

Safety & Security

A list of broad social goals has been established as a starting point for the sustainability plan. To achieve these (and environmental and economic) goals, the City and the community have been working for some time to develop and implement a Social Development Strategy. The Strategy complements the sustainability plan in that it focuses on the actions that meet at least one of the Sustainability Plan's goals. This document summarizes our performance, and highlights the links between goals, actions and root causes.

Description

Crime statistics are often used to gauge the relative safety of a community. Therefore, strategies to improve safety are often reactive and punitive in nature. In fact, public safety covers a broad spectrum of services that range from crime prevention initiatives like early childhood development programs; to timely and factual communication with citizens who perceive the community to be unsafe.



Prince George has categorized its assets in public safety according to the following area:

- Prevent and deter crime (including childhood and youth services)
- Rehabilitation and reintegration
- Apprehension and prosecution
- Communication, information and education
- Emergency disaster response

Status and Trends

Prince George's social development inventory showed that there was a focus in the community on initiatives to prevent and deter crime, thus addressing the **root causes** of crime.

While all individuals have an obligation to act responsibly and respectfully towards each other, communities also have an obligation to address the conditions, such as poverty, that hinder healthy development and act as a breeding ground for criminal behaviour. Crime is primarily the result of multiple adverse economic, social, cultural and family conditions.

The complex and inter-related root causes of crime can be summarized in three main categories:

1. **Poverty and economic factors:** In addition to lack of financial resources, poverty manifests itself in lack of educational opportunities, lack of meaningful employment options, poor housing, lack of hope and prejudice against people living in poverty.
2. **Social environment:** Our social structure mirrors to citizens and communities what we value and how we set priorities. Social root causes of crime are: inequality, not sharing power, lack of support to families and neighborhoods, real or perceived inaccessibility to services, lack of leadership in communities, low value placed on children and individual well-being, the overexposure to television as a means of recreation.
3. **Family environment:** Families are uniquely placed in contributing to raising healthy responsible members of society. But the task of putting children first goes well beyond the family to include communities and society. Dysfunctional family conditions contribute to future delinquency. These conditions include: abuse and neglect of children, family violence, parental conflict, parental criminality, and lack of respect, responsibility and communication.

There has been a significant move from reactive, to preventative, programs to address public safety. Many people say that “The offender of tomorrow is often the vulnerable child of today.” At the centre of this is the recognition that we need to provide for the physical, emotional and intellectual well-being of children, so that they can become healthy and well-adjusted adults.

Performance Measurement

Of the potential measures listed below, which should we use to measure and communicate progress? Would you rather use another one? Why?

- **Crime rates**
- **Annual change in crime rates**
- **Rate of re-offending** (recidivism)
- **Experiences of racism** and lack of “cultural safety”
- **Perception of crime** compared to actual crime rates
- **Child and youth perceptions of safety** in school
- **Percentage of children reporting being bullied**, teased or picked on

Questions for Consideration

1. What are some of the root causes of crime in Prince George? Which problems are specific to the community, and how do they differ from other towns?
2. How are we addressing the community’s perception of lack of safety in areas such as the downtown core? What has contributed to this?
3. What partnerships and linkages should be formed to address the root causes of crime, and develop primary prevention programs?