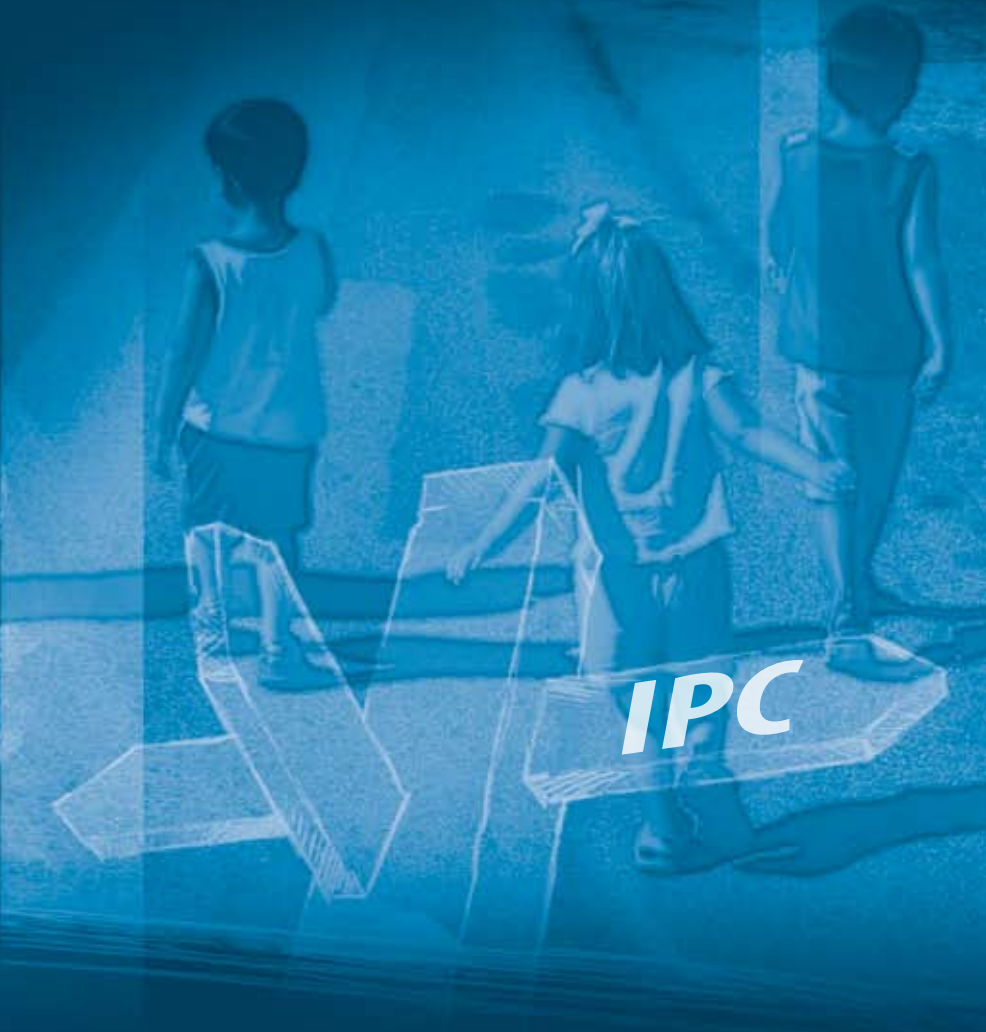
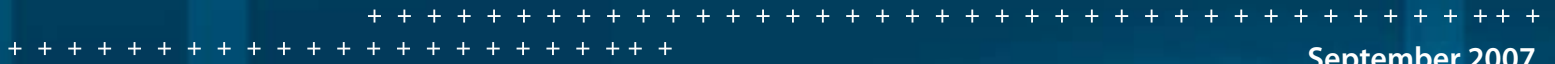


BUILDING A SAFER CANADA

FIRST REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON CRIME PREVENTION

September 2007



IPC



Institute for the Prevention of Crime
www.prevention-crime.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The work of the National Working Group on Crime Prevention (NWG) is based on a conviction that safety is a vital component of the individual and collective well-being of Canadians. This report acknowledges the contribution of the criminal justice system to achieving these goals. However, it also draws attention to the growing evidence on proven and promising approaches to prevention that reduce levels of crime and victimization. In our view, Canadians and their governments are not making the best use of the evidence base in crime prevention—the NWG makes a number of recommendations designed to improve the capacity to *build a safer Canada*.

This report shows that the levels of crime and victimization in Canada are still too high. In 2004, 1 in 4 Canadians were the victims of at least one crime (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005). There are a number of individual, relational, social and economic risk and protective factors that are associated with offending and victimization. Prevention plays a critical role in responding to these factors and to those which the justice system has neither the mandate nor the resources to address. Many proven and promising practices that have reduced and prevented crime have been identified. This evidence has led a number of parliamentary committees and national and international organizations to advocate for an increased emphasis on investments in prevention.

In the view of the NWG, Canada is not doing enough to put this knowledge to use for the benefit of Canadians and their communities. Canada needs a comprehensive approach to developing and sustaining

integrated and evidence-based programs and problem-solving partnerships if we are to reduce and prevent crime and victimization. This approach requires:

1. A *national vision* of the role of crime prevention to individual and collective well-being, and a national framework and *results-oriented action plan* to guide collaboration and problem-solving. *Responsibility centres* are required to direct this work.
2. An improved capacity to identify areas of need, and a commitment to *concentrating resources* there. Better diagnostic tools, access to user-friendly data, and more technical assistance to practitioners are needed in order to accomplish this.
3. Systematic use of what has worked in crime prevention and a much greater investment in developing and sustaining *community capacity* through research, development and training.
4. A more *adequate and sustained level of support* to responsibility centres and prevention initiatives from all orders of government.
5. A *public* that is better informed and more engaged in prevention initiatives.

The assessment of the NWG, and the specific recommendations we make in each of these five areas, are described more fully in this report and are summarized in the chart found in the centrefold. Our bottom line is that prevention is a proven approach to reduce and prevent crime and victimization and it deserves more attention—we need less talk and more action if Canada is to benefit from the promise of prevention.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is significant and growing evidence that crime, victimization and fear of crime can be prevented. This evidence demonstrates that properly focused and well designed prevention initiatives can reduce levels of crime and victimization, and increase the safety and well-being of our communities. The problem is that Canada does not make enough use of this vital knowledge. We must do more to harness this expertise in order to build a safer Canada.

The work of the NWG reflects a desire to contribute to improving individual and community health and well-being by helping to make Canada safer—in our vision, evidence-based crime prevention is a means to an end. It is an essential part of the “toolbox” of programs and practices that are necessary to achieve the goal of improving individual and collective safety, security and well-being.

There is a great deal of knowledge about the factors that increase the risk that some people will become involved in crime in a persistent or chronic manner, or be vulnerable to victimization. There is also clear evidence on the situations that facilitate or encourage criminal activity. Finally, there is an impressive body of knowledge—based on both research and practice—about the types of initiatives that reduce the risks of crime and victimization.

In spite of this growing body of knowledge, policies and practices aimed at improving community safety

and well-being tend to be overly influenced by myths and stereotypes and show an over-reliance on reactive approaches geared towards offenders. A key message in our work is that a successful approach to safety and security requires an effective criminal justice system *and more*. Even the best efforts of criminal justice system agencies are limited by the constraints of their mandate and by their lack of access to information and resources. If we are serious about building a safer Canada, our vision, our planning and our practices must be expanded and improved.

Our success in achieving the goals of safety and well-being can not depend solely on the police, the courts and the correctional system. Community safety is equally dependent on the commitment and work of other sectors including municipal planners, public health officials, educators, employment agencies, child welfare services, and many others who play a critical role in making our communities safer and healthier places to live, work and play. Community well-being is also influenced by factors such as gender equality, youth employment and inclusion, public health and social services, opportunities for recreation and cultural activities and the availability of mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms. A global vision of individual and community well-being, and of the contribution crime prevention can make to achieving these goals, requires the engagement and collaboration of all institutional and community stakeholders. They may not see themselves as “doing” crime prevention, but

their actions are essential components in accomplishing the goal of community safety. It is imperative that we do more to develop mechanisms that will allow all these sectors to collaborate more effectively.

