to focus on their core responsibilities

Priorities and Solutions:

- Specialized policing units that are responsible for dealing with key issues such as crime prevention or narcotics
- Education for youth through programs that include Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Sexual Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP) that support crime prevention and awareness
- Develop strong relationships between the continuum of social services and the communities they support
- Regular communication between law enforcement and local media
- Community coordination in the development of community protocols to address local issues
- Social support programs for domestic violence, safe home programs and outreach providing extra resources
- Alternative justice initiatives including restorative justice, community court and community circles programs

- Create opportunities for employment to address social inequality

2. Policing Core Responsibilities

Issues:

- Police are required to fill the gaps created by inadequate social services which puts a strain on existing resources
- Police have become the default organization for the public to contact for any problem which takes away their ability to manage their core responsibilities
- There is a gap between where police services begin and mental health supports and services end
- Support services and other agencies such as conservation officers and mental health workers are generally only open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm or they have been cut completely, making police the only reliable and accessible service available 24/7
- There is more administrative work required for police to perform their duties now than ever before
- The government and police need to educate the public on what realistic expectations of police services are
- There is no accountability at the provincial level for managing the impact of reducing funding to programs which results in municipalities being affected and held accountable for continuing to provide these services
- There needs to be a process in place for assessing financial and social costs and benefits from services across different levels of governments
- Privacy laws are inhibiting agencies from effectively sharing information, even though they provide services to the same clients
- Rural RCMP face the challenge of covering huge geographical areas with a small number of staff
- Due to amalgamation, there are fewer services available directly to the remote regions of certain jurisdictions
- The current funding model for policing creates inequality as it is based on population, and does not factor in the geographic region or temporary population increases through tourism
- An external body needs to be designated for investigating police and managing public complaints as they both currently require a great deal of police resources; the mandate of the Independent Investigations Office should be expanded and the complaint process streamlined
- There is a lack of community-based victim services and as a result, existing services end up managing more than the program is funded to do
- There are a lack of resources and training opportunities for police officers and nurses to provide effective response to sexual assaults

- A repercussion for not being able to address crimes effectively is that the public will lose trust in policing services and not bother to report crimes at all
- The amount of time police spend in the field is reduced by the large amount of training that is required
- Police do not want to see the BC Policing Plan lead to a greater detrimental impact on the time police are able to spend in the field, such as further training requirements or new administrative/reporting requirements
- Federal government policy decisions, such as the updated requirements for providing backup, can have a dramatic impact on areas with a small number of officers

Top Priorities:

- Implement a holistic approach to support persons with mental health challenges, those in poverty or in abusive situations - with policing role limited to ensuring public safety
- Clearly define what the core responsibilities of policing are for the benefit of officers, local governments and the public
- More funding is needed for policing and support services
- Develop a provincial traffic patrol so that RCMP can focus on contract policing duties
- Allocate more resources to crime investigation and traffic safety
- Support programs related to alcohol abuse and drug prevention
- Create community awareness programs to promote volunteering in the community
- Allow police to focus on their core responsibilities
- Formalize a partnership between the Ministries of Justice and Health Services
- Generate greater police involvement in the community through community based policing

Priorities and Solutions:

- Investigate criminal activity
- Promote community safety and crime prevention
- Serve the community by identifying the needs of the community through engagement
- Road and traffic safety enforcement
- Quick and effective responses to emerging or escalating problems in the community
- Hire reservists in areas with high seasonal variation in policing requirements
- Establish working relationships between agencies, such as the ability for police to be able to call a mental health worker to assist with calls
- Inclusive community programs that bring people together in addressing sensitive issues such as suicide and abuse
- The Prolific Offender Programs are working to keep offenders off the street because of good communications among policing jurisdictions
- Increase officer presence in youth programs and the community
- Find ways to collaborate with other agencies such as with traffic bylaw officers in managing traffic related issues

- Set requirements at the provincial level for mandatory training
- Identify what should be done by non-policing resources and community volunteers
- More emphasis must be placed on mentoring and supporting new policing recruits
- Identify different methods for engaging different communities as demographics should determine the approach
- More crime analysis to support in identifying where resources need to be allocated to be most effective
- Look for creative ways to generate revenue, such using the proceeds of crime

3. Policing and Crime Prevention Resources

Issues:

