

DISCUSSION

Prolific offenders are those offenders who are criminally active, have a history of numerous criminal offences and most likely have been in jail at some point in their lives. They are assessed to be at high risk to re-offend. The reasons behind such reoccurring criminal behaviour however are complex and often intertwined. To achieve a sustainable positive outcome, the causal factors behind these negative behaviours need to be addressed.

According to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, about 50% of reported crimes in British Columbia are committed by about 10% of offenders (prolific offenders). Although these are primarily property crimes, the impact of prolific offenders on communities and public safety, as well as public confidence in the justice system, is substantial. Their criminal behaviour reaches well beyond the justice system to cause disproportionately high costs to the health care system, housing and social services, as well as to individuals, businesses and communities through property and other financial loss.

For a number of years Surrey RCMP has identified and targeted its enforcement teams on prolific offenders. In part, due to these efforts, considerable reductions in certain types of crime have been achieved.

The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (Criminal Justice Reform Secretariat) has identified Surrey as one of five pilot sites for the establishment of a Prolific Offender Management Team. This pilot project that was recently established in Surrey provides an opportunity to engage in a more meaningful way the key agencies that that can have an impact on these individuals' lives. These agencies include:

- Surrey RCMP;
- Provincial and Federal Corrections Services;
- Provincial and Federal Crown counsel;
- Ministry of Children and Family Development (youth justice);
- Fraser Health Authority (mental health and addictions);
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance;
- BC Housing; and
- Adult Forensic Psychiatric Services.

The POMT will be led by the Community Corrections Manager, Corrections Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. and will meet monthly to coordinate each agency's involvement with the subject offenders and to plan for both enforcement actions and the provision of social services to assist prolific offenders in the following key areas:

- sustained supervision;
- services to address physical and mental needs and to support behaviour change; and
- timely and robust response to relapse or re-offending.

Initially the Surrey POMT will work with approximately 30 prolific offenders. The pilot will run for a minimum of two years. Additional information relating to this pilot project is available in a short report published by the Criminal Justice Reform Secretariat, a copy of which is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

The work of the POMT will include a strong evaluation component. Measurements of progress will include, among other things, aggregate crime rates in communities, recidivism rates for the individual offenders, compliance/engagement rates and feedback from the participating agencies on matters relating to levels of integration and collaboration. This will facilitate the learning process to make the POMT as effective as possible over time.

Further reports will be provided to Council on the progress of the POMT and on the relative success of the Team in meeting the objectives for which it was formed.

CONCLUSION

This establishment of the POMT is an important element of the continuum of services (i.e., the holistic approach) that the Surrey CRS recommends to address the root causes of crime and thereby to have a permanent positive effect on the level of crime and safety in the City.

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PROLIFIC OFFENDER PILOT PROJECT OVERVIEW

About 50 per cent of reported crimes in British Columbia are committed by about 10 per cent of offenders. Although these are primarily property crimes, the impact of prolific offenders on communities and public safety, as well as public confidence in the justice system, is substantial. Their criminal behaviour reaches well beyond the justice system to cause disproportionately high costs to the health care system, housing and social services, as well as to individuals, businesses and communities through property and financial losses.

For this reason, the prolific offender pilot project is being set up in five communities to test an integrated approach to reducing crime by more intensively managing the small number of offenders who commit a large proportion of crime.

Much of these offenders' behaviour can be linked to substance abuse and addictions, mental disorders, lack of job skills and other issues. Evidence shows that focusing law enforcement on prolific offenders while referring them to the services they need to prevent them from committing more crime, has broad benefits for communities by reducing crime rates and chronic criminal behaviour.

The prolific offender pilot project brings together resources from enforcement agencies (police, corrections and Crown) and health and social services. The project aims to use more intensive supervision of and timely intervention with a small group of prolific offenders to reduce crime, whether that is through treatment or incarceration.

In British Columbia, a number of related initiatives are already underway, led by the RCMP, corrections, Crown counsel, municipal police, health authorities and social service agencies. The pilot project will build on existing initiatives and will include a strong evaluation component to allow us to learn what works, and what doesn't.

What is a prolific offender?

Prolific offenders are criminally active, have a history of numerous criminal offences and most likely have been in jail at some point in their lives. They are assessed to be at high risk to re-offend. Each community will have a different makeup of offenders, but police experience shows that many of these offenders are involved in property crime.

How does the pilot project work?

The local project teams will meet regularly to coordinate each agency's involvement with the offender and to plan for both enforcement and social services to the prolific offenders through the following key activities:

- close police supervision;
- services to support behaviour change;
- timely and robust response to relapse or re-offending.

Who is on the local pilot project teams?

The local teams will involve and include the following agencies:

- Police (RCMP and municipal police)
- Provincial and federal Corrections
- Provincial and federal Crown Counsel
- Ministry of Children and Family Development (Youth Justice)
- Health authorities (mental health and addictions)
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- BC Housing
- Adult Forensic Psychiatric Services

Others that may be involved are: Victims Services, local Aboriginal services, non-governmental service organizations, and the Legal Services Society.

What are the anticipated outcomes of the integrated approach?

An integrated system of prolific offender management is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- reduced crime rate in pilot communities;
- reduced rate of re-offending by prolific offenders;
- improved compliance with sentencing conditions and treatment;
- improved co-ordination and cost effectiveness of service delivery in the social service and justice systems;
- improved outcomes for offenders (access to and maintenance of health, housing, and other social services);
- enhanced coordination between agencies;
- improved public safety and confidence in the justice system.

Where will the approach be tested?

The approach will be tested in five communities — Kamloops, Nanaimo, Prince George, Surrey, and Victoria (Capital Regional District). The project team is also working with Williams Lake to add them as a pilot location. These sites were chosen to reflect a variety of geographic locations, size of communities, and to build on existing initiatives.

The prolific offender pilot project is led by the Criminal Justice Reform Secretariat, which was formed jointly by the three justice ministries: Public Safety and Solicitor General, Attorney General, and Children and Family Development to lead the development and implementation of provincial crime reduction and prevention strategies.

Early Solutions, Faster Justice – Justice Reform in B.C.

