

The Corporation of the City of Vernon

Protective Services  
Community Safety  
2023 Year End Report



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## **Community Safety Unit Synopsis**

The Community Safety Unit forms part of the City's Protective Services team and includes two community safety coordinators and 29 dedicated RCMP volunteers. Using the principles of community-based policing and regulatory programs, the Community Safety Unit provides education and information to residents, businesses and community groups to help reduce opportunities for crime in the community and foster a better understanding of crime prevention.

The Community Safety Coordinator – Public Programs looks after Community Safety Office operations and delivers safety education programs involving schools, seniors and area businesses and works closely with social service providers under the auspices of crime prevention through social development. The Community Safety Coordinator – Crime Prevention looks after operational community safety programs related to crime prevention by engaging community members to be part of the solution to crime in their neighbourhood and throughout the City.

Community Safety Office RCMP Volunteers donated 1900.5 hours in 2023. They handled 431 phone calls and tended to 3722 community members that came into the office for crime prevention/community information, programs and education, and returning Police Information checks. Volunteers participated in a variety of events throughout the community including the John Minguy Memorial RCMP Youth Academy, Seniors Fair and Children's Festival, Bike Rodeos and Emergency Services Day. Volunteers also registered bikes on Garage 529. Requests for educational workshops from schools, social service providers, businesses and citizen groups began in January. Programs such as, frauds cons and scams, bike, internet and personal safety were in demand. The Folks on Spokes Green Team and Ambassador programs were active from April-October. The positive feedback from the community regarding Folks on Spokes continues to support the importance and value of the program.

The Anti-Tag Team (ATT) identified and documented unwanted graffiti and tagging vandalism throughout the City of Vernon from the end of May to August 18<sup>th</sup>. Their duties included communicating with property owners and as a courtesy the tenants, with the goal of having the property remediated. The documents delivered to property owners included a letter, photos of the vandalism, a form with action options including having the ATT help with remediation, and a copy of the Graffiti Bylaw #5010. Additionally, a courtesy copy was delivered to the tenant in the building. Upon receiving completed form, the ATT would then work with the property owner or their designate to remediate the graffiti vandalism if that was the property owner's direction.

The CSO Coordinator continues to manage the activity and programming of the CSO and be actively involved in a broad spectrum of initiatives throughout the community; Working collaboratively with many community sectors through Partners in Action, focusing on the Camp Okanagan Outreach Liaison (COOL), Harm Reduction Action Team (HART) and providing educational outreach, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design security audits and addressing emerging challenges and matters of safety and security within the City of Vernon.

In 2023, Crime Prevention RCMP Volunteers provided 3510 hours of service supporting regular and special operations. Regular operations included Community Safety Patrols, Speed Watch Operations, Cell Watch Operations, Marine Vessel Pre-Safety Check

and Invasive Mussel Operations and Lock Out Auto Crime Operations. In addition to those regular operations, the RCMP Volunteers assisted with community events such as Winter Carnival, Funtastic, Jean Minguy Youth Academy, Ducks for Dogs and the Emergency Services Showcase.

A variety of training sessions were held for the RCMP Volunteers in 2023. One session of note was the information session presented by OASSIS and BC Conservation regarding invasive species. In 2023, through regular and special operations, the RCMP Volunteers supported and assisted program partners such as ICBC, Vernon RCMP Detachment and OASSIS.

The Protective Services, Community Safety Unit continues to support Council's strategic Areas of Focus - "Community Safety" and a "Vibrant Downtown" through various programs and educational workshops with a continued focus on crime prevention volunteer operations to enhance public safety and security to reduce the fear of crime by building connections with many residents, businesses and community groups throughout the City.

## **Community Safety Unit: Crime Prevention Program**

**Crime Prevention Coordinator** is responsible for RCMP Volunteers working for Vernon Detachment and all related operational programs including Vehicle Patrols; Speed Watch Operations; Distracted Driving Operations; Lock out Auto Crime; Vessel Safety Pre-Check Operations; and Special Events.

