HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality

A Report to the Mayor

Supplemental Report #5:
The Engaged Focus Groups

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April 2008

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT # 5: THE ENGAGED FOCUS GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION

Subsequent to the identification by the writer (and vetted by the Mayor's Advisory Committee) of seven key dimensions of the crime and public safety problem in HRM, focus group meetings involving about a dozen local persons engaged in the specific issues were arranged for each dimension. All told, 91 persons participated and each focus group met at least twice for roughly two hours. The selection of the participants was made by the writer drawing in part on suggestions made by the advisory committee members and others. The selection criterion was essentially "who are the major people directly engaged in dealing with these issues"; fortunately, virtually all the persons identified and contacted agreed to participate. The objectives of the focus groups were (a) to bring together people with experience and expertise; (b) have focus groups informed by persons representing diverse but interconnected interests and vantage points; (c) learn more about the problems and issues and especially the HRM realities; (d) learn what is working well, what has promise and what could be done to reduce crime and increase public safety; (e) appreciate what the community and the City can do; (f) contribute to networking and knowledge exchange among key engaged parties.

The seven key dimensions or focus group themes were:

1. Street Crime, Violence and Public Safety
2. Neighbourhood Engagement and Public Safety
3. The Downtown Bar Scene (The Night-Time Economy)
4. Troubled Youth and Issues of Public Safety
5. Public Safety and Security Issues in Minority Communities
6. Social Constructions of Violence and Public Safety
7. Community and City Initiatives Regarding Organized Crime and Issues of Addiction, Prostitution and Offender Reintegration

The focus group theme, **Street Crime**, was oriented to considering a variety of issues that have generated public fears for safety, including swarmings (usually by a grouping of teens or young adults), conventional robberies of individuals (often deemed to be carried out by addicts looking for quick money), possibly the intimidation of street-level sex trade (not to mention the dangers of violence for the sex trade workers), and the grey-crime area of intimidation and harassment in public places. Swarming and street robbery, perhaps more than anything else, have been at the heart of public concerns for safety, and indeed HRM, compared to most other jurisdictions in Canada, has had a high level of these "signal crimes'. While both swarmings and conventional street robbery would appear to overlap much with respect to the motives of the offender, robbery would appear to be more utilitarian. The criminological literature on the whole supports that depiction, suggesting that street robbery, committed by a single person or two, is most often utilitarian and linked to drugs (e.g., "I was high", "I wanted to buy crack"), but it too may involve a complex of factors such as notions of street justice, getting status and the "high" of domination. As Barnet argues ("Street Robbery Is Not Just About Money", 2006), "the decision to commit street crime can be explained in part by particular characteristics of the street culture … any explanation must take into account cultural factors associated with life on the street".

There has been little examination of the motivation for swarmings and virtually none on the victims. A Quebec article in 2002 (State and Rising Youth Gang Violence) noted that "Sometimes the motivation for the attack is to obtain some property from the victim. However, many senseless and unprovoked attacks left the victim with their property. Violent swarmings are committed by emotionally deprived kids who are looking for status and acceptance. A study found a strong correlation between youth with absent fathers and/or lack of family support joining violent gangs and committing violent acts. It is argued that by participating in violent acts, one's status in a gang is upgraded and he becomes more strongly integrated into the gang and brotherhood – thereby fulfilling his/her emotional need to belong/accepted". Cultural factors appear to be significant. Sociologists refer to the modern origins of swarming in the inner cities of the USA where the desire to get an expensive item such as top-grade running shoes (i.e., expensive sport paraphernalia) mixed with quasi-gang motives (e.g., the status factors that Barnett refers to above). It has an inner city, Black subculture identity which conventional street robberies do not have. Swarming, as found in HRM, would appear to be more motivated by non-utilitarian considerations. There is often no material gain whatsoever and when there is, the assault seems "over the top" or gratuitous (a concept frequently used by police, prosecutors and judges in describing these actions). In one HRPS report dealing with gang swarmings, an officer noted, "To be indicted [into the gang] new members must commit an assault in the presence of established members".

Analyses of the data on swarming and street robberies provided by the HRPS, for the period January 2006 to July 2007, indicates that swarming, where assault is more prominent than robbery though both may be involved, by youth and young adults in the urban cores of HRM – there is little outside these zones – is very disproportionately carried out by young Black males. On the other hand, 'conventional' street robberies of individuals, where the material gain seems to be the sole objective, has been more likely carried out by individual Caucasian males though Black male robbers are not exceptional. For example, in the Central and East districts of HRPS jurisdiction, the urban core areas where robberies of both kinds largely takes place, one typical period report shows 11 Whites involved in 9 robberies and 23 Black males involved in 5, a clear indication of the style of conventional street robbery versus swarmings; another period report for a district indicates that 23 of the 26 robberies were committed by groups of 3 or more Black young males. Aside from these general patterns, there is some variation by area of attack (but most of these street crimes occur close to home), gender (there are a few swarmings by females), the number of attackers, and motive. In a recent, well-publicized case in HRM where several young teenagers swarmed a sixty year old woman and the assault could be described as gratuitous, the ostensible motive as expressed by one of the girls was to get back to the Youth Correctional facility where her basic survival needs would be better met. The notion that a subcultural pattern of swarming may have taken hold among socially disadvantaged Black youths, who themselves are usually routinely victimized in their everyday life, seems supported by the large number of such youths who have been identified by HRPS as quasi-gang members engaged in swarmings and by the fact that older Black males, young adults, appear to be participants and role models.

