



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Services Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Community-Based Crime Prevention
January 1 to December 31, 2020

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Services Board

Report Date: 2021-06-28

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Police Services Board receives this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Service is in compliance with By-Law 192-2000 – Community-Based Crime Prevention.
- The Chief is required to make a written annual report to the Board with respect to community-based crime prevention.
- This report provides a summary of requirements to ensure the Service is in compliance with the By-Law.

Financial Considerations

Not Applicable.

Analysis

By-Law 192-2000, a By-Law respecting community-based crime prevention, was enacted as a result of Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulation CP-002, which requires the Chief to make a written report to the Board annually in respect to community-based crime prevention initiatives. The report shall include:

- a) a summary of the written procedures concerning community-based crime prevention initiatives;
- b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures;
- c) a summary of current crime prevention initiatives and an indication of their success; and
- d) a summary of current concerns, as voiced by the community through the community partnership initiatives.

The following is a detailed response to each of the above noted requirements:

- a) summary of the written procedures concerning community-based crime

prevention initiatives.

General Order 149.04 provides direction on a police officer's duties including "crime prevention". Section 42(1) of the Police Services Act of Ontario, R.S.O. 1990, establishes specific statutory duties for police officers that include: preventing crimes and other offences and providing assistance and encouragement to other persons in their prevention.

b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures.

The Service is committed to working, wherever possible, with municipalities, school boards, community organizations, neighbourhoods, businesses, and neighbouring municipalities or jurisdictions to develop and implement community-based crime prevention initiatives. The Service ensures the community-based crime prevention initiatives are consistent with the Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing. The current pandemic and associated restrictions greatly curtailed proactive crime prevention initiatives throughout 2020. These restrictions also contributed to the cancellation of crime prevention based educational opportunities such as the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) course.

c) a summary of current crime prevention initiatives and an indication of their success.

The following is a summary of crime prevention initiatives during 2020:

School Resource Officers – School Resource Officers are involved with students in the Niagara Region from grades 9-12. They are a physical presence in the schools to positively impact at risk youth through community engagement. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, throughout 2020, officers adapted their model to online presentations and virtual engagement to students from grade 7-12. Officers also assisted outside of the school to address concerns throughout the region.

In September 2020, the School Resource Officer program was paused by the District School Board of Niagara to allow for a review and community consultation. This pause remains in effect at the time of this report.

Project Impact - This partnership program with Brock University and the District School Board of Niagara engages youth at St. Catharines Collegiate Secondary School. Students interact with officers, enjoy sports, and participate in lectures and demonstrations conducted by School Resource Officers and other Service members. An average of 165 to 175 students participate in this program each session. The attendees also earn volunteer hours. This partnership has proven beneficial for youths at risk for involvement in crime.

1 District – St. Catharines and Thorold

Foot Patrol: In 2020, two officers were dedicated to foot patrol in the downtown core of St. Catharines with an additional two officers deployed at various times throughout the year in a temporary capacity. Foot patrol officers adjusted their regular patrol duties to include enforcement and education of COVID-19 regulations with businesses and visitors to the downtown area. Foot patrol officers also assisted with COVID-19 compliance checks throughout St. Catharines and Thorold. Officers walked a total of 391 hours of patrol with the remainder of the time in marked vehicles assisting with calls in the downtown core as well as the Queenston Street area. Foot patrol officers assisted or generated 380 calls for service resulting in 38 arrests, 12 Provincial Offence Notices, and performed five NARCAN rescues.

Foot patrol increased to include the Queenston Street area in 2020. This expansion was met favourably by the residents and businesses in the area. Officers also began regular visits to community support agencies such as the Breakfast Club, Start Me Up Niagara, and the Out of the Cold Program. These community agencies reacted favorably to officers attending and have reported a reduction in crime (i.e., drug dealing, assaults, etc.) and disturbances around the centres. Clients of these programs have also expressed their appreciation for police attendance.

Southridge Shelter Initiative: On September 21, 2020, 1 District began an Officer Liaison program at the Southridge Shelter on Glenridge Avenue in St. Catharines. A member of each of the four platoons was identified and attended the shelter on a regular basis during the six-month initiative. As of December 31, 2020, officers have made 40 documented visits to the shelter. During this time, 34 calls for service were diverted from general patrol. Officers spent a cumulative total of 28 hours at the shelter dealing with residents and staff.