At the moment, Canadians are not getting the best possible return on the billions of dollars spent each year in the area of criminal justice, which is around \$13 billion (Department of Justice Canada, 2005). These expenditures are not generating as much as they could in terms of a better quality of life for all Canadians. The objective of this report is to help remedy this situation—our goal is to make constructive and action-oriented recommendations to decision-makers and practitioners about how to do evidence-based crime prevention.

A. National Working Group on Crime Prevention

This report is a product of the National Working Group on Crime Prevention (NWG), and is part of a larger project on “Harnessing Knowledge to Prevent Crime”. The project is an initiative of the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC) at the University of Ottawa, and is funded through a three year contribution agreement with Public Safety Canada, namely the National Crime Prevention Centre. The other main components of the project include a series of state-of-the-art reviews of the evidence about what works to prevent crime, as well as the coordination of a network of Canadian municipalities involved in prevention. Further information on the work of the IPC is available on its Website at www.prevention-crime.ca. Visitors to the web site will also find information on the best evidence about what works to prevent crime and victimization and improve safety and well-being.

The main focus of the National Working Group is to bring together an independent group of researchers, policy makers and practitioners to assess the current state of crime prevention in Canada, and to make constructive and actionable recommendations about how to enhance and sustain progress in this area.

B. Organization of the report

The objective of this report is to make recommendations to decision-makers about how to make better use of the wealth of evidence about what works to prevent crime and victimization in order to improve the safety and security of our communities. The report provides:

1. An overview of crime and victimization in Canada.
2. A review of the work of parliamentary committees and national and international organizations, all of whom have come to agree that prevention is a key to safety and well-being.
3. A brief overview of some of the risk and protective factors associated with offending and victimization, and of some selected proven or promising approaches to addressing these factors.
4. A plea for the development of a comprehensive and integrated national strategy, and a description of the key components of such a strategy.
5. An assessment of how we are doing so far in this regard—does Canada have a comprehensive evidence-based strategy, or are there gaps in current frameworks and approaches?
6. A plan of action—a series of recommendations on how to be more effective and efficient in reducing crime and victimization by designing and delivering evidence-based crime prevention.

The report reflects the results of consultations and meetings of the National Working Group. This was supplemented by the research of the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC) at the University of Ottawa. In addition, the NWG benefited from consultations and discussions with some of our partners in the area of prevention. These include:

- members of the Municipal Network of the IPC;
- participants in the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being (sponsored by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police);

- contributors to the Institute for the Prevention of Crime Review (IPCR), and others.

The participants have many years of experience working in this area and share a passion for the goal of building a sustainable infrastructure critical to achieving community safety and well-being.

II. CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION IN CANADA

The level of crime in society is measured through two primary data sources: police statistics and crime victimization surveys. Police statistics have the advantage of being able to provide trends over time, but are restricted to offences that are reported to police. Crime victimization surveys interview samples of citizens about their experiences and perceptions of crime and have the advantage of capturing crimes that were not reported to police. However, these surveys are limited by the fact that they do not include all types of crimes, do not interview children or businesses and are only conducted every five years. While both sources of data contribute to our knowledge of levels of crime, victimization and fear of crime, both are limited in their ability to capture the full picture and likely underestimate the true level of crime in Canada.

The latest victimization survey by Statistics Canada (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005) estimates that in 2004:

- 1 in 4 Canadians were the victims of at least one crime;
- nearly half a million women were sexually assaulted;
- over half a million households experienced a break-in or an attempted break-in; and
- over half a million households experienced a motor vehicle theft or theft of vehicle parts.

Canadian surveys suggest that the rate of reported victimization is increasing; 24% of Canadians reported being the victim of a crime in 1988, but this figure increased to 26% in 1993 and to 28% in 2004. The proportion of victims reporting incidents to the police, on the other hand, has been steadily decreasing. In 1993, 42% of victimizations were reported to the police, whereas the proportion was 37% in 1999, and 34% in 2004 (Besserer et al., 2001; Gannon & Mihorean, 2005; Statistics Canada, 1994).

Though a number of factors could be at play here, these data suggest that we should not be complacent about some drops in official crime statistics—victimization rates are still too high.

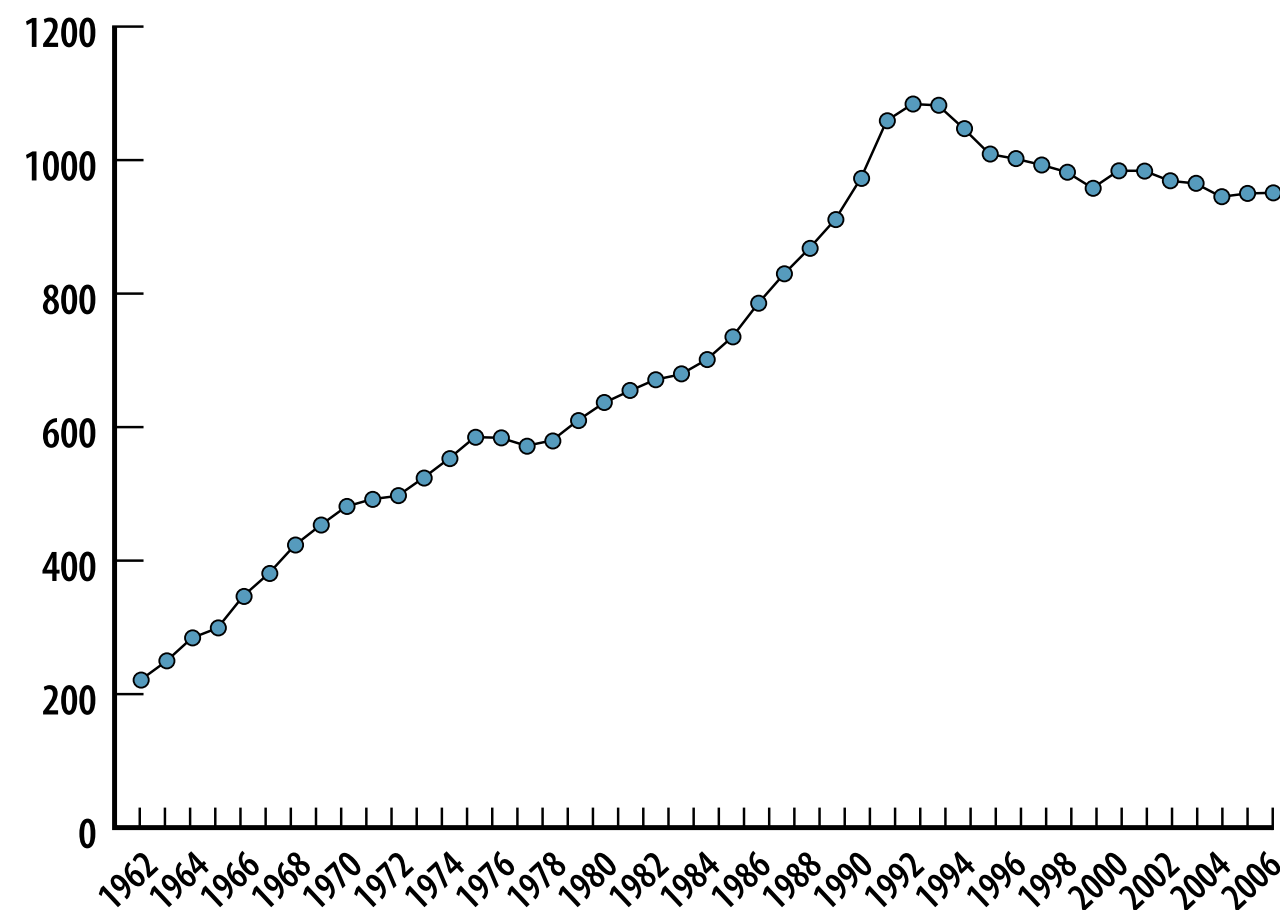
As for violent crime in particular, levels recorded by the police in Canada increased steadily between 1962 and the early 1990s. They then declined slightly and have remained fairly constant since 1998 (Figure 1). The violent crime rate in 2006 was more than four times higher than in 1962 (951 per 100,000 population vs. 221). Assaults make up three-quarters of all violent crimes and 80% of these are in the relatively less serious category of common assaults.