The grey-crime / provincial statute area of intimidation, vagrancy and the like has frequently been identified as a significant public safety issue and usually linked with the proliferating

problem of the homeless, and panhandling. Little information is available on the threat to public safety. It is unclear what crimes are committed with what frequency by the "street people". Charging people for some such statute violations has sometimes been seen as following the famous "broken windows" policing strategy whereby social disorder is reduced, opportunity for crime diminished and the offenders seized may be subsequently charged for more serious offenses. In the parlance of the American street, such a statute charge is designated, "it's a humble" (i.e., no serious implications for one's record, bail etc but a 'statement'). At the same time, the line between statute and crime can be a shifting one and there can be little doubt that street people, given their frequency of addiction and health problems, on top of their poverty and need, would likely be repeat minor offenders as well as repeat victims of violence themselves.

A number of studies have been done of the homeless in HRM and are accessible through the HRM website. Studies completed in 2004 indicated that the public perception was that the problem was getting worse and that some action by government on affordable housing was needed. Other studies in that period indicated that most homeless are young adults and older with only some 12% being under 18 years of age, that the homeless numbers were significant though not increasing dramatically, and that the problems of the street people were multifaceted; they, too, emphasized the need for safe, affordable housing. A 2006 report which probed the circumstances and views of a small, and likely unrepresentative, sample of the homeless (Street Youth Speak Out, 2006) pointed to a high level of victimization both before and after the respondents became homeless, a persistent homelessness, extensive use of drugs and serious health problems, and few available social services (too old for Community Services and few other services save Phoenix House and ARK available for them). Safe, supervised housing was a central recommendation of the 2006 report as well.

Throughout Canada, that has been the central recommendation of virtually all studies of the homeless and the threat to public safety. It has become almost a mantra that the "housing first" approach, by getting people into supportive housing, would yield big savings in public outlays for diverse social services and that there would be a high (80%) housing retention rate (e.g., "Sheltering addicted persons would save millions" British Columbia Report www.cbc.ca April, 2008). Recent legislation has made it possible to enhance the enforcement side of dealing with this general problem. Bill 7 amending the MV Act was passed in January 2008 to reduce or eliminate the squeegee problem. The Nova Scotia Safe Streets Act directed at panhandling and street "intimidation' is set for promulgation. In August 2007 the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear an appeal from eleven homeless men arguing that an Ontario law outlawing squeegee "kids" and panhandlers is unconstitutional. There is though reluctance by governments and the public in general, appropriately so in this writer's view, to use the enforcement tools here save in egregious circumstances (Lezlie Lowe, 2008). Getting at the roots of the problem (undoubtedly, problems since there are complicated issues here) through more positive approaches such as the "navigator project" encouraged by local business associations (see Supplemental Report # 5, Authorities and Experts) or the partnerships proposed by the Community Action on Homeless (funded in part by both senior levels of government) to generate permanent, safe housing stock, should be encouraged by and collaborated in by City government. Typically, too, much effort is expended by police and courts in dealing with disturbed or addicted street people committing relatively minor but frequent offenses. A variety

of specialty courts have come into vogue in an attempt to get more on the roots of the problems experienced by these persons such as mental health courts, drug treatment courts or community courts, and it appears that the province is now encouraging such initiatives.

Drug addiction and abuse has been considered by many criminal justice people, community groups and the public at large to be a major contributor to street crime and threats to public safety. It is at the core of much street crime, the street sex trade, deadly local disputes and turf wars, and organized crime in the large. The emphasis in the USA and Canada justice policy and practice has been on enforcement and the supply side but a major rehabilitation thrust has accompanied the growth of drug treatment courts as options to conventional incarceration in both countries over the past decade (i.e., there are now over 2000 such courts in the USA and six formal and three "informal" courts in Canada). Research carried out by the writer in 2003-2004, with respect to HRM getting a drug treatment court, found that drug offenses were increasing and that the number of addicted persons who would be eligible for that option (i.e., addicted persons charged with drug dealing, street crimes etc) would be sufficient to mount the initiative. These data have been updated by accessing federal prosecutions data and interviewing prosecutors and local treatment providers (e.g. Directions 180). The drug problems and the drug numbers appear to be similar to the earlier period and indeed, the local treatment providers (providing methadone and some counselling) indicate that they are operating at capacity. There is also an underlying concern that powerful addictive drugs such as "crystal meth" might become more widespread. There appears also to be a greater openness to rehabilitative initiatives, such as the drug treatment court in Canada, and, in the USA, a noticeable trend away from mandatory sentences for drug possession (see for more detail the focus group write-up on drugs below). In Nova Scotia the provincial Department of Justice is considering a form of drug treatment court for the immediate future. Improving treatment and other services – dealing with the demand side of drug abuse –is an important complement to the enforcement thrust. It would also have positive implications for reducing street crime. The municipality is home to seven halfway houses accommodating adult ex-inmates, many of who have addiction problems and without treatment, housing, and the like might – and do – recidivate at a high level. Similarly, it could benefit street sex trade workers and associated public concerns (see below). Presently, there is a relatively small number of street sex trade workers but, reportedly, a high proportion is drug addicted. According to police authorities, "there are never more than ten prostitutes working the streets at one time" and "where there is [street] prostitution, there is usually drugs and a crack house within a short distance."

The Street Crime focus group discussed a variety of specific issues such as chronic offenders with mental health or drug problems, vandalism, graffiti and so on. As Murphy has noted in his write-up below, two major perspectives were evident. One was that advanced by participants associated with services and agencies responding directly to the needs of the people often in trouble (i.e., clients), and the other reflecting broader governmental and community interests. While both perspectives shared commonality as to the social factors causing individuals to engage in various types of street crime (e.g., poverty, parental and school inadequacies, drug abuse and lack of positive alternative opportunities), the former emphasized the need for more effective treatment and rehabilitation (e.g., mental health programs, employment, housing support) while the latter emphasized the need for Justice system changes (e.g., sentencing, YCJA) to effect greater accountability among those causing street crime. There was considerable consensus though that there is in HRM a great need to overcome the lack of consultation and coordination between diverse community service providers and the governmental services, and that HRM should become more engaged in facilitating that coordination; specifically, the focus group suggested a crime prevention council be established by the municipal government. Despite the major divide between treatment and enforcement perspectives, there was a sense that a coherent strategic action plan could accommodate both approaches.