**RCMP Volunteer** means an individual who provides a direct service to or on behalf of the RCMP without compensation or anything of value instead of compensation, other than reimbursement for expenses actually incurred. "E" Division describes an RCMP volunteer is someone who:

- Works collaboratively with the RCMP.
- Is officially screened into the RCMP, including mandatory security clearances.
- Is oriented to the RCMP mission, vision and values.
- Receives all training necessary to carry out the activities associated with their position.
- Is willing to contribute a minimum number of hours to the program, project or activities they are assigned to – in Vernon it's 80 hours.

**The role of the RCMP Volunteer Program is to support the Vernon RCMP Detachment by being additional eyes and ears in the City of Vernon** - As of December 31, 2023, we have twenty-nine (29) Vernon RCMP Volunteers. In the Spring, a recruiting drive was held which resulted in the Core Volunteer Training Program being offered in June. Three (3) new Volunteer Candidates completed the training, obtained their security clearances and are currently operational.

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### **Regular Duties for 2023 Include:**

- Vehicle Night Patrol
- Speed Watch Operation
- Cell Watch Operation
- Marine Vessel Safety Pre-check & Invasive Mussel Operation
- Lock Out Auto Crime
- 9pm Routine – Cst. Terleski
- Quick Response Team

**Special Duties for 2023 Include:**

- Winter Carnival Fireworks
- Winter Carnival Parade
- Winter Carnival Kick Off
- Community Expo
- Jean Minguy Youth Academy
- Funtastic
- Ducks for Dogs
- Ride Don't Hide
- Sun Valley Cruise-In



**Crime Prevention Program Statistics:**

Total Volunteer Hours Worked: 3510

**Community Safety Patrol:**

Community Safety Patrols provide an increased visibility in the community in an effort to deter and prevent crime. Volunteers observe, record and report suspicious and/ or criminal activity directly to the Watch Commander or OCC. Community Safety Patrols occur three (3) nights per week year-round and may receive additional patrol assignments for special operations.

This year one team was scheduled for a special operation on Halloween night. The team focused on patrolling neighbourhoods where children were actively trick or treating. The volunteers received many positive responses from parents during this operation.

Number of deployments:	169	
Operational hours:	2024	
Kilometers driven:	14525	
Number of license plates ran on Stolen Auto Recovery program:		11297

### Speed Watch Operations:



Speed Watch is an ICBC sponsored educational program aimed at reducing incidents of speeding. This program not only provides awareness to drivers who are speeding, but also provides valuable data to the RCMP and ICBC on areas where speeding is a significant problem. Speed Watch Operations are held from April through October and are weather dependent.

At the end of October, there were two Speed Watch Operations held at 4900 Okanagan Avenue at the request of Superintendent Baher. During the October 31 operation, a member of A Watch conducted traffic enforcement near the Speed Watch and issued three (3) Violation Tickets.

Number of deployments:	85
Operational hours:	340
Number of vehicles targeted to slow down:	27330

### Cell Watch Operations:

Cell Watch is an educational initiative aimed at reducing distracted driving incidents in communities throughout B.C. and it is conducted in partnership with police, RCMP Volunteers and ICBC's Road Safety Department. The program is designed to remind drivers that it is illegal and dangerous to use hand-held cell phones and other portable electronic devices (PED's) when driving.

Number of deployments:	11
Operational hours:	44
Number of vehicles observed:	5855
Number of warning letters issued to registered owners:	7

### Marine Vessel Safety Pre-check & Invasive Mussel Operation:



The Marine Vessel Safety Pre-Check is a voluntary program that boaters can participate in to ensure the boaters have all the items required under the Canada Shipping Act 2001. Volunteers review the required equipment checklist with the boat operator before they launch. This safety pre-check assists the RCMP members in their efficiency while patrolling Okanagan Lake.