The property crime rate dropped more dramatically in the 1990s; however, rates are still twice as high as they were in 1962 (3,588 per 100,000 population

vs. 1,891) (Figure 2). Break-ins into homes and businesses have declined substantially and are now at levels lower than in 1977. Even so, Canada has had higher rates of break-ins than the United States since the early 1980s (Gannon, 2001). Theft of motor vehicles is now at levels higher than 1977, and is higher than the per capita rate in the United States.

Crime rates vary across the country. Rates are highest in the territories, and are higher in provinces west of Ontario than in central and eastern Canada. Within cities, crime rates are highest in areas characterized by economic disadvantage, high mobility and social disorganization (Fitzgerald et al., 2004; Savoie et al., 2006; Wallace et al., 2006).

Figure 1
Police-recorded rates of violent crime in Canada

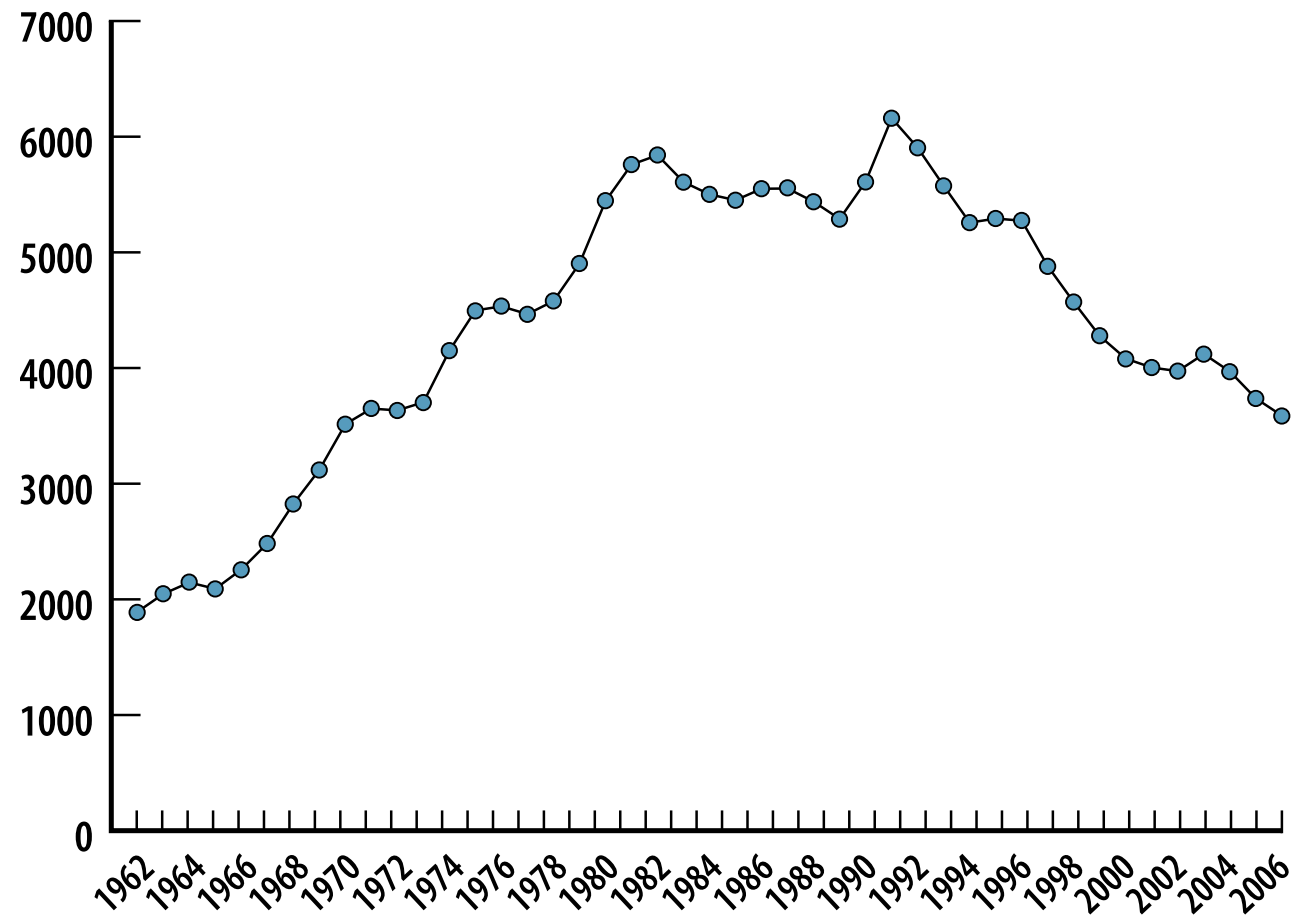


Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Statistics Canada.

Violent crime includes homicide, assault, sexual offences, robbery, criminal harassment, abduction and other violent offences.

Figure 2

Police-recorded rates of property crime in Canada



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Statistics Canada.

Property crime includes break and enter, motor vehicle theft, fraud, other theft and other property offences.

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III. BUILDING A SAFER CANADA

Building a safer Canada means creating communities where all Canadians can live, learn, work, play and raise a family without fearing crime or becoming the victim of crime. It means building a Canada where all children, families and communities have equal access to the information, skills and resources they need to assure their safety and well-being.

As highlighted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, “a distinguishing feature of the Canadian identity is its pride in its safe communities” (2004: 5). Yet the most recent national victimization survey shows that 1 in 4 Canadians report being victimized each year by a common crime such as break and enter, car theft, or assault (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005).

A great deal of knowledge exists about ‘what works’ to reduce crime and victimization and what does not. This knowledge has been generated by years of research and practice on the specific social factors, situational conditions and facilitators (i.e., drugs and alcohol) that contribute to crime and victimization (National Crime Prevention Strategy, 2003; Waller, 2006). Programs that target these risk factors and

“Community safety and well-being are best achieved by addressing root causes of criminal behaviour” *Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police 2002.*

“When kids flourish, crime doesn’t”. *Canadian Council on Social Development 2006*

enhance protective factors have shown success in reducing the incidence of crime and victimization, some by as much as 70% (Goldblatt & Lewis, 1998; Sherman et al., 2002; Waller, 2006).

Yet the main policy response to crime and victimization in Canada is reactive. Within the current system, we wait for victimization to occur, count on the victim or a witness to call the police, and then for police to investigate the incident and arrest the identified suspect(s) if possible. The matter then proceeds through the courts and, if there is a conviction, the judge may impose a sanction on the accused. But most victimization incidents in Canada will never reach these stages and only a small proportion of all crimes result in a conviction. In 2004, it is estimated that only 34% of crimes in Canada were reported to the police, ranging from as low as 8% of sexual assaults to 54% of break-ins (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005). Of the cases that do come to the attention of the police, only a small percentage result in a formal charge, and only about 58% of adult court cases and 60% of youth court cases result in a conviction (Robinson, 2004; Thomas, 2004). Some types of victimization like child abuse, and sexual and spousal violence are especially underreported and

often remain hidden, leaving victims to suffer in silence.

This is an ineffective and yet very expensive way of dealing with the challenges posed by crime, victimization and fear of crime in our communities. The criminal justice system has an important role to play in community safety. However, it is also clear that spending more and more on police, courts and prisons alone will not reduce the crime, victimization and fear suffered by the direct victims of crime and the communities in which crimes occur (FCM, 2004; Waller, 2006).

