



A solution to the enforcement VACUUM

Dr. Roy Jensen, CA*SP

Tyler Robillard, Canal Side Security

An unfortunate reality in law enforcement is that growing communities, increasing costs, increasing documenting, stagnant budgets, and an over-burdened court system means police must prioritize their time to the more serious offences and get the most serious offenders off the street.

Major crimes

Across Canada, the target police response time to a priority call is 5 to 7 minutes. Priority calls are those where there is an active situation and an imminent risk of serious injury or death to people involved: robbery, shooting, injury accidents, etc. While numbers vary from year to year,

- In Vancouver, the average response time is around 13 minutes.
- In Toronto, the average response time is around 20 minutes.

Similar statistics exist for most Canadian cities. Only a few meet their target 5 to 7 minutes.

Another reality is that many crimes are over in seconds or minutes. Robbery, assault, hit and run, etc. take seconds to complete.

Minor crimes

Minor crimes are those where there is no risk of injury or death and where the value is under 5000 \$: shoplifting, vandalism, bylaw infractions, public disorder, disputes, etc. The police response time to minor calls is hours to days to never.

While law enforcement might label a crime “minor”, the victim is traumatized and left feeling frustrated and unsupported by law enforcement.

If a victim is able to report the crime via an automated online reporting system, it is a minor crime. Do not expect police to respond. Do not expect a police investigation. Do not expect the perpetrator to be caught, charged, or punished. The police will provide you with a case file for your insurance company. That’s about it.

This is not to disparage the police! The police I know are dedicated and hard working. They are exhausted at the end of their shift. But their priority is to do the most good for the most people, which means focusing on the serious offences and offenders.

Community engagement

Also gone are the days of community engagement by the police. Gone are the days of regular foot patrols, engaging with local businesses, and attending community meetings.

Only seeing the police after a major crime has been committed and not seeing them for minor crimes has resulted in communities feelings isolated and abandoned.

Knowing about the long response times has emboldened criminals. The chances of getting caught are slim. If caught, the chances of significant punishment are also slim. A fine. Probation. Community service. Incarceration only occurs for habitual criminals and serious offenders.

The enforcement VACUUM

There exists an enforcement vacuum for minor crimes. Criminals are aware of the vacuum, and are taking advantage of it.

The enforcement vacuum is harming the relationship between police and the community.

Addressing the enforcement VACUUM

A solution to the enforcement vacuum and long response time is the use of security professionals. Empower security professionals to be an effective first link in the emergency response chain.

Montreal, Vancouver, Hamilton, Waterloo, and other communities already have security professionals walking beats, engaging with those living and working in the communities, addressing situations before they escalate, and working with emergency services on more-serious situations. Some municipalities also have security professionals enforcing parking and bylaws, which allows the police to focus on major crimes.

Being in the community, security professionals are often first on scene. They can assess the situation, handle minor situations themselves, and bring the appropriate emergency services for the situation. They can conduct welfare checks, investigate noise and disturbance complaints, investigate bylaw complaints, investigate lost property, and de-escalate disputes. If things escalate, they disengage and contact the appropriate emergency services. This is an effective strategy for improving community visibility, providing deterrents, and providing improved emergency services to communities. Security professionals become the liaison between the community and law enforcement. It is an effective use of resources.

This requires training well beyond what they receive in their basic security training program.

CA*SP is working with security companies to develop a training framework that prepares security professionals to effectively and safely function as a municipal security agent.