The focus group theme, **Neighbourhood Engagement and Public Safety**, was considered crucial since the City has had to date such a minimal role in directly dealing with issues of violence and public safety that the onus has fallen largely to neighbourhood initiatives supported by the United Way. The City does provide, since 2007, modest grants for applicants advancing projects on a neighbourhood safety theme but few have been requested to date (personal communication, HRM, February, 2008), There has also been an HRM Community Response Team format in operation for five years but it appears to have had a limited, reactive role (e.g., crime prevention through environmental design). The focus group was set in train in order to explore whether community mobilization has been thus far an effective strategy in responding to violence and public safety issues, what the current assets and capacities are, what might be recommended to enhance effectiveness, and what the City's role might be in that regard.

The focus group brought together persons who worked in the area of community mobilization as well as leaders of several well-known community efforts where significant change was achieved with respect to reducing crime rates as well as increasing community refurbishment and pride. The facilitator, Professor Schneider, who has developed and implemented innovative intervention programs (e.g. mentoring), studied and written on the topic, also provided a review of the salient literature which is reproduced below. He observes there that a central problem of community mobilization and crime prevention has been that it is least successful where it is usually most called for, namely in the socio-economically disadvantaged urban core areas of modern Western societies. Academics, and the evaluation literature, have become quite pessimistic about the capacity of such communities to mobilize and impact on the pervasiveness of crime and have emphasized the greater value of social development programs targeted at at-risk children and youth, their families, their schools and their after-school activities. There has

been some research indicating that collective efficacy, defined as social cohesion among neighbours combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good, is linked to reduced violence (Neighbourhoods and Violent Crime, 1997). The challenge has been to achieve collective efficacy in areas characterized by poverty, transiency, high crime levels and so on. The Lighthouse program in Winnipeg (see the main Roundtable report) and the Mulgrave Park developments referred to below indicate that it is possible.

The focus group's discussion dealt with three broad issues, namely what have been the features of the community initiatives successful in reducing violence and threats to public safety, what the chief obstacles have been to greater effectiveness, and what role has and should the municipal government play. It was agreed that having a broad, active, volunteer base was crucial to success, as was promotion of the programs, developing partnerships with government agencies, the voluntary sector and private business, and accessing municipal resources and facilities. The obstacles to community participation and the factors that undermine effective community safety programs were seen basically as two-fold, namely too few volunteers and little sense of ownership in the local problem-solving, and, secondly, lack of local municipal leadership in coordinating community efforts and making available municipal facilities and other resources. The recommendations reasonably enough focused on how the municipal government could advance community / neighbourhood engagement in reducing violence and crime and improving public safety. Here the central call was for leadership from the Mayor's Office in acknowledging the problem of public safety and assuming a mobilizing and coordinating role. The focus group held that a community crime prevention coordinator and associated advisory group, directly reporting to the Mayor's Office, should be established. Specific ways in which this new organizational structure could advance community engagements were deemed to be assisting in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, supplying technical experience and a broad strategic planning umbrella for community initiatives, and directly supporting a social development approach to the problem. It was also recommended that the police services commit more to reassurance policing, deemed to mean police personnel in specific neighbourhoods, full time, and focusing on reassurance policing objective.

The Downtown Bar Scene or what some English writers have termed "the night-time economy" was an especial emphasis of the Roundtable initiative since much of the violence and concern about public safety in HRM has focused on the Downtown in the evening, and it has also been such a vital part of HRM's attraction and economy. The challenge for HRM is how to respond effectively to the assaults and other crimes there while retaining the vibrancy of the Downtown areas. There have been many assessments of the violence and public safety issues with respect to the 'night time economy' or Downtown bar scene in Canada, England and the United States. The specific features associated with increased likelihood of violence and crime, as well as the recommendations on how to reduce their impact, are very commonly noted (see the literature cited by Murphy below). The Downtown bar scene could well be described as the perfect storm for violence and crime, involving as it does young adults (the central contributor to violence in virtually all societies), moderately affluent, of diverse race/ethnic and social status, concentrated in large numbers in a few large drinking

establishments, engaged, in significant number, in excessive alcohol consumption, and in a very permissive milieu (open hours past midnight, poor oversight, discounted alcohol prices) where Bar security is questionable and transportation inadequate. In all parts of the Roundtable initiative the Downtown was a central point of emphasis but especially so in this focus group and in the Student survey (as one might expect the Downtown scene has a major allure for some, though not all, university and college students). Data from the public and student surveys, and other material generously provided by the HRPS, was passed on to professor Murphy who took on the task of preparing an overview and pulling together the recommendations as he saw appropriate; his elaborate seventeen page overview follows the focus group report on the Downtown also prepared by himself.

The HRPS police statistics, cited by Murphy in his overview piece below, and included in greater number in the appendix to the main report, indicate a very significant crime and public safety problem which has grown over the years 2003 to 2007. The HRPS' recommendations in presentations to the provincial government have emphasized prohibiting deeply discontinued liquor prices, staggering closing times given the high outlet density in the Downtown, reducing the hours of operation, strengthening the regulatory oversight, mandating responsible service and "safe bars" training, and support for the Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy for long-run change. All of these recommendations have been incorporated in the overview recommendations advanced by Murphy.

The focus group on the Downtown represented well the diverse interests on the Downtown bar scene, drawing upon owners/managers, regulatory officials, police, urban planning expertise, security and University officials, and spokespersons for the local business associations. The participants agreed that violence and public safety have become serious problems and that the public imagery about that scene (encouraged perhaps by media sensationalism in the eyes of some participants) has depicted the Downtown as a dangerous place to visit in the evening. The reality and the public discourse were seen to have a negative impact on the viability of the Downtown and the economy of HRM. The focus group differentiated between the bar scene and the contiguous area, Spring Garden Road, where the public safety issues are the vagrants / homeless, aggressive panhandlers, and disturbed persons who, in the daytime and early evening hours especially, frighten off the public and negatively impact on the area's economy.