“All sectors—including governments, social services, business, labour, educational institutions—are responsible for addressing the identified issues, preferably through a planned and coordinated approach that combines resources and expertise in innovative ways”, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2003.

Major reports by parliamentary committees and a number of national organizations in Canada have urged us to make better use of the available knowledge in order to make the most of our limited resources and enjoy safer streets, homes, schools and communities. In 1993, the *Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General*, also known as the *Horner Commission*, called for the allocation of the equivalent of 5% of the federal criminal justice budget towards tackling risk factors associated

“Every dollar spent on crime prevention saves \$5-7 in corrections. How can we not put our full support behind crime prevention initiatives?”, *Horner Commission*, 1997.

with crime. Other national organizations like the *Canadian Council on Social Development* (1984), the *Canadian Public Health Association* (1994), the *National Crime Prevention Council of Canada* (1997), the *Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (2002) and the *Federation of Canadian Municipalities* (2007) have all put forth official policy statements stressing the importance of enhancing the well-being of children, youth and families and providing communities with the tools they need to prevent crime in a sustainable manner. These statements are available on the websites of the individual organizations or on the website of the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC).

“A comprehensive national strategy for community mobilization to prevent crime must ensure that all communities have access to the knowledge, skills and resources they need to get the job done”, *National Crime Prevention Council of Canada*, 1997.

Various international commissions have also identified certain elements that are key to ensuring that crime prevention measures are delivered effectively. These elements are well reflected within the United Nations *Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime* (UN ECOSOC, 2002) and the recommendations of the World Health Organization’s *World Report on Violence and Health* (WHO, 2002, 2004). Among other recommendations, they all call for strong leadership at all orders of government and a community-based problem-solving process that involves building partnerships, analyzing local crime problems and community assets, planning and implementing interventions to address risk and protective factors, and evaluating the impacts of actions in order to learn from our efforts.

“Peace, shelter, education, food, income, stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice and equity are the prerequisites for health, as set out by the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (World Health Organization, 1986). Violence is often fostered by the absence of these preconditions for health”, (Ontario Public Health Association, 2003).

As this report will show, a number of important initial steps have been taken in Canada to reduce crime and improve community safety through prevention. However, we must start making better use of our knowledge about what successfully reduces crime and what is needed in order to deliver crime prevention effectively. Applying this knowledge will help Canadians enjoy lower rates of fear, crime and victimization in the years to come.

IV. EVIDENCE-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH TO PREVENTION

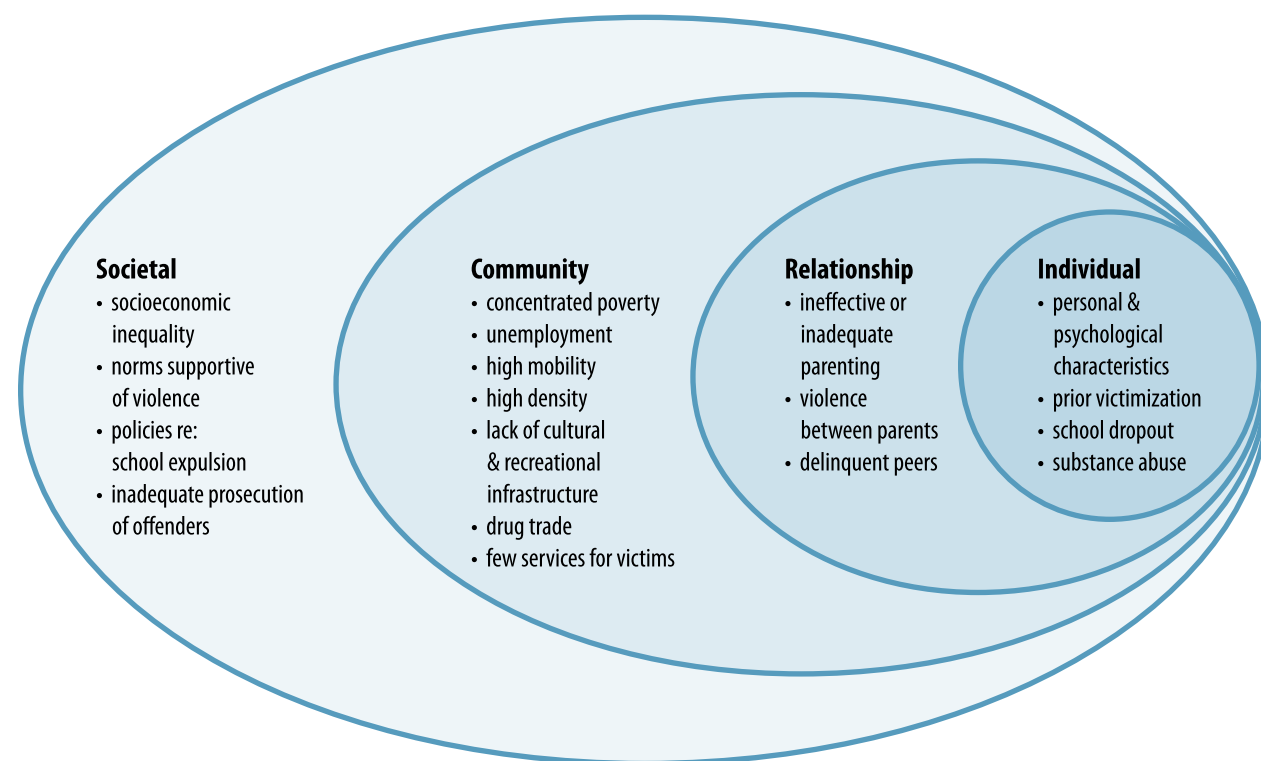
A. Risk and protective factors

An understanding of the risk and protective factors associated with crime and victimization is necessary to implement proven and promising prevention programs where they will be most effective. Evidence about these factors is available from longitudinal

surveys of children, youth and families, for example, which track the development of a young person over time. This enables researchers to identify the conditions that are most strongly associated with delinquency (see Latimer et al., 2003; Spratt, Jenkins & Doob, 2000).

Figure 3

Risk factors for crime and delinquency



Adapted from World Health Organization (2002).

No single factor predisposes a person to become involved in crime, or protects her or him from such activity. Individual, relational, community, societal and economic factors, and the interactions among these, all influence behaviour. Individuals are affected not only by their personal histories, but also by those in their immediate sphere, such as family members and peers, by their wider local community, and by society at large (see Figure 3). The greater the exposure to risk, and the greater the absence of protective factors, the more likely it is that an individual will be victimized or commit a crime (Spratt, Jenkins & Doob, 2000; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001; World Health Organization, 2002).

Risk factors are not *causes* of crime and their presence does not guarantee that a person will become involved in crime. Many children and adolescents living in what might be considered high risk families or neighbourhoods do not come into contact with the criminal justice system due to protective factors that buffer the effects of these negative influences. For example, socio-economic disadvantage is often seen as a risk factor for delinquency but the effects of low income and other types of disadvantage can be offset by the presence of nurturing parents, adequate levels of social infrastructure (i.e., community culture and recreation), and high levels of social cohesion in the neighbourhood (Sampson et al., 1997; Torjman, 2004).

Some groups in Canada suffer disproportionately from these risk factors and from the absence of protective factors and consequently have higher rates of crime and victimization. Historic inequities and the inter-generational impacts of residential schools, for example, have left First Nations children, youth, and families vulnerable (see First Nations Child and

Family Caring Society of Canada, 2005). Today, Aboriginal peoples experience lower income and educational attainment, higher unemployment and residential mobility, higher rates of substance misuse, more family break-downs, and more overcrowding and substandard housing (Bennett, Blackstock & De La Ronde, 2005; Dickson-Gilmore, 2007). Some risk factors also show signs of increasing. For example, economic disparity, drug use and the number of disadvantaged lone parents are growing in some Canadian communities (Adlaf & Paglia, 2001; Heisz, 2005; O'Donnell et al., 2006).