- Criminal activities that fall under Federal policing responsibilities are not always being acted upon, resulting in increased pressure on provincial and municipal level polices for enforcement responses.
- There is an increase in administrative work required to have successful charges
- Disputes for minor misdemeanors such as traffic tickets are taking up a significant amount of police resources
- Even if a detachment is fully staffed, they are never operating at full capacity (sick leave, vacations, maternity leave, etc.)
- Policing facilities are dated and do not meet the current needs
- Officers don't always have time available to spend time acting as community liaisons
- Disagreement with decisions to amalgamate detachments
- The current funding formula for policing does not work well
- Due to the large administrative process that accompanies crimes such as domestic violence, officers are in some cases charging individuals under different crimes to avoid this burden

Top Priorities:

- Collaboration between communities and law enforcement
- Reduce legislative requirements that restrict officers or increase administrative burden
- Information sharing between agencies
- Streamline procedures to improve efficiency and use of resources
- Identify priorities through collaboration
- Accountability for all parties
- Increase funding and staff resources
- Support from Provincial government on recommendations voiced by municipalities on what is best for them
- Continue to educate the public on role police play as that role evolves over time
- Define core policing from the provincial and municipal levels

Priorities and Solutions:

- Provide resources for a new detachment building and cells
- Increase crime analysis capacity in communities
- Create a staffing strategy to manage officer leaves (maternity, long-term leaves)
- Set up Case Management Teams that support every community
- Greater collaboration at the local level on community based programs
- Implement LEAN thinking methodology in police processes
- Utilize By-Law Officers
- Municipalities need to be consulted by the province on strategies to deal with cuts or changes to programs
- Educate the public on what they can do to help policing efforts
- Provide more support for other agencies to get involved – police should be there to manage criminal and safety issues not social issues
- Agencies should be mandated by government to work together through the sharing of resources, services and information
- DARE program is working well
- Need to intervene quickly in cases of domestic violence before the problem escalates
- A streamlined complaint evaluation process is necessary in filtering through what internal investigations need to be pursued and which are baseless
- Take a proactive approach to funding programs focused on crime prevention
- Clearly define the core policing responsibilities and ensure resources are adequate for managing them
- Implement immediate consequences such as fines to free up more court resources
- Funding should be allocated to a community coordinator position to oversee volunteer initiatives
- Hire crime analysts to identify statistically what the real issues are and develop appropriate responses
- Restorative Justice Program, Citizens on Patrol Program and Housing and Poverty Committee are all working well
- Officers involved in community liaison programs focusing on working with youth
- Community awareness that members can talk openly with police about deficits in the community
- Planning ahead with multiple agencies to prepare responses to anticipated issues
- Restorative justice and victim services get their own grants and funding which takes pressure off of police

4. Crime Prevention and Public Safety

Issues:

- Youth involved in criminal activity
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Domestic Violence

- Priorities vary between the municipality, police and community
- The perception of crime created by the media is negative and does not accurately reflect the reality of crime in the community
- Delays that exist in the court system
- Police are not effectively managing sensitive situations such as domestic disputes
- Victims of crime feel unsafe due to lack of understanding of the criminal justice process
- The lack of communication with law enforcement providers also breeds a lack of trust within the community
- Displacement and lack of facilities for people with mental health issues
- Need to have a solid information gathering process to ensure that the key issues identified by the community are in fact the major issues, and not just perception
- Unique challenges faced when policing rural areas due to the large geographical area, poorer infrastructure, sparse population, and the diverse role and responsibilities that law enforcement is expected to play

Top Priorities:

- Provide education on drugs and alcohol abuse and the far reaching effects it has on the community
- Increase police visibility in the community
- Engage the community in working with police to identify problems and contribute their ideas to developing solutions
- Community policing continuum that offers collaborative services from the areas of justice, education and health
- Align resources with the needs of different agencies
- Effective community relations that include police, community, as well as provincial and federal representation

Priorities and Solutions:

- Use restorative justice initiatives as they are a good form of education and effectively teach that undesirable actions have consequences
- Police visibility and involvement in the community
- Communication with citizens is key to effective community policing
- The community needs to play a role in developing programs and initiatives to address community problems
- Educating the public on what services are available for the community to utilize
- Comprehensive crime analysis is a huge benefit to the community
- Community safety is a shared responsibility between law enforcement and members of the community
- The ability to inform or advise community of a violent sexual offender through media
- Crime prevention through environmental design