The consensus of the group was that the central immediate cause of the problem in the Downtown bar scene was the abuse of alcohol, that is intoxicated young adults who are both offenders (minor assaults, property damage and social disorder) and victims (prey to assaults by predatory outsiders and others). That problem was deemed to have become worse in recent years (see the appendix in the main report for supporting data) for a variety of reasons, such as the 'cheap drinks' promotion by the bars, inadequate police or private security presence, ineffective regulatory oversight, inadequate late night transportation and the default of universities and colleges in collaborating in solutions. The recommendations advanced by the focus group were directed at these perceived causes. With respect to the group assaults on the Downtown patrons, the focus group recommended more police presence, CCTV monitoring, tougher prosecution and

sentencing, and strategic use of CPTED principles (e.g., closing off key streets to automobile traffic). In the case of the Spring Garden Road area of Downtown HRM, the focus was on "street people" and it was held that solutions in this 'grey crime' area of public safety appears to be limited by both an uncertain enforcement policy (e.g., the Safe Street Act enhancing the powers of provincial statutes in this area has yet to be promulgated) and inadequate treatment and social development programs (e.g., mental health services, supervised housing access). The participants made recommendations dealing with these factors and especially called on the municipal government to take leadership in creating private, voluntary and government partnerships to deal with housing and other social development approaches.

Professor Murphy has pulled together data and recommendations, provided in the various parts of this Roundtable report, to lay out a comprehensive overview of the immediate causes of the public safety problems in the Downtown and the recommendations advanced to deal with them. There is considerable consensus on the problems and the recommendations as readers of the various supplemental reports would appreciate. Murphy's analyses elaborate upon most of the consensus recommendations (e.g., more police presence). Some of the recommendations involve provincial jurisdiction (e.g. better and stricter regulation of liquor establishments) where the City might assume a larger mobilizing and advocacy role while others fall more directly into the current municipal mandate (e.g., transportation policy). Some are immediately feasible while others (e.g., changing the culture of alcohol abuse) are more long-term and their successful implementation would appear to require a more holistic strategic planning (see the argument elsewhere in this Roundtable report for connecting this objective with a system of alternative justice, extra-judicial sanctions). Murphy recommends that the Mayor's Office, as a priority, should constitute a Downtown Public Safety Committee, charged with developing a strategic action plan based on the Roundtable report, a recommendation the writer endorses.

The focus group dealing with **Social Constructions of Violence and Public Safety** was asked to explore how crime and public safety issues are conceptualized and framed from the perspectives of the various media, police and criminal justice system, and other interests (e.g., youths, minorities) and communicated; what policies, practices or networks might represent appropriate change, and what role, if any, that governments and HRM in particular might have in any suggested change process. It was drawn to the participants' attention that cities having task forces on these issues virtually always raise questions about the quality of the information (e.g., accuracy, depth, balance) conveyed to the public and how well it is disseminated. There is a strong premise that public discourse or cultural ways of thinking and talking about violence and crime are heavily influenced by the mass media and are significantly disconnected from actual crime and likelihood of victimization (some researchers have contended that such focus transcends culture in that humans are 'hard-wired for fear", Globe and Mail, May 6, 2007). In policing circles, for example, the reassurance policing movement has underlined that social perceptions of public safety may operate on a somewhat different trajectory from

actual crime patterns, but have real consequences so strategies have to be developed to respond to the public mindset.

The literature in this area has largely focused on the role of mass media (TV, radio and newspapers) and usually held that the media does overplay the sensationalism of crime and stoke fears for public safety. A recent overview of the literature concluded, "Crime is central to the production of news in Canadian society … it is also a central component in entertainment" (Dowler and Fleming, 2006). The authors argue that crime news has been understood to have had a profound influence in moving society toward a "law and order" approach and cite the copious literature on 'moral panics' generating public fears (Cohen, 1972). The famous line, "if it bleeds, it leads" captures the perceived media thrust also conveyed by a veteran Nova Scotian journalist (Surette, The Chronicle-Herald, July 26, 2007), "The media, especially supper hour private TV, do blow up crime. It's true – it's virtually a form of entertainment". Research has shown that mass media accounts of local crimes of violence that were sensational and random (e.g., presumably most HRM swarmings) were more associated with high levels of fear (Heath and Gilbert, 1996) than other accounts (e.g., property crime, non-random violence such as turf battles, and non-local violent crime). There is also much uncertainty about the overall impact of the media on the public perceptions of violence and crime

Research has also regularly found that high levels of fear of crime and victimization are associated with variables such as gender (female), age, past victimization, race/ethnicity, residence, and level of neighbourhood integration. However, the same research indicates that these effects are weak to modest so clearly there is much that is unknown or perhaps idiosyncratic. In general, suggestions advanced for countering and reducing fears of crime and victimization include more community engagement and better education about public safety. If there is a need for better quality, if not balanced, information being developed and disseminated, how might that be done? Who might have what responsibility? How well does HRM meet the test of "quality information well disseminated" regarding violence and public safety? It surely is not a matter of condemning or discouraging write-ups and emphases about drive-by shooting, swarming or murders but more a question of balance, depth, and reassurance, where appropriate, especially for certain people.