B. Examples of promising approaches

Rigorous evaluations and systematic reviews show that a variety of social, situational and enforcement strategies that address risk and protective factors have 'worked' to reduce crime and victimization (see Audit Commission, 1996; Goldblatt & Lewis, 1998; Sherman et al., 2002; WHO, 2002). Examples of these successes exist in a number of areas, including:

Public health

- Providing new, at-risk mothers with public health *nurse home visitations* has reduced child abuse and neglect by 80%, maternal arrests by 69% and youth arrests by 66% through to age 15 (Duggan et al., 2004; Olds et al., 1998).

Education

- Developing children's readiness to learn through *enriched preschool* has significantly improved academic achievement, school completion, and employment earnings, and has reduced arrests for violent crime, property crime, and drug crime

through to age 40 (*Perry Preschool*: Schweinhart et al., 2005).

- Addressing bullying as well as dating and peer violence by making *healthy relationships* a part of the curriculum has reduced relational aggression in school-aged boys (*The Fourth R*: Wolfe et al., 2005).
- Promoting *high school completion* through incentives and tutoring has reduced high school dropout by 27%, increased attendance at post-secondary education by 26%, and reduced youth arrests by 71% over 4 years (*Quantum Opportunities*: Hahn et al., 1994; Lattimore et al., 1998).

Social inclusion and cohesion

- Reducing social exclusion through intensive *youth inclusion* programming in literacy, mentoring, recreation, anger management, and dealing with gangs and drugs has reduced school expulsions by 27%, youth arrests by 65%, and reduced overall crime in neighbourhoods by 16% to 27% (*Youth Inclusion Program*: Morgan Harris Burrows, 2003).
- Creating a multi-sector and targeted *neighbourhood cohesion* program has reduced burglary by 75% and repeat victimization through burglary by 80.5% over 4 years (*Kirkholt burglary prevention project*: Forrester et al., 1990).

Public / private partnerships

- Involving many partners in a *comprehensive auto theft strategy* to educate and equip car owners with anti-theft devices and address the risk factors of auto theft offenders has reduced car theft by 32% over 2 years (*Regina Auto Theft Strategy*: Regina Police Service, 2004).

- Improving the quality of life in a *high-risk neighbourhood* through free recreational activities for kids, more jobs for youth and better use of the physical space has reduced police reported crime by 60% over 1½ years (*San Romanoway Revitalization*: National Crime Prevention Strategy, 2004).

Less is known about preventing *violence against women*, due largely to the fact that evaluating strategies to prevent sexual assault and intimate partner violence has not been given the same priority as other types of programs (U.S. National Research Council, 2004a). There has been a lack of funding for the implementation and evaluation of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ prevention programs in this area and existing evaluations often use relatively weak research designs (U.S. National Research Council, 1998, 2004a). However, some of the approaches mentioned above address early signs of relational aggression and are showing promising results in reducing aggression, especially among boys (see Wolfe et al., 2005). Other approaches have made use of community and site-specific safety audits to help enhance the safety of women in public places by improving physical environments, enhancing community programming and the accessibility of services, and fostering policies that ensure a gender sensitive approach to community development (see Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, 2007).

What is the *role for the police* in preventing and reducing crime? Evidence shows that merely increasing the number of police officers to conduct standard reactive policing activities will not produce significant or sustainable reductions in rates of crime or victimization (HMIC, 1998, 2000; US

National Research Council, 2004b). Police can help reduce crime, however, by adopting a problem-solving approach and partnering with agencies able to address the multiple risk factors for crime and victimization. The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, with its emphasis on neighbourhood-level

accountability and interagency problem-solving, is one example of how police can help reduce the fear of crime and various crime and disorder challenges in their communities (Skogan & Steiner, 2004; US National Research Council, 2004b).

Building a Safer Canada by improving our knowledge of what works and our capacity to apply this knowledge in practice.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS	CURRENT SITUATION	GAPS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Collaboration and problem-solving partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal/provincial/territorial collaboration on crime prevention • Increasing support from within criminal justice system, especially from the police and municipal governments • Resistance to diverting resources from reactive to preventive approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear and measurable vision of community safety • No national framework to guide work or to establish inter-sectoral roles and responsibilities • Tension between central authority and local priorities • Hard to identify the leaders or spokespersons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vision of the contribution of prevention to well-being • A National Framework for collaboration • A ten-year action plan • Permanent and adequately funded responsibility centres at all orders of government
<p>Concentrate investments on highest needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent National Crime Prevention Centre emphasis on evidence-led focused action • Some important success stories • Debates over appropriate indicators • Lack of required data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success stories not well-known • Difficult to elicit a clear interest in prevention • Insufficient access to user-friendly data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify clear and measurable indicators to serve as benchmarks for diagnoses and evaluations • Assure user-friendly access to required data • Invest in training and technical assistance
<p>Develop and sustain community capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that communities need the tools to do the job • Highest needs communities feel left out • Special requirements of First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central orders of government faster to download responsibilities than resources—communities often do what they can instead of what they should 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of sustainable resources • Greater investment in research and development in prevention in order to assure a better evidence base for decisions • Improved technical assistance to practitioners through the design and delivery of targeted training initiatives
<p>Adequate and sustained supports and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Crime Prevention Centre for federal funding • Provincial initiatives by Nova Scotia, Québec, Alberta and British Columbia • Domestic and partner violence initiatives in some jurisdictions • Emergence of municipal responsibility centres, but few are adequately funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-reliance on short-term project-based funding • Little sign of growth, vulnerability to cuts • Little indication of adequate and sustained support in provinces and territories • Municipalities have responsibilities, but not the tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources and supports to problem-solving partnerships • Implement the Horner Commission recommendation to invest the equivalent of 5% of justice spending in prevention • More attention to the challenge of sustaining success
<p>Public engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad public support for prevention • Less indication of actual political or practical engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little sense of how to better educate public (link message, media and audience) • Must address the political role of crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater investment in public education initiatives • More research on how to reach different types of audiences in the most effective manner



V. AN INTEGRATED CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY FOR CANADA

A. The need for a comprehensive approach

A great deal of work has already been done in the name of prevention. A consensus has emerged around two key themes:

1. The police, courts and corrections are essential to a comprehensive strategic approach to public safety, but there are limits to what the traditional criminal justice system can do. As shown in the previous sections, the risk and protective factors associated with crime and victimization are complex and often beyond the mandate of the justice system. For this reason, addressing these factors through prevention is necessary in any attempt to address the problems posed by crime and victimization.
2. A comprehensive crime prevention strategy should be integrated and evidence-based—there is little indication that an uncoordinated project-oriented approach will be enough to deliver on the promise of prevention to contribute to greater safety.

This raises the question of what is meant by a ‘comprehensive strategy’—how is such an approach to be defined and measured? In general, comprehensive approaches can be of two types. They can focus on the needs of an entire community

(either a geographical area or a social group), or they can be designed to address a type of crime or victimization (for example, car theft or bullying). In either case, the common theme is an attempt to deliver a comprehensive and integrated response by coordinating people and organizations with a broad range of knowledge, skills and resources in the design and delivery of a solution.

B. The nature of the work: problem-solving

Problems related to crime, victimization and community well-being can be identified and addressed at a number of levels. Some issues can be dealt with in a relatively isolated manner, and without too much concern for other elements in the wider context within which the problem emerges. Others are more serious, more complex, and require a greater investment of time and resources in order to make a difference. In both cases, however, strategic problem-solving does allow us to identify some of the key knowledge, skill and resource requirements of successful crime prevention.

There are many different models of problem-solving. However, they all share a vision of the process as being divided into a series of stages, each of which requires certain types of knowledge and skills and adequate resources.

