

The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention: Building Safer Communities

A national strategy to prevent crime

The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention is aimed at developing community-based responses to crime, with a particular emphasis on children and youth, Aboriginal people and women. The federal government has committed \$32 million annually to assist communities throughout Canada to develop programs and partnerships that will help prevent crime in the first place.

The Government of Canada launched Phase I of the Strategy in 1994. This phase provided a framework for federal efforts to support community safety and crime prevention; encouraged federal, provincial and territorial cooperation; and emphasized the mobilization of Canadians to take action at the community level to prevent crime. Phase II of the National Strategy, launched in 1998, enables the federal government to broaden its partnerships and support communities in designing and implementing innovative and sustainable ways of preventing crime.

The objectives of the National Strategy are:

- to promote the integrated action of key governmental and non-governmental partners to reduce crime and victimization;
- to assist communities in developing and implementing community-based solutions to problems that contribute to crime and victimization, particularly as they affect children, youth, women and Aboriginal people; and
- to increase public awareness of and support for effective approaches to crime prevention.

The high costs of crime

Crime in Canada has traditionally been dealt with primarily through reactive measures — the apprehension, sentencing, incarceration and rehabilitation of offenders. Statistics Canada estimates (1994-95) that \$9.9 billion a year is spent by governments on Canada's criminal justice system (i.e., police, courts and corrections). However, this amount represents a small portion of the total costs of crime. If the personal and physical costs and the losses of earnings due to crime are included, the annual cost of crime in Canada may be as high as \$46 billion. Moreover, this figure does not include the cost of white collar crime, tax evasion or stock market manipulation.

There are other costs of crime that cannot be quantified. Crime hurts people and makes them feel unsafe; it decreases quality of life and changes the face of our communities. The ripple effects of crime are felt throughout sectors such as health, social services, education, labour and employment.

In order to prevent crime, action must take place at the community level. It is the people who live, work and play in a community who best understand their area's assets, problems, needs and capacities.

National strategy priorities

The Strategy comprises three main components: a Safer Communities Initiative, a Promotion and Public Education Program, and a Private Sector/Non-Profit Body on Crime Prevention. The newly created National Crime Prevention Centre within the Department of Justice has the responsibility to implement the National Strategy, in partnership with the Solicitor General Canada.

The following are priorities for the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention:

Investing in Children and Youth

The best way to deal with the root causes of crime and victimization, and to thereby contribute to a safer society, is to provide children and their families with supports and resources. Risk factors associated with youth crime include fetal alcohol syndrome, child abuse and poor parenting.

Investing in Aboriginal People and Communities

Many Aboriginal communities experience disproportionately high rates of violence, victimization and poverty. Funding under the Safer Communities Initiative will complement *Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, contributing to improvements in health and public safety, and investment in people and economic development.

Investing in Women's Personal Security

Violence has a significant impact on the quality of women's lives. Studies have reported that one half of Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16. Fear of crime is a particularly important issue for women because it restricts their freedom to participate fully in society. Initiatives are required to improve women's personal security and to reduce victimization and fear of crime.

Safer communities initiative

The Safer Communities Initiative is designed to assist Canadians in undertaking crime prevention activities in their communities. Communities may be defined by geography, as in the case of neighbourhoods or towns, or by shared goals and experiences. The Initiative has three elements: the Community Mobilization Program, the Crime Prevention Investment Fund and the Crime Prevention Partnership Program.

The Community Mobilization Program

The Community Mobilization Program helps communities develop comprehensive and sustainable approaches to crime prevention and undertake activities that deal with the root causes of crime.

The Community Mobilization Program aims:

- to increase the development of broad, community-based partnerships focused on dealing with local crime prevention issues;
- to increase public awareness of and support for crime prevention; and
- to increase the capacity of diverse communities to deal with crime and victimization.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the Community Mobilization Program, as well as how to apply for funding to support local projects, consult the *Community Mobilization Program — Access Guide*.

The Crime Prevention Investment Fund

The Crime Prevention Investment Fund supports selected demonstration projects of Canada-wide significance and encourages the sharing of information on quality crime prevention initiatives across Canada. It also supports research and evaluation of the costs, benefits and overall effectiveness of efforts to prevent crime and victimization and build safer communities.

The Crime Prevention Investment Fund aims:

- to identify and support the development of promising and innovative, community-based crime prevention models;
- to conduct rigorous evaluations to determine the components of successful programs and the extent to which they can be replicated in similar settings (both urban and rural) across the country;
- to facilitate the sharing of information on quality crime prevention programs that are community-based, multidisciplinary, cost-effective and sustainable over the long term;
- to promote savings in the longer term by improving existing crime prevention programs, in order to achieve more integrated, cost-effective crime prevention approaches.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the Crime Prevention Investment Fund, consult the *Crime Prevention Investment Fund — Access Guide*.

The Crime Prevention Partnership Program

Canada's approach to crime prevention can be strengthened by providing support to, and encouraging the involvement of, national and international non-governmental organizations that can directly contribute to community crime prevention efforts.

The Crime Prevention Partnership Program aims:

- to support the involvement of organizations that can contribute to community crime prevention activities; and
- to develop information, tools and resources that facilitate community participation in all phases of crime prevention (e.g., the assessment of needs, development of plans, and implementation and evaluation) and that can be applied across Canada.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the Crime Prevention Partnership Program, consult the *Crime Prevention Partnership Program — Access Guide*.

For more information:

To obtain further information on the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention Phase II, or to obtain copies of the access guides for the Community Mobilization Program, the Crime Prevention Investment Fund or the Crime Prevention Partnership Program, contact:

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