The focus group identified three central points, namely (a) that violence is a community issue not just a matter for governments or police services to deal with; (b) that a communications strategy is needed that deals with violence but also the fear of violence, and (c) that comprehensive, timely quality information, well disseminated is critical to the success of the strategy. Several broad recommendations were advanced, namely (1) HRM should develop a communications strategy that provides proactive comprehensive, comprehensible, contextual and useful information to citizens on crime and violence; the strategy should involve a wide range of key players, entail the municipality coordinating the public awareness of local programs and initiatives to make sure these 'solutions-oriented" messages reach the larger community, establish a "safe community citizens' website, and use paid advertising in conventional media to communicate to get quality information on violence and public safety to the citizenry, (2) HRM should develop a

social marketing campaign to influence community attitudes and values drawing on past marketing successes, engaging champions for the initiative, using real-life stories to show positive change is possible and non-traditional partners and means of communication to ensure its message reaches those who need it most; (3) The Roundtable itself should develop a continuing community dialogue around these issues.

The focus group on **Troubled Youth** discussed especially youth who are serious and chronic offenders, those under the under the care of Community Service in Group Homes, homeless youth and associates in quasi-gangs. The challenge here is to understand the issues for public safety as well as to consider ameliorative policies for the youths, drawing on experiences elsewhere as well as in HRM. In the main Roundtable report there is a discussion of street crime focusing on gangs, basically African-Canadian gangs in HRM where leadership and role models appear to be provided by young Black adults (i.e., persons eighteen years of age and older). Clearly this is a major problem since the incidents of serious violence are many and the gangs' reach extends to a large number of Black youths in the urban core areas on both sides of the Harbour (and perhaps includes some youths from North Preston). Black youths, especially those involved with gangs according to police records, are disproportionately charged and convicted in court and also disproportionately given the option of restorative justice referral enabling them to avoid court processing (Clairmont, 2006); in 2007, about 20% of the referrals to the Halifax Community Justice Society (the restorative justice provider for youths under eighteen years of age in HRM) were African-Canadians, almost all from the urban core areas of HRM.

It was noted in that section of Roundtable report , too, that apparently a small minority – roughly 12% - of the homeless are youth, under eighteen years, but a much larger proportion was young adults; the total numbers of homeless persons are hard to determine but estimates in reports for the years 2004 and 2005 were several hundred persons. Provincial Community Services has responsibility for homeless youth until they turn sixteen but there appears to be no effective 'exit strategy' for providing services and housing, and only a few places (e.g., most notably Phoenix House which reportedly has a significant waiting list) where these 'graduates' of the group homes can obtain safe, supervised housing. There are roughly fifteen group homes in HRM, slightly more than half of which are available specifically for youth (others focus on the disabled and other groupings). The youth accommodated in the group homes have many problems (addiction, health, familial etc) and have become increasingly more challenging over the years for the group home staff (Clairmont, 2006). Like Black youths in the urban core areas, they have significant involvement, on average, with the criminal justice system and with restorative justice (Clairmont, 2006).

A third group of troubled youth are chronic or serious offenders who are neither gang associates or among the homeless. It is difficult to estimate the numbers in this category without more detailed research. In recent years, in HRM, more and more chronic if not serious young offenders have been referred to restorative justice on multiple occasions (Clairmont, 2006). While that program may not have been particularly successful in its intervention with these youth, the fact that police and crown prosecutors continue to refer

repeat offenders to the restorative justice process suggests that they have hope, if not confidence, that something positive might result. In discussions with the referral authorities, it was frequently suggested to the writer that the court process would have done no better in dealing with the youth and causing him / her to change his / her behaviour. The HRM restorative justice agency has quite a large caseload (i.e., handling over 40% of the provincial restorative justice referrals in 2005) and has not had the resources to engage in the in-depth appraisal and case management (including searching for possible mentors) that appears to be required for these admittedly difficult cases. A special, intensive, well-resourced project has been recommended by the writer in order to determine whether an in-depth restorative justice intervention could be effective (Clairmont, ibid).

Clearly, in responding to the troubled youth, balance has to sought between, on the one hand, the protection of public safety, and offender accountability for victimizing others, and, on the other hand, rehabilitation and treatment for youths who themselves usually have a long complex history of being victims in both a narrow sense (directly victimized by others) and a broad social sense (poor parenting, racism, identity issues etc). Alternative pro-social opportunities for potential and actual gang members, Africentric approaches that may create more positive self-identity, housing, and robust restorative justice interventions, may well yield good results as a complement to enforcement and accountability. It is interesting that the crime prevention strategy announced this winter by the provincial government does largely focus on youth and on the kind of restorative justice initiatives suggested here (Time To Fight Crime Together, 2008).

The participants in the Troubled Youth focus group highlighted (a) the barriers in access to social services and recreational facilities faced by many troubled youth, (b) the lack of coordination of effort among the different levels of government which limits the effectiveness of intervention, and (c) the lack of safe, supervised housing for youth aged 16 to 19. The participants observed that there were many innovative programs in place for troubled youth in HRM and others scheduled to come into effect in response to the Nunn Commission and the provincial Minister's recently concluded Task Force and Crime Prevention. Specific needs identified included treatment services for youths with mental health and drug problems, building more attachment to school, and early intervention with youth and their families. The was agreement that HRM should be playing a more significant role specifically in (a) facilitating community engagement and community conversations about issues (e.g., the much maligned group homes); (b) re-establishing a Volunteer Bureau; (c) facilitating if not providing more safe, supervised youth "hang-out" areas; (c) innovatively getting information out to troubled youth and their families concerning the help available and how to access it. The general recommendation was that the City should be more assertive in coordinating, facilitating and networking and in lobbying the senior levels of government – "HRM with its almost soon-to-be 50% of the Nova Scotian population has a right to be heard in violence and public safety issues. To realize the more expansive role, the City should establish a business unit dedicated to public safety thereby incorporating the issues of troubled youth and other Roundtable foci into HRM government's business plan and priorities".