1. **Problem identification:** This involves identifying a problem and locating elements that are amenable to intervention. This stage is actually a great deal more difficult than one might imagine. For one thing, a significant portion of offences never comes to public attention. This reality is complicated by the myths and misinformation that surround crime and justice, and the lack of an accepted set of indicators to help diagnose problems and assess the impact of our interventions. We often do not have the knowledge and skills required to identify all the risk and protective factors involved in a particular problem or to select the ones most open to intervention.
2. **Setting priorities and selecting targets:** The evidence base provides some guidance in this regard. However, decisions about priorities are never purely scientific. Problems and their solutions intersect with a broad range of interests. The challenge is to translate problems into priorities for action and to identify “solutions” we are willing to try and able to afford. Setting objectives is a political process, and coming to an agreement about goals and targets requires compromises among competing concerns and interests.
3. **Designing and implementing a response:** There is considerable guidance available in the extensive evidence-based literature on crime prevention, both about the types of programs that work and the delivery mechanisms that they require. Unfortunately, prevention initiatives tend to run into three main roadblocks. The first is that much of the evidence is little known to those who are in a decision-making position or to the public. The second is that the organizations that are mandated to respond, and that have the greatest relative level of resources,

usually are inclined to keep doing more of the same. It is very difficult and risky to break a new trail, and there is pressure to stay with the tried and true. Given the orientation of the criminal justice system, this usually means an emphasis on offenders, and a reluctance to extend their mandate or their activities into the types of areas where risk and protective factors can be addressed systematically. The third key factor is the reality of limited resources. All too often, we choose program options because of what we can afford rather than because they are the best possible solution. The availability of resources is often the key determinant of what is done in response to a problem.

4. **Evaluating success:** Few areas of public policy are as impervious to impact evaluation as criminal justice. This is unfortunate given the high costs associated with both the problem of crime and the financing of the criminal justice system. Problem-solving approaches always require that initiatives should be assessed to determine whether they had the desired impact and whether there were unanticipated results (for better or for worse). This raises the issue of what the appropriate indicators of success might be—how should progress be measured? The concern for public accountability also emphasizes the question of the costs of an initiative, and an attempt to measure whether the benefits were obtained in the most efficient manner. Once again, the difficulty is that few organizations have the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to do sound evaluations. Agencies must be encouraged to become more fully engaged at this stage of the problem-solving process and they must be equipped to do so.

The basic point is that attempting to address even apparently simple and isolated problems requires an inter-related series of stages. In practice, it is not feasible to break down the process into steps and address them one at a time. The process is more circular than that, and decisions made at one stage tend to have an impact on the others. The problem-solving process does however alert us to the importance of the wide range of evidence-based knowledge and information, the variety of skills, and the human and financial resources necessary to tackle crime and victimization problems in an effective and efficient manner.

C. The need for an evidence-based approach

We need to go further still. A review of the Canadian and international literature in this area (see Johnson & Fraser, 2007) suggests that the promise of prevention will only be fulfilled by developing strategies and initiatives that are comprehensive, integrated and evidence-based. Crime and victimization are complex and multi-dimensional phenomena—as a result, our responses will have to be as complex as the problem they are designed to address. The challenges posed by offenders, victims and communities in difficulty require **comprehensive** approaches that address multiple dimensions of the problem, and that are based on the best available evidence.

Significant progress is unlikely if only limited or partial approaches are adopted. The health sector is a good example. A situation involving multiple symptoms or problems requires a comprehensive solution that addresses all aspects of the problem, including a strong prevention strategy. The same is true of crime and victimization: situations involving a

number of risk factors require responses that address these factors in a timely and integrated manner.

The focus on an evidence-based approach reflects a growing sense of the need to rely on programs and strategies that have been scientifically assessed and shown to work. If we are going to do something, we should do it as effectively as possible. **Evidence-based crime prevention** involves a greater reliance on programs and practices that have been evaluated and shown to be effective. This reliance on lessons learned should be a constant in all stages of problem solving related to crime and victimization. This is routinely expected in other sectors. We assume experts in health or economics will use the best available information and research to guide their responses. It should be the same in all sectors.

Steps taken to identify problems and their causes, to set priorities, to design and implement solutions and to assess their impacts and cost-benefits must be guided by the wealth of data and research evidence that is available in the domain of prevention. The expertise that communities and practitioners can bring to the table must also be included.

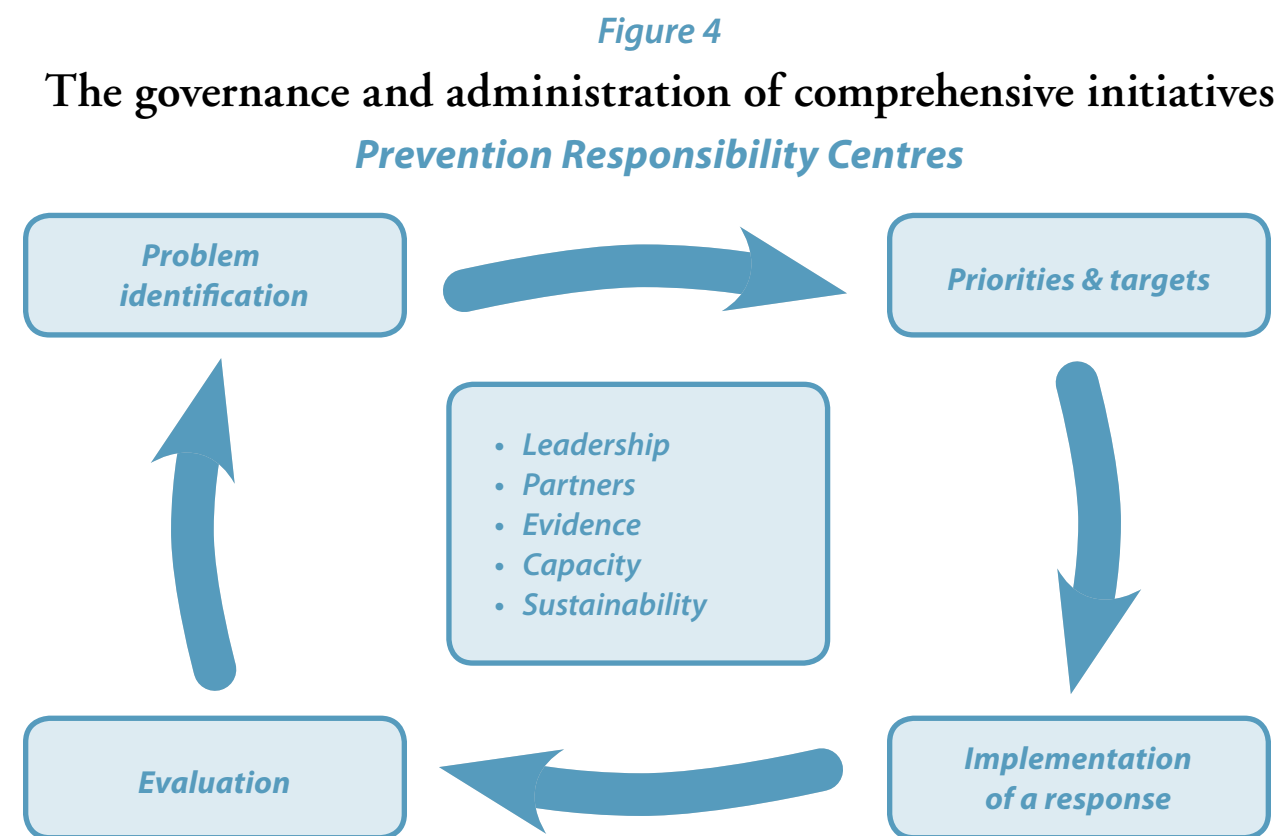
D. The governance and administration of comprehensive initiatives

The problems that affect community safety can range along a continuum from relatively less harmful acts or activities that are amenable to simple solutions all the way to large scale and extremely destructive activities that do not only harm victims but also have a significant impact on community safety and well-being. Different types of problems require different approaches to the design, management and

governance of the strategic responses. As a rule, the bigger and more complex the problem and the longer the time frame required to address it, the greater the challenge of getting organized.