In addition to the Marine Vessel Safety Pre-Check volunteers assist with the Invasive Mussel Operation which is ran in conjunction with OASISS, a non-profit organization dedicated to working collaboratively to prevent, monitor and control the spread of invasive species in the Okanagan-Similkameen region. Volunteers are stationed at Paddlewheel Park boat launch checking vessels for Quagga and Zebra invasive mussels.

Number of deployments:	19
Operational hours:	206
Number of vessels checked:	169
Number of vessels found with potential mussels:	0

### Quick Response Teams:

There was one Quick Response Teams (QRT) consisting of a Team Leader and eight (8) members. The QRT was assembled for short notice callout by a Vernon RCMP Watch Commander or Search and Rescue Manager. The Quick Response Team was not called out to any incidents in 2023.



### **Block Watch Program:**

On March 16, a Block Watch training refresher for Captains and Co-captains was facilitated by the Crime Prevention Coordinator. Cst. Chris Terleski was in attendance to support the Coordinator's presentation and answer inquiries from the participants. Twenty (20) Captains and Co-Captains attended this session.

Currently there are 85 active Block Watches in Vernon.

In Vernon we have **7 Crime Free Multi-Housing** Properties.

### **Challenges Faced in 2023:**

In 2023 there were some challenges for the Crime Prevention Programs. A number of volunteers resigned from the program due to changes in their personal lives. A recruiting drive was held in the Spring which resulted in three (3) new volunteers joining the program bringing the total number of volunteers to twenty-nine (29) at the end of December.

The outlook for volunteer recruitment in 2024 is positive. There are five (5) Volunteer Candidates currently in the application process and the goal is to offer a Core Training Session for the RCMP Volunteer Program in the Spring.

The Block Watch program also saw a reduction in the number of active groups due to a review of Block Watch policies and procedures. Groups that had been in-active for over six months were deactivated after attempts to find new Captains were unsuccessful. In an effort to recruit new Block Watch members a media release is planned for early 2024.

## **Community Safety Unit: Community Safety Office; Public Programs**

The Community Safety Office (CSO) maintained a compliment 10 RCMP volunteers. They staffed the storefront office, returned successful Police Information Checks and tended to public enquires for information, education and assistance. The CSO RCMP Volunteers also played a vital role in the success of the Folks on Spokes Programs and Garage 529. Volunteers have taken an active role in working with the community through the Coordinator's participation with various action teams and special programs such as Strengthening Communities. With the CSO RCMP volunteers supporting the Folks on Spokes program as well creating a safe, nonjudgmental place of refuge, providing information, brochures or connecting the public to the right services, the CSO is actively involved in making Vernon a welcoming place to work, live and play regardless of economic or social barriers.



Commitment to community collaboration remained the foundation of the Community Safety Unit. The Public Programs Coordinator continued to be actively involved in complex concerns regarding safety and security by participating in the Camp Okanagan Outreach Liaison (COOL) team and Harm Reduction Action Team (HART). As the housing, mental health and opioid crises in tandem with severe weather, issues of homelessness and toxic drug alerts significantly impacted the community.



Partnerships and community empowerment are cornerstones to Community Safety. In 2023 the Coordinator delivered a record number of workshops. Requests for educational programs began in January with Personal Safety and Frauds Cons and Scams. Digital Safety -Cyber Bullying/Citizenry, Bike Safety, and Drug Awareness were regularly requested as well as De-escalation of Situation/ Situational Awareness. The age range for program participation was from 3 years old to well over 90 years of age. Conservatively, over 1250 people participated in the workshops and those that attended were from a variety of sectors within the community.

The CSO Public Programs Coordinator continues to be actively involved in a broad spectrum of initiatives; working collaboratively with many sectors, providing educational outreach and addressing emerging challenges and matters of safety and security throughout our unique, dynamic and ever-changing city. The Strengthening Communities project that funded a variety of front-line programs including the Folks on Spokes Ambassadors (FOSA) concluded and Vernon Gun & Gang Violence Prevention Strategy, funded through the Building Safer Communities grant launched. The CSO Coordinator, with Urban Matters, plays a project

managing role in the delivery the Building Safer Communities fund. Further, towards the end of the year, as Vernon has had a collaborative community of practice in place through Partner's in Action since 2008, the feasibility of formally participating in the Public Safety Program Situation Table provincial initiative was to be explored by the Coordinator.