The focus group on **Community and City Initiatives Regarding Organized Crime and Issues of Addiction, Prostitution and Offender Reintegration** was asked to consider what role the City and the community might have in responding to these issues. Dealing with organized crime directly is clearly the preserve of the police and the Justice system. Police also have to deal with the turf wars and drive-by shootings which cause considerable public fear and occasionally significant direct collateral damage; deft strategies appear required to respond to so-called street justice – retaliation in the criminal underworld – as shown in research in many American cities such as St. Louis (Jacobs and Wright, Street Justice, 2006). Public policies and community services may impact however on the 'demand" factors that make organized crime profitable for some. At the level of community responses, in addition to supporting the police and criminal justice system in the enforcement of laws (e.g., in HRM, providing information to the Safe Communities unit which could lead to closing down a "crack house"), there has been much controversy over social policy initiatives, such as encouraging alternative arrangements for sex trade, specialty courts and injection sites for drug addicts, and half-way houses for ex-inmates. Some municipalities are quite active in exploring if not implementing these policies and some are not.

Clearly, the drug trade forms the cornerstone for a variety of public safety issues. Over 2000 jurisdictions in the USA and six large cities in Canada have, over the past decade and a half, initiated specialty courts (drug treatment courts) to emphasize the treatment of addicts and reduce the demand for illicit drugs (Clairmont, 2004). In the USA, there appears to be a decided shift away from depending on the preventative strategy of imposing mandatory sentences for drug dealing to encouraging addiction treatment centers (US research has found that low level drug dealers, many addicts themselves, lack good information to exchange for the waiving of a mandatory sentence charge, so disproportionately receive long sentences, as noted in the National Post, April 26, 2008). In HRM, the police and federal prosecutors (the latter are responsible for prosecuting drug charges) report that drug activity and use of 'hard' drugs has not levelled off in recent years and this observation was seconded by a staff member of "Directions 180" which provides various services, including methadone, to addicts.

According to the HRM Vice Squad, prostitution, both the street sex trade and escort services, remain a significant problem even if the former at least is now less obviously controlled by organized gangs. Some cities such as Vancouver have long had an informally enforced zoning approach to the street sex trade and other cities, including Moncton in 2007, have considered attempting to concentrate the street trade in a "safe stroll" area. New York City is reported to have reduced the street sex trade appreciably by encouraging the prostitutes to move in-doors. Three of the four political parties represented in the House of Commons have gone on the record as supporting decriminalization (Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 2007). The street sex trade has usually been identified as the most likely to place the sex trade worker in danger of violence and also to generate public complaints (for HRM, for example see, "There isn't any safety out here", and "Complaints drive police response to sex trade: vice squad officer" The Daily News, November 26, 2007). HRM is home to seven half-way houses for about 70 adult ex-inmates (and about fifteen group homes, the

large majority of which are for youth). How well are these services reintegrating ex-inmates and in that way reducing the demand for drugs and thereby undercutting organized crime?

As the Chambers' report below indicates, the focus group participants were a well informed grouping of Justice officials (prosecution and police), provincial employees involved with social services for ex-offenders or for implementing the Safe Communities Act, an Insurance Association representative, staff person with Directions 180 (e.g. methadone treatment and counselling), director of Stepping Stones (assisting sex trade workers), social worker, provincial social services, criminologist, urban planner, leader of an Aboriginal offender reintegration project and others. The wide-sweeping focus group theme made for good discussion but no especial consensus on priorities. A major benefit, according to some participants, was the networking with informed persons representing such different interests on the issues. There was discussion of drug policy, the sex trade options and the challenges of offender reintegration, and much attention drawn to the larger macro factors of poverty, racism and public stereotypes. The group considered that drug addiction was a central problem, that it was increasing (and potentially even more dangerous with the introduction of "crystal meth"), and that it was clearly linked to the street sex trade (i.e., sex trade workers engaging in the activity to fund their drug addiction) and to difficulties in successfully reintegrating ex-inmates, many of whom have drug problems.

There was little consensus on alternatives to the current operations of street sex trade such as instituting a 'safe troll' area or encouraging a move by the street sex trade workers off the street into small, inside operations; indeed, there was uncertainty about the implications of the latter for all players, the sex trade workers, the neighbours, the law and so on. Offender reintegration was considered to be handicapped by the lack of safe, supervised housing which drove persons back into the milieu associated with their addiction and other problems; a related concern was the lack of services for the ex-inmate and the public fears and worries about half-way houses or group homes. There was more support for a drug treatment court with its promise of more rehabilitation resources for persons charged with non-violent crime such as prostitution-related and property offenses. Overall, Chambers reports that five general suggestions for future directions emerged from the group discussions. These were (a) thoroughly examine other jurisdictions' successes to determine what might be appropriate for HRM; (b) develop a more coordinated approach among governmental jurisdictions and community agencies; (c) encourage the establishment of a drug treatment court to reduce demand for drugs; (d) develop safe supervised housing for ex-inmates and others; (e) have a communications strategy to counter public stereotypes about half-way houses and group homes.

Public Safety and Security Issues in Minority Communities was the theme of the seventh focus group where violence and crime were discussed from the perspectives of minority and sometimes marginalized groupings such as immigrants, Aboriginals, African-Canadians, the Gay, and the Disabled. Frequently some of these groups have only been highlighted in a negative manner in discussions of violence and crime. What

are their concerns and what would they recommend that HRM do to enhance their sense of public safety?

Interviews and correspondence with activists in the Gay community indicated that while public views have changed appreciably, and for the better, there are still concerns. The disappearances and murders of Gay men in 2007 sparked anger and fear (Marwah, "Times change but violence a constant for gays" Chronicle-Herald May 16, 2007). It also may have led to a better relationship with the HRPS; one activist commented, "The recent tragic murders of two men marked a new relationship between Halifax Regional Police and the LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender] Community. The police reached out to us with concern for our safety and a desire to work with us. The Chief and his deputies were present in uniform at a rally against homophobia; they mourned with us, standing in solidarity against the physical, psychological and social violence of homophobia. I have the very best hopes that we can continue to build on this renewed trust". The public safety concerns raised included responding to domestic violence in LGBT relationships, drug abuse, the safety of sex trade workers and concern about entrusting public security to groups such as the Guardian Angels ("As taxpayers, we can hold our police to the highest standards of respect for individual and collective human rights, we expect them to be well trained and responsible. The Guardian Angels, or any such group that expresses its intent to use force as it sees fit, are at best unaccountable and at worst, dangerous").