Few of the significant and enduring problems related to crime, victimization or fear of crime can be significantly improved through small, stand-alone and time-limited projects. The myriad of risk and protective factors to address, and the interplay among them, are complex. The reality is that no organization or community has the breadth of mandate or the depth of resources to go at it alone. Success depends on cooperation and collaboration, and ultimately on our capacity to design initiatives in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The need for collaboration raises the question of how to administer and govern relatively long term inter-agency and inter-sectoral initiatives. A number of attempts have been made to imagine what such a governance model might look like. For our purposes, we will adapt a model that has been proposed by a number of international agencies (see Figure 4 below). The basic idea is that most serious comprehensive initiatives involve the planning, management and coordination of a number of problem-solving initiatives, each of which addresses some limited aspect of a problem. It is highly unlikely that each and every element of the various initiatives can be taken in hand by any single group or organization. The result is that comprehensive initiatives require three essential elements: leadership, coordination and management, and adequate resources.



Adapted from Waller (2006) and Waller, Sansfaçon & Welsh (1999).

The four outside bubbles in Figure 4 represent the four main stages of the problem-solving process. Ideally, each stage would be addressed in a linear sequence, and the challenge of one stage would be dealt with before moving on to the next. In reality, the process is a great deal more complicated. Decisions at each stage have an impact on the other stages, resulting in a problem-solving process that is interactive. This can be manageable if a single agency is responsible for the problem or, at least, taking a clear leadership role. In such cases, the organization's management capacity must assure the direction and coordination of activities, and provide for collaboration with other activities or areas.

The process is even more complex in comprehensive initiatives. These require:

- a central focus for leadership and accountability;
- a scan of the community in order to identify actual or potential problems;
- a number of problem solving activities, each at a different stage of advancement;
- the recruitment and coordination of a wide range of partners from different organizations or groups;
- the allocation of responsibility for leadership, finding resources, management and accountability; and
- the development and maintenance of links to other sectors and initiatives.

It is unlikely that any one organization can take this on independently.

The best way to face these challenges is to create permanent responsibility centres for crime prevention and community safety. However, these centres must exist in more than name only. Experience has shown that, to be successful, such responsibility centres must, at a minimum, have the following attributes (UN ECOSOC, 2002; WHO, 2002):

1. They must be in a position to have a significant influence at both the political and administrative levels of power—they are unlikely to have much impact if they are marginal to the key decision-making processes regarding the selection of priorities and the distribution of resources.
2. They must have the capacity to target, plan, design, deliver and evaluate comprehensive initiatives—they are unlikely to have much impact if they do not have the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to get the job done.
3. They must have the capacity to bring key partners to the decision-making table and to keep them there—they are unlikely to have much impact if they are isolated, without influence, or overly aligned with the mandate of any one group.
4. They must play a public role and be able to acquire and disseminate the best evidence on crime and prevention—they are unlikely to have much impact if they fail to compete successfully in the realm of public attitudes and public engagement around crime and justice issues.

The key question is whether there is the capacity to establish and sustain such responsibility centres at all orders of government in Canada.

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VI. CRIME PREVENTION IN CANADA

A. The requirements for success

Crime prevention should be approached like any other investment strategy—success starts with good planning. A commitment to implementing and sustaining comprehensive responses to the problems associated with crime and victimization must be complemented by a better sense of what is needed in order to improve our capacity to do evidence-based crime prevention planning. At a minimum, evidence-based crime prevention has five key capacity requirements.

1. It must foster and support effective planning and collaborative problem-solving partnerships.

Good prevention requires the optimal use of our limited resources, and effective partnerships can allow increased efficiency and the ability to achieve economies of scale. More importantly, the complexity of prevention often requires initiatives and interventions that go well beyond the scope of the mandate and resources of any one organization. This reality puts a tremendous importance on good planning and coordination, and requires effective partnerships. It also raises the issue of the best way to administer prevention projects or to design governance structures for prevention-oriented responsibility centres.

2. It must target and concentrate investments on the areas or sectors where the need is greatest.

Crime and victimization are not randomly distributed. It is estimated that less than 10% of offenders account for well over half of all offending, and that less than 10% of victims account for almost half of all victimizations (Spelman, 1995). Some areas are also more affected than others (Fitzgerald, Wisener & Savoie, 2004). It is therefore imperative that the capacity to identify priority points of intervention be improved, and that resources be concentrated where they will have the greatest impact. A great deal more attention must also be devoted to assessing the impact of our interventions, and to sharing the lessons from our experiences with others. This requires access to data and diagnostic tools to identify high needs areas, including more regular victimization surveys, surveys of youth and a greater capacity to map crime and link it to other social factors. It also requires the political will to prioritize such problems.

3. It must develop and mobilize community capacity.

Governments have been reluctant to support prevention on a level similar to their investments in police, courts and corrections. Moreover, there are only a few areas of prevention where the potential for profit will attract significant levels of private sector investment (i.e., private

security). As a result, communities have become the focal point of a substantial proportion of prevention activity. The challenge here is to avoid the risk of reducing the breadth of prevention initiatives to only those things that communities are willing and, more importantly, able to do. A great deal more needs to be done in order to enable communities to take on the challenges of crime and victimization in an effective and sustained manner. This calls for a more integrated and coordinated approach between federal, provincial/territorial and local authorities. The initiative of the public health sector to take on the challenge identified by the World Health Organization (2004) and develop a national plan of action to reduce violence is an excellent example of how different sectors can collaborate in initiatives designed to improve health and well being by reducing victimization.

4. It must ensure that the levels of investment in prevention are sufficient to develop, implement and sustain comprehensive evidence-based initiatives.

Effective prevention is a good investment both economically and socially. Like any other investment, adequate financial support is required to build an infrastructure that will deliver results—it can not be done cheaply. If benefits are to be gained in the long term, a great deal more attention will have to be devoted to ensuring that those tasked with responding to the challenge of crime have the data, knowledge, skills and human and financial resources necessary to design and implement effective programs, and to sustain these programs as long as necessary to have the desired impact. Short-term results are possible, but effective approaches take time and cost money—comprehensive and

sustained approaches to planning and financing are required if we are to get the best value for our investments. It would also be helpful to identify initiatives that are not working or even making things worse and stop wasting time and resources on these interventions.

5. It must elicit public support and participation.

There are indications that the public generally supports the idea of prevention (Roberts and Hastings, 2007). The challenge is to convert this support into action. This needs to happen on two fronts. To begin, there is a need for more political leadership and support for approaches that generate more investments in evidence-based prevention by politicians and policy-makers. Ways to engage the public and to convert their passive support into active participation in prevention projects are also needed.

These five requirements should be considered the minimal guidelines or criteria that we can use to assess Canada's national crime prevention strategy—significant progress in reducing crime, victimization and fear of crime is unlikely unless these elements are in place in a sufficient and sustainable manner.

B. The assessment of the National Working Group

The previous section identified five requirements for success in crime prevention:

1. Effective planning and collaborative partnerships
2. Concentrating resources where they are most needed
3. Well supported community-based problem-solving

4. Adequate and sustained supports and resources
5. An informed and engaged public

These elements are the necessary conditions for success in developing comprehensive and integrated approaches to prevention. For each of these areas, the evidence base from both research and practical experience can be relied upon in order to make better decisions and get more out of our investments of time, energy and money.

The National Working Group has attempted to assess our current capacity to do problem-solving and implement comprehensive initiatives in Canada. The chart on the center page of this report summarizes our approach to this task. The chart lists the elements or guidelines for success, describes the current situation in Canada and raises questions about whether these efforts have sufficient and sustained access to the tools they need to give them the best possible chance for success. In some cases, the results are encouraging—in others, there is considerable cause for concern. We will return to these gaps in the next section, and make some practical recommendations as to how the situation can be improved.

The first area of interest is that of *effective planning and collaborative problem-solving partnerships*. There are some very encouraging signs in this area. Crime prevention seems to have become an established part of the political discourses on law and justice, and criminal justice agencies are providing more support to prevention initiatives. An excellent example is the recent effort on the part of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to help launch the Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being.