As a result of police interactions; residents, staff, and volunteers have reported a sense of calm and safety. Staff have also reported that the residents have a greater feeling of respect, appreciation, and trust with police.

Queenston Street Trespassing/Vandalism/Drug Use: Places of Worship in the Queenston Street area reported to police an overwhelming problem with trespassing, encampments, vandalism, and drug use on their properties. Police engagement greatly reduced the unwanted behaviour with limited use of enforcement actions under the Trespass to Property Act and Criminal Code over the course of several weeks. The positive effects of this action have continued and have been met with appreciation by members of the community. As part of this initiative, police worked with Niagara Assertive Street Outreach to offer those experiencing homelessness opportunities to move to transitional and permanent housing.

Project Compliance: This annual initiative known as “South End Student Noise Initiative” has operated yearly since 2006 and was re-branded in 2020 as “Project Compliance”.

The Thorold Town & Gown Committee comprised of members of the community including Brock University and the Service was focused on COVID-19 restrictions and compliance. This initiative was planned and implemented as a cost shared project between Brock University Off-Campus Living and the Service. Post-secondary student house parties were specifically targeted to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Through university education and social media platforms, students living off campus were encouraged to refrain from holding or attending parties during Homecoming Week and into the fall. Officers and Thorold By-Law officers provided additional enforcement presence to discourage gatherings.

St. Patrick's Day Off Campus Living Noise Patrol: This initiative was a joint project with Brock University Off-Campus Living and 1 District. Uniform officers identified St. Patrick's Day student party houses in the south end of St. Catharines and Thorold before the event. Residents were visited and issued verbal warnings that inappropriate behaviour would not be tolerated. This year, due to the Provincial Wide Lockdown, student numbers were noticeably down. Officers did affect two arrests during St. Patrick's Day and several Provincial Offence notices were issued under the Nuisance By-Law.

Project Sunset - Platoon Initiative: This initiative was focused on problems encountered by people from areas in lockdown attending the Niagara area beaches. This initiative was organized with the assistance of the Traffic Enforcement Unit and St. Catharines By-Law Enforcement and focused on noise, impaired driving, HTA offences, and COVID-19 related municipal By-Laws. This project was highly effective and addressed numerous citizen complaints.

2 District - Niagara Falls and Niagara on the Lake

Operation TSR: This initiative was created in response to repeated complaints of excessive noise, speeding, and dangerous driving pertaining to car meets on Thorold Stone Road in Niagara Falls. This initiative was conducted on Wednesday nights, primarily throughout the months of July and August 2020. Checks of the area continued through the year with most activity and enforcement taking place in the summer. A total of 22 Provincial Offence Notices were issued for various infractions.

Foot Patrol Initiative: In response to incidents of unwanted persons, pan handlers and COVID-19 related calls for service involving social distancing within the Casino District area, foot patrols were initiated with the main objective of having visible officer presence within the community. A total of 556 foot-patrols were conducted within the Casino District and Clifton Hill areas. The business community and residents applauded this initiative and expressed an increased feeling of safety.

3 District - Welland and Pelham

Downtown Core Visibility: Platoons continued to set initiative goals to address drug activity, loitering, and trespassing around the area of East Main Street, which included businesses around the downtown core, including the courthouse and city hall.

Vacation Rental Property Initiative: Numerous complaints were received with respect to a vacation rental property causing issues with local neighbours. This joint project with the city resulted in the suspension of a property used as a vacation rental.

Foot Patrol Initiatives: Throughout the year officers spent time in visible areas in the downtown area of Welland and Pelham Town Square. Numerous compliments were received from local businesses and residents.

ATV Patrols of St. Lawrence Seaway Property and Surrounding Areas: The targeted areas included Hunters Point, Seaway service roads and both east and west sides of the canal. Uniformed Officers utilized ATVs along seaway property enforcing the Criminal Code of Canada, the Highway Traffic Act, and Trespass to Property Act.

5 District - Fort Erie

Cottage Checks: Officers utilized ATVs to conduct cottage checks along the Lake Erie shoreline, patrol the Friendship Trail, and local golf courses to address snow machines and off-road vehicles that may be causing damage. Officers issued Part I offence notices under the Trespass to Property Act and the Off-Road Vehicles Act. The checks consisted of ensuring doors were locked with no obvious signs of damage or break in. Cottage check placards were left behind for owners to inform them that officers conducted a premise check of their home.