A HRPS officer underlined the need for a better relationship between the LGBT community and the police, and a possible educative role for HRM in reducing violence against LGBT people, in her comment, "Under-reporting of victimization in the gay community is very high. The majority of "cruisers" are not self-identifying as gay and are highly vulnerable to assault and robbery. There is a general lack of trust toward those in authority, including Police. There are no openly gay male members of HRP. Those victims who do report often cite that they are treated differently than other victims with the emphasis being on their sexual orientation as contributing to the cause of the crime whether that is truly the case or not"; she added, "Due to a lack of support and acceptance within the larger community, substance abuse is extremely high in the gay community. Education regarding the gay community is required in order for acceptance and tolerance within the larger community".

Interviews were carried out in 2006 with twenty-five local Black activists engaged with public safety issues and updated with others in 2007 for the Roundtable initiative. These local leaders emphasized the context of a more holistic response to social problems in certain parts of the Black community, problems whose roots, at least in part, have been shaped by the historical experiences of Blacks in Nova Scotia. Black youths and adults have been and remain disproportionately represented in probation, custody and, in the case of youths, restorative justice referrals. In an assessment of the level of over-representation, using reasonable demographic assumptions, and drawing on data from probation, custody and restorative justice sources, it has been estimated that in 2005 possibly as many as 10% of all African-Canadian males between the ages of 12 and 17 inclusive had been involved as offenders in the Nova Scotia criminal justice system

(Clairmont, 2006). The interviewed Black stakeholders in HRM were not surprised by this clearly high level of CJS entanglement. One respondent commented, "I'm not at all surprised; I work the front-lines". A black defence lawyer reported, "not at all surprised because that is where the poverty and underlying issues such as racism are". There was much consensus among the respondents that such youth offending has become more serious as well as plentiful. This view was reflected in such comments as "more weapons and violence than before", "I notice it more", and "in my fourteen years on the police force, the youth crime is definitely more serious than it was before, 70% to 80% more serious". A few respondents simply commented that they were not surprised because the justice system is two-tiered and "it's always been that way".

The local leaders' views on alternative strategies such as restorative justice (RJ) were sought. While positive, they believed that it was necessary to strengthen it through accountability, effective community engagement, better mentoring, especially youth on youth, and black, and "tough love" with consequences and limits. But the other side of tough love is love and the respondents also stressed that the context and causes of offending have to be addressed since otherwise RJ was just a band- aid; accordingly, the respondents pointed to the need for RJ to be more proactive, to liaise with the schools in particular, and through having a more Africentric philosophy give Black youth a sense of the possibilities of life. While acknowledging the need for more resources being available to restorative justice programming to accomplish these broad objectives, they also suggested that it could be possible to draw more from community , especially other youth, professionals, other programs and the like, but ordinary residents too if they can perhaps appreciate more their stake in the RJ option. While most respondents were not asked about sentencing circles, the few, who were, considered that that RJ tactic might be valuable in effecting community engagement, something called for in the focus group report below. In the case of both Black and Aboriginal offenders (many Aboriginal ex-inmates re-settle at least on an interim basis in HRM), the need for offender reintegration programs was emphasized (see Supplemental Report # 6, Authorities and Experts).

It is always important to underline that offending frequently occurs in an historical and societal context of victimization. For example, Statistics Canada (The Daily, February 20, 2008) recently released the 2004 GSS findings showing that among those aged 15 or more, Canadian- born visible minorities' rates of violent victimization are three times higher than visible minorities born abroad and twice as much as non-visible minorities in Canada; the rates were 211 per 1000 versus 69 and 107 respectively. It was noted that the Canadian-born visible minorities are younger, single, lower income and engaged in more evening activities but, even so, the differences according to Statistics Canada remain very significant. In light of the disproportionate offending and victimization among Blacks in HRM it is disappointing and unacceptable that HRM's Community and Race Relations Committee has not been more effective (e.g., "Few members attend anti-racism meetings', Chronicle-Herald March 6, 2008).

As detailed earlier, immigration to Nova Scotia has increasingly meant immigration to metropolitan Halifax. The relatively small foreign-born population has been diverse as well with Asian groupings (especially Chinese) being the largest. No substantial data are

available concerning the foreign-born as either victims or offenders, Neither the court data system (JEIN) nor the restorative justice one (RJIS) refer to race/ ethnicity, apart from Caucasian, African-Canadian, Aboriginal, and two grab-bag categories, namely "Other" and "Unknown". In addition to being limited in categorization, information on race / ethnicity is frequently not entered in these data systems. Information gathered through interviews with HRM prosecutors and police authorities indicated no significant level of immigrant offending or victimization. Indeed, in a 2008 interview, a well-known and long-time immigrant activist commented that immigrants have brought a greater sense of community in one or two large housing projects in HRM, contributing in that way to a reduction of violence and crime.

