

April 9, 2008

CSCP08.2.06

NATIONAL ACTION TO PREVENT CRIME AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY SAFETY

WHEREAS too many youth are victims of violence and involved in gangs and drugs in Canadian cities; too many women and children are the victims of sexual assault and violence; too many individuals and households are victims of property offences; too many Canadians do not feel safe in their homes, at their places of work, at their schools and universities, or on their streets; and,

WHEREAS intergovernmental organizations, such as UN Habitat and the World Health Organization, as well as a many Canadian organizations have reviewed the scientific research world wide to conclude that:

- Rates of violence and crime have been reduced cost efficiently by tackling the multiple causes in a concerted manner and that this knowledge can be used much more in Canada,
- Municipalities are the order of government most able to collaborate with local agencies and neighbourhoods to identify the needs for service and so tackle the roots of crime,
- Two out of three Canadians prefer to lower crime through additional money and effort in education and jobs rather than police and prisons; and,

WHEREAS the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police have called on all orders of government to collaborate in national action to prevent crime that tackles its roots; and,

WHEREAS some provinces have already acted to invest in concrete steps to combine prevention, treatment and enforcement in reducing crime and enhancing community safety, including supporting municipalities; and

WHEREAS municipalities are a key to a safer Canada, yet:

- They have the least resources of any order of government to invest in programs that work,
- Lack of resources for prevention now, means pay later for more police officers;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities call on the Government of Canada to:

1. Collaborate with provinces, territories and municipalities in concrete and urgent action to tackle the roots of crime and violence, including responsibility centres at the highest level to guide and monitor success;
2. Engage the public and community services to tackle the root causes of crime and violence;

3. Improve data such as crime victim surveys to target actions, and establish national data standards and training to ensure success;
4. Provide sustained investment in targeted services that prevent crime, including support for municipal governments to foster collaborative, and evidence based strategies to guide those investments;
5. Ensure that services that tackle the roots of violence are not cut to pay for more reaction; and to
6. Ensure that annual increases in funding to pay for law enforcement are matched by similar increases in services targeted to tackle the roots of violence;

City of Ottawa, Ontario

Background Research and Assessment (April 2008)

Background and Research:

Evidence-based crime prevention strategies have long been promoted by FCM. For example, the 2007 Policy Statement on Community Safety and Crime Prevention states that “FCM supports crime-prevention programs that actively target youth before they become involved with gangs, drugs, violence and other criminal activity and that provide alternatives for youth by developing parks and recreation facilities.”

Resolutions previously adopted:

No resolution dealing specifically with this issue has previously been considered by FCM.

Issue:

While crime rates reported by the police have fallen since the early 1990s, the majority of crimes are not reported to the police. In 2004, Statistics Canada’s General Social Survey (GSS) on criminal victimization revealed that just 34% of crimes were reported to the police. The same survey also reported that 1 in 4 adults in Canada were victims of some type of crime. Crime rates vary among municipalities and within cities, and are higher in areas of concentrated disadvantage and social disorganization.

A number of organizations, including the UN and WHO, have demonstrated that there is growing evidence that crime, victimization, and fear of crime can be reduced significantly through prevention, and that investments in prevention can be more cost effective than expenditures on standard responses to crime. 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. Research from Environics and Ekos also consistently shows that two-thirds of respondents to their surveys support investment in prevention strategies to reduce crime over law enforcement and corrections.

There is a growing recognition that municipalities have a key role to play in reducing crime and enhancing community safety. The roots of crime and violence are varied and therefore require strategies that engage multiple sectors such as schools, social services, recreation, housing, and law enforcement, as well as citizens and community organizations.

Municipalities provide many of the services that enhance community safety and play an important role in mobilizing key stakeholders, developing local action plans, and implementing short- and long-term solutions. However, out of every tax dollar collected, the federal and provincial/territorial governments take 92 cents, leaving just eight cents for municipal governments. With that, municipalities must provide roads, water-supply systems, solid waste management, recreation, policing, fire-protection and many other services, leaving few resources for evidence-based crime prevention strategies..

Assessment and Recommendation:

Previous strategies geared at crime reduction and community safety have largely been focused on enforcement. This resolution is much wider in scope, essentially proposing a national strategy that includes reduction and prevention measures. The measures proposed are very much in line with FCM's policy priorities with regard to crime and safety. Given the current public and Parliamentary interest in community safety, this resolution provides FCM with a timely opportunity to refocus and reinvigorate its efforts in this area.

Staff Recommends Category "A"; Concurrence.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (April 2008): Category "A"; Concurrence