Residential Break and Enters: February through June 2020, the Town of Fort Erie experienced approximately 60 break and enters in the area of Central Avenue and Bertie Street to residences, garages, and sheds. Many of the offences were committed with the occupants inside the residences at the time. The Fort Erie Detective Office began an investigation utilizing foot patrols, bike patrols, static surveillance, and several other investigative strategies. At the conclusion of the project, Detectives were able to identify a suspect who was arrested and charged with 12 offences directly related to 7 of the break and enters. Since this arrest, the community has not had any similar patterns of break and enters in that area.

Licensed Premise Checks: Officers conducted proactive inspections and enforcement of licensed establishments throughout the year. A dedicated approach was conducted during the months of July and August centering in the area of licensed establishments in Crystal Beach. With the addition of hundreds of seasonal residents in this area, underage drinking and property damage occurs. An increase of reports of intoxicated individuals and impaired drivers are also received. This proactive initiative was very well received by the licensed establishment owners in Crystal Beach. Additionally, the District Commander received compliments on the officer's presence, enforcement, and education.

6 District - Port Colborne and Wainfleet

Project Safe Streets: Officers participated in this project from January through March, conducting compliance checks on persons that were bound by terms of Release Orders/Probation Orders and apprehending wanted persons within the community. This also increased police presence in identified areas of concern relating to potential criminal activity. As a result of this project, 23 arrests were made in relation to wanted persons or people failing to comply with conditions of their Release Orders. Numerous address verifications were also conducted to ensure compliance with specific conditions.

Foot Patrol: This was a community engagement initiative with its primary goal to strengthen community and police relations. Enforcement resulted in the issuance of several Provincial Offence Notices and the arrest of wanted individuals in addition to intelligence gathering. Social media was used to highlight these foot patrols to bring additional community awareness to police efforts.

Lock It or Lose It: Officers participated in the "Lock It or Lose It" campaign during various times throughout 2020. Officers attended local arenas, shopping plazas, and residential apartment buildings in an effort to educate the public about the importance of removing or securing valuables within motor vehicles. Officers engaged with the community through face to face conversations, handing out pamphlets, and posting information on social media. Community members were appreciative of the crime prevention information provided and the extra efforts police were taking to ensure the community and their property were safe.

ATV Patrols: ATV patrols were utilized to provide officer presence and enforcement in rural areas, open areas, and those trails normally accessed by members of the public. ATV officers conducted cottage checks along the Lake Erie shoreline, patrols along the Friendship Trail, St. Lawrence Seaway properties and areas of concern reported by the community. Officers would enforce offences under the Trespass to Property Act and the Off-Road Vehicles Act. The cottage checks consisted of ensuring doors were locked with no obvious signs of damage or break ins. Cottage check placards were left for owners to inform them that officers had conducted a premise check of the dwelling and served notice that officers were active in the area conducting these patrols. Social media was used to inform the public of this initiative which received positive feedback.

8 District - West Niagara (Grimsby, Lincoln, and West Lincoln)

Lock it or Lose It: In the fall of 2020, officers attended various neighborhoods conducting foot, bicycle and vehicle patrol to deter thefts from unlocked vehicles. Officers distributed Lock it or Lose It cards and identified various insecure vehicles and residences.

Bicycle Patrols: Bicycle trained officers spent time in the communities in West Niagara to interact with members of the public.

- d) a summary of current concerns, as voiced by the community through the community partnership initiatives.

The Service regularly monitors and evaluates the effectiveness and on-going need for community-based crime prevention initiatives in collaboration with municipalities, school boards, businesses, and community organizations. Property crime and crime prevention strategies remain a community concern. Crime prevention and engagement initiatives with youth also continue to be a concern. Crimes related to the societal issues of illicit drug use are an ever-growing community concern. The Service remains cognizant of these issues and strives to address them through continued collaboration with community stakeholders and continuing with proactive community-based crime prevention.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of the Niagara Regional Police Services Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with the Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulation CP-002.

Relevant Policy Considerations

By-Law 192-2000, Crime Prevention

General Order 149.04 Community Patrol and Problem Oriented Policing.

Other Pertinent Reports

162-2020 Annual Report - Crime Prevention January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

This report was prepared by Sergeant Erin Madill, Community Engagement Unit, reviewed by Inspector Patrick McCauley, #3 District Commander and Marco Giannico, Superintendent, District Operations and recommended by Brett Flynn, Deputy Chief of Police, Operational Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not Applicable.