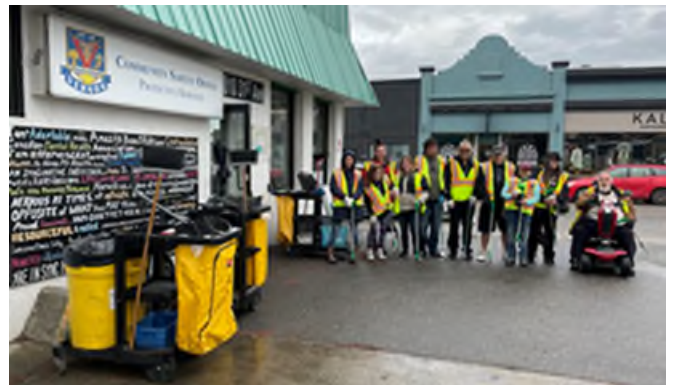
The Anti-Tag Team (ATT) was hired for the summer of 2023, staffing challenges occurred when one of the team members was unable to continue the program leaving only one individual to complete the season. As the term of the ATT is quite short re-posting and re-hiring was impracticable.

While the four positions for the Vernon Safety Ambassadors were posted, due to the ongoing labour shortage none were hired. Once again, due to the short-term nature of the position, reposting was not practical.

### **Folks on Spokes (FOS)**

Folks on Spokes (FOS) celebrated their fifth year of service officially launching with a Community Clean Up on April 21 and officially ending October 31. Many continued to participate with the Fall Community Clean Up held on November 1.

Between April and October, working in downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) 8am-10am and 1pm-3pm, the FOS team picked up 135 large bags of garbage. Focussing on areas potentially impacted by disenfranchised activity. Their efforts ran in tandem with the Downtown Vernon Association's (DVA) Downtown Beautification Technician and Venture Training caring for the downtown street landscaping. FOS picked up 99 improperly disposed needles. This is a vast reduction from the 178 picked up in 2022.



### **The FOS Peer Ambassador (FOSA)**



This program was funded through the Strengthening Communities Grant to provide a consistent physical presence, to addresses business concerns regarding unwanted activity around the public bathrooms. The team started with 20 but quickly stabilized to 12.

Community feedback was excellent. The team provided information and direction to those requiring assistance to programs and services as well as helped reduce incidents of overdose and misuse of the public facilities. Unintentionally, the FOSA became tourist ambassadors. The team's uniformed and highly visible flag and presence in high foot traffic areas, resulted in them being approached for tourist information, such as cycling and hiking maps as well as tourism guides by tourist and locals

alike. During their shift, FOS Ambassadors did wellness checks on users of the facility if the team decided a check was necessary and took appropriate action if required.

### **Community Safety Office Program Statistics:**

Active volunteers	10
Volunteer hours	1900.5
Regular shifts exclusive of special events.	384

### **Public Engagement & Phone Calls:**

A total of 431 important phone calls were documented to this office and 3722 people came into the Community Safety Office in 2023. (*This does not include staff /volunteer calls and visits or Folks on Spokes*).

**Public Events Attended** In 2023 CSO Volunteers participated in a variety of community events outside of regular office hours:

- Vernon Children's Festival- two days
- John Minguy Memorial RCMP Youth Academy
- Sunshine Festival,
- DVA Trick or Treat Trail
- Senior's Fair
- Emergency Services Day
- Tiny Tots Bike Rodeo x 2
- Kee's Taekwondo Spring Break Camp Bike Rodeo
- Ecole Beairsto grades 3/4/5/ bike Rodeo
- Alexis Park Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (*SEY2KT*) *Bike skills*
- Ellison Elementary School Bike Rodeo
- Military Tattoo - two days



### **Operation Cat's Paw**

2082 entries were made into the pawn program data base. The sharp decline in entries is due to loss of the last two reporting pawns shops in the city. One shop closed and the second was lost due to fire.