However, commitment to prevention is hampered by the lack of a national framework to direct the work and allocate roles and responsibilities. This gap results in some tension between central and local orders of government, and in some uncertainty about who should assume the leadership in any particular problem-solving partnership.

A similar situation occurs when it comes to *concentrating resources where they are the most needed*. On an encouraging note, the National Crime Prevention Centre (2007) has given a clear indication that it intends to be much more focused on specific priorities. For the most part though, Canada has no clear and measurable vision of what is meant by community safety and a lot of debate over what the indicators of problems or successes should be. It is also often difficult for practitioners to get access to the knowledge and the data they need to work effectively. All of this makes it difficult to elicit greater interest in prevention.

There is little doubt that prevention initiatives in Canada have emphasized the importance of local *community-based problem-solving*. However, federal, provincial and territorial governments have often off-loaded responsibilities to local governments without providing the requisite resources to adequately meet these responsibilities. To make matters worse, communities with the greatest needs usually have the fewest resources. The result is that prevention initiatives are often reduced to what communities can afford rather than what they require.

This raises the issue of *adequate and sustained resources*. There is general recognition of the significant contribution of the National Crime Prevention Centre and of the attempts of some

provinces to develop provincial crime prevention strategies. There are also some effective municipal responsibility centres. However, there is also agreement that few of these initiatives are adequately funded and all are vulnerable to cuts or to shifts in political priorities. At the moment, too much of the available funding is concentrated in short term project-based initiatives, and relatively little support is available to build planning capacity, assure collaboration and sustain initiatives. Moreover, there is a sense that many of the activities in place do not reflect a reliance on the current evidence base on prevention.

Finally, more attention must be directed to the *role of the public in crime prevention*. There appears to be a lot of support for the idea of prevention, but this does not seem to translate into political engagement or actual participation in prevention activities (see Roberts and Hastings, 2007). It is also clear that much of the discussion and debate around prevention takes place within the wider context of the political and ideological roles of crime and justice. Better ways of educating the public on effective prevention and of eliciting their support and participation are needed.

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VII. PRIORITIES FOR AN EVIDENCE-BASED ACTION PLAN

The efforts of the National Working Group have been motivated by the conviction that safe homes, safe schools, safe streets and safe communities are vital components of the overall well-being of Canadians. The police, the courts and correctional services all contribute in significant ways to our attempts to reduce crime and victimization but more is needed.

There are limits to what the criminal justice system can do. Many of the risk and protective factors associated with both offending and victimization are not ones that the justice system has the mandate, the expertise or the resources to address—this is why a broader approach to prevention is needed. Prevention strategies operate at three levels:

1. *Primary prevention* addresses the social and economic policies and activities that contribute to the overall well-being of Canadians. These have significant influence on the risk and protective factors associated with crime, victimization and fear of crime. Child poverty and homelessness are excellent examples of policy areas where progress will have an impact on crime and victimization by affecting the factors related to risk and resiliency.
2. *Secondary prevention* focuses on individuals who are most at risk of becoming offenders or victims, and on situations most likely to foster or facilitate criminal activities. It is at this level that

some of the best evidence exists that prevention is an effective and efficient approach to improving community safety and well-being.

3. *Tertiary prevention* focuses on the reactive responses that help to reduce re-offending or re-victimization. Canada has long been a world leader in research on effective correctional programming, and has sought to play a leadership role internationally in the area of justice system responses to victims.

A comprehensive approach to prevention will have to incorporate all three dimensions in order to improve our capacity to do effective problem-solving and our ability to develop effective comprehensive approaches to community safety and well-being.

Unfortunately, Canada is a long way from achieving this. In the last sections of this report, five requirements were identified that must be met in order to do better at planning and doing prevention. The position of the National Working Group is that there are significant gaps or problems in each of these areas—these will need to be addressed in order to deliver more effectively on the promise of prevention.

Our recommendations are designed to identify areas where Canada needs to move forward and to provide suggestions as to how this can be done. They are

organized in roughly the same sequence as the five prevention requirements identified above; however, given the overlap between many of the issues we face, the recommendations are somewhat broader in their focus.

A. Recommendations of the National Working Group

Recommendation 1A: Articulate a vision on how crime prevention can contribute to the individual and collective safety and well-being of all Canadians.

The federal government, in collaboration with other orders of government and national partners must strive to articulate a vision of the nature of individual and collective well-being that acknowledges the importance of safety and the role prevention can play in helping build a safer Canada. This process must include a wide range of institutional and community partners from a variety of sectors in a participatory manner.

Recommendation 1B: Develop a national framework for inter-sectoral collaboration and a ten year action plan for crime prevention.

Comprehensive initiatives to prevent crime require collaboration and effective partnerships among all orders of government and various sectors such as education, housing, public health, social services, and policing as well as civil society. At a minimum, this framework should identify appropriate spheres of leadership and assign roles and responsibilities, providing a mechanism for accountability. This framework should also create a process for solving tensions and conflicts between participants. The federal government should work with other orders of government and the voluntary and private sectors

to develop this framework and to design a ten-year action plan for crime prevention with short and long term goals. The key role of municipal orders of government in forging strong working partnerships and in tailoring and coordinating the delivery of programs that are adapted to local needs should be acknowledged and supported.

Recommendation 1C: Develop permanent and adequately funded responsibility centres at all orders of government.

These centres should be responsible for problem identification, strategic planning, program development, and the recruitment and coordination of appropriate partners in their areas of operation. These responsibility centres must provide leadership and direction in crime prevention—they should be responsible and accountable for action plans in their respective spheres of operation, and for ensuring that rigorous evaluations are conducted of their success in reducing crime and victimization, and of the costs and benefits of prevention initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Concentrate resources where they are the most needed. Develop better diagnostic tools and data collection mechanisms for assessing our progress in this area.

The vision and action plan for crime prevention must be translated into a set of clear and measurable indicators of success. For example, the availability of regular victimization surveys would give us a much better sense of whether our interventions were resulting in higher levels of safety and in a greater sense of personal security. It is this type of indicator that will serve as a benchmark of progress, and that will help us evaluate the benefits and costs of different types of interventions. Finally, decision-makers and

practitioners must have access to reliable and user-friendly data in order to assess where they stand and make decisions about how to proceed. This should be supplemented by increased levels of technical assistance and training in order to help practitioners access and use the best available evidence.

Recommendation 3: Ensure a greater emphasis on what has worked in crime prevention and in problem-solving partnerships. Federal, provincial and territorial governments must invest more in research, development and training in these areas.

There is agreement on the importance of making better use of the evidence base in crime prevention. There is a great deal of knowledge about what has worked and what has not, and it should play a greater role in decision-making. We also have much more to learn, and more research would help fill the gaps. Finally, all orders of government must pay greater attention to providing professional development opportunities and technical assistance to elected officials, policy makers, senior executives, managers and practitioners.

Recommendation 4: Governments must improve the levels of sustainable supports and resources available for prevention policies and activities.

More effort, and more money, needs to be invested in improving our capacity to design, implement and evaluate our initiatives and to sustain our

successes. The NWG supports the recommendation of the “Horner Commission” (1993) that the federal government invest the equivalent of 5% of its spending in the area of criminal justice in initiatives related to the prevention of crime and victimization, over and above “primary prevention” spending on general social and educational policies. The NWG further recommends that provincial and territorial governments match this level of investment. In addition, there is a need to improve the coordination and focus of the investments made by other relevant agencies outside the criminal justice sector that can have an impact on crime and victimization. Finally, a great deal more attention and effort must be paid to sustaining the capacity to design and implement successful initiatives.

Recommendation 5: Governments and national partners must develop effective strategies for educating the public about prevention and for engaging Canadians in prevention programs and activities.

The public appears to support prevention, but levels of engagement and actual participation remain relatively low. A deeper appreciation of the vision of community safety and well-being as well as higher levels of commitment and engagement are needed in order to build on the promise of crime prevention. In practice, this requires a better understanding of how to link messages, media and audiences, and a larger investment in prevention education initiatives.

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