### **Police Information Checks (PICs)**

From January through December the CSO received 1118 PICs from the RCMP

### **Sharps Hotline: April-October**

The sharps hotline received a total of 5 calls for service.

### **Folks on Spokes (FOS)**

The Green (FOSG) Team worked 171 shifts of 2 hours each. The teams picked up 135 large bags of garbage in the downtown core.

FOSG picked up 99 improperly disposed needles.

Ambassadors (FOSA) worked 148 shifts of 2 hours each

### **Anti-Tag Team (ATT):**

The ATT identified and documented unwanted graffiti and tagging vandalism throughout the City of Vernon from the end of May to August 18<sup>th</sup>. Their duties included communicating with property owners and as a courtesy the tenants, with the goal of having the property remediated.

The document delivered to property owners included a letter, photos of the vandalism, a form with action options including having the ATT help with remediation, and a copy of BLAW#5010. Additionally, a courtesy copy was delivered to the tenant in the building. Upon receiving the completed form, the ATT would then schedule a day with the property owner to remediate the graffiti vandalism if that was the property owner's direction.

The ATT documented 1737 tags and noted the most prolific tag vandals.

- 71 properties voluntarily remediated as a result of the initial educational correspondence.
- 60 property owners responded to the correspondence
- 14 of the 60 properties were cleaned by the ATT
- Properties remaining in non-compliance at the end of the ATT program are forwarded to Bylaw Compliance for follow up.

The short duration of the ATT program is a challenge as the time to document, contact, and remediate is 13 weeks.

### **Community Safety Coordinator – Public Programs Tasks and Priorities**

Coordinated store front Community Safety Office Programs and volunteers, Anti-Tag Team, Folks on Spokes Green Team and Ambassadors.

#### **Special Projects:**

- Vernon Gun & Gang Violence Prevention Strategy, Building Safer Communities and Situation Table
- Folks on Spokes Ambassador program through the Strengthening Communities Grant
- December 5<sup>th</sup>, International Day of the Volunteer - recognize the long service and dedication of Volunteers to the City of Vernon RCMP Volunteers.

#### **Safety and Security Workshops Delivered by the Coordinator:**

The Coordinator presented 39 workshops throughout the community in 2023 reaching over 1250 participants. Workshops included:

- Frauds Cons & Scams
- Personal Safety
- Business Security
- Drug Awareness – School based
- Drug Awareness – Adult
- Digital Safety/Citizenry

- Child Safety -Pregnancy Outreach Program
- Bike Skills/Safety
- Hug a Tree and Survive
- De-escalation / Situational Awareness

**Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Security Audits:**

- Requested by Victim's Assistance: 3
- Requested by the community: 12

**Professional Development:**

- Decriminalization Education
- Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP) Conference
- RCMP Stakeholders Meeting
- EOC Wildfire Event Planning,
- Dementia
- Workplace Violence Prevention Workshop

**Events Participated in:**

- Sunshine Festival,
- DVA Trick or Treat Trail
- Senior's Fair
- Emergency Services Day
- Tiny Tots Bike Rodeo x 2
- Kee's Taekwondo Spring Break Camp Bike Rodeo
- Ecole Beairsto grades 3/4/5/ bike Rodeo
- Alexis Park Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (*SEY2KT*) *Bike skills*
- Ellison Elementary School Bike Rodeo
- Military Tattoo-two days
- RCMP vs Special Olympics baseball game Overdose Prevention Day,
- United Way Drive through Breakfast,
- Service Providers Appreciation Mixer,
- Homeless Memorial
- CMHA Youth Integrated Service Hub info night.
- RCMP vs Special Olympics Baseball Game