In light of the diversity of cultures, and reports that some immigrants would not be comfortable or trusting in bringing their victimization to the authorities, immigrant activists were asked about the possible benefit of alternatives such as having the matter dealt with through restorative justice circles involving the community's members. There was much appreciation for the idea that RJ could provide a more nuanced response to offending that would take into account contextual factors as well as avoid some of the fears that some immigrants may have with respect to the formal court process. One respondent commented, "It [RJ] is phenomenal, allows reflection on what has happened and why, opportunity for restitution and personal ownership of the event, compassion and learning. Immigration is a two-way street. They have to know their rights and responsibilities. At the same time, they have to work with Canadian citizens and create an open and inclusive environment". While positive about RJ, at the same time, the respondents stressed very much the diversity of the immigrant communities, suggesting that some immigrants could well feel more comfortable in the formal court process than in "semi-public discussions" of family members' troubles and possible airing of discordant family dynamics. One long-time immigrant service provider emphasized the variation as follows: "In some cultures any crime needs to be punished. For them RJ may be seen as getting away with the offence. Immigrants from some cultures feel the system should be dealing with the criminals and they don't need to be involved".

Despite the diversity of the minority groups involved in the sessions there appeared to be considerable empathy. An LGBT leader and focus group participant observed, "I was struck by the common ground that LGBT Haligonians had with refugees and other New Canadians in responding to violence within our respective communities; in both communities, the violence often remains hidden from the larger society. Both groups have identified a (possibly unwarranted) distrust of officialdom, particularly law enforcement. Both groups have a fear of disclosure which might prevent their reporting crimes of violence, i.e. for those LGBT persons who are closeted (whether at work, or to our families and others) fear of being "outed." An attendant fear which may prevent reporting of crime is that of anticipated homophobia on part of the police".

In their report below, the focus group members involving activists and leaders in the minority and sometimes marginalized communities indicated that there were special issues for their members and that the City had an important role to play in resolving or reducing the problems. One major issue was the problem of reporting violence and crime

to the authorities. In the case of Aboriginals and Afrcian-Nova Scotians the legacy of racism was seen as a continuing obstacle to trusting relationships with authorities and especially reporting violence to police; somewhat similar issues were raised by participants from the gay community (how serious their complaints might be taken, reluctance to acknowledge that they are gay). In the case of the disabled, a major problem of reporting was the negative implication of alienating a support person in light of the absence of alternative shelters and other support services. For immigrants the reporting issues varied by immigrant group but in some cases there was anxiety about losing support in one's ethnic community and uncertainty about the legal implications for oneself as well as for the offender. A number of solutions or recommendations were advanced to deal with violence and public safety in these disparate communities, including community justice programs (e.g., circles involving members of one's community), creation or greater awareness of shelters for the disabled and others (similar to women's shelters or transition homes), educational programs, and offender reintegration programs. The general recommendation was that HRM should be more "hands-on" in this area since "diversity is a top-down initiative". The greater HRM role could be both direct in coordinating information and supporting programs, and indirect, being an advocate vis-à-vis the senior levels of government.

FOCUS GROUP 1: DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY
Facilitated by: Chris Murphy

Focus Group Participants (Not all participated in all three meetings)

1. Chris Murphy, Dalhousie sociologist and research coordinator
2. Costa Ellis , Restaurant Association (Opa and Seven Restaurants)
3. Cst Andrew Conrad, HRPS and former Downtown bouncer
4. Paul McKinnnon, Downtown Business Association
5. Bernie Smith, Spring Garden Road Business Association
6. Margaret McGee, N.S. Alcohol Gaming Corporation
7. Pat Lyall, Destination Halifax
8. Shawn Mantley , teacher and youth worker
9. Mary Dempster, Hotel Association
10. Frank Palermo, professor Architecture and Planning, Dalhousie
11. Ron Lovett, Source Security, Restaurant Owner Downtown
12. Larry Maloney, Vice President, Academic Provost Dalhousie University,
13. Pater Martell, general manager The New Palace Cabaret
14. S/S Don Spicer, HRPS Watch Commander, Downtown area
15 John MacDonald, Alcohol & Gaming Division, Nova Scotia Government
16 Denis Kerr, Alcohol & Gaming Division, Nova Scotia Government

This focus group dealt with the various public safety problems in the Downtown business / recreation area where various public disorder and security incidents have generated significant public fear and concern about the safety and security of the Downtown Halifax.. The Downtown public safety group is a diverse but representative group of people with shared personal and professional interests in the public safety of the commercial Downtown area of HRM. Discussions in the group were enthusiastic and constructive. The participants met three times in order to develop what they believe is an informed analysis of the security problems facing the Downtown. They developed a series of recommended responses which they believe will better address the problems. They hope the Mayor's Roundtable task force will seriously consider their recommendations and that it addresses what they see as a serious problem affecting the vital centre or core of the city and HRM.

The Problem:

The Downtown is defined as the area bounded by: the Waterfront –Casino to Pier 21 – up to the top of Spring Garden Road – the area shopping, restaurant, and bar zone.

Over the last few years a growing number of well-publicized crime and security incidents (signal crimes) have occurred in the Downtown area, fuelling growing public and media perception that the HFX Downtown is a risky place to go, especially at night. The public sees the Downtown as place frequented by aggressive panhandlers, drug users, and

disorderly youth, and, at night, by rowdy and often belligerent, intoxicated young people. While the accuracy of these perceptions may be questionable, the perceptions that the Downtown is unsafe and threatening are negatively affecting the viability and vitality of the Downtown as a commercial and residential area. The group believes that effectively addressing the public safety concerns of the Downtown is a necessary part of any revitalization and renewal of the Downtown as vibrant and attractive urban living and shopping area, and something they see as essential to the overall health and wealth of the city and HRM in general.

The group's consensus was that while some aspects of the problem were sensationalized and exaggerated, there were some real and serious safety and security problems that are not being adequately addressed. As Nova Scotia and HRM depends on our public image or brand as a safe secure and friendly place to attract tourists, convention visitors, out of province students and new immigrants. It important that we aggressively address these threats to our national reputation / brand or face serious economic and social consequences.

Some evidence for the scope and scale of this problem can be derived from *police statistics* which show the following: We know from police data reported for 8 different areas of HRM from 2003 (Nov-April) that the Downtown has more recorded crime that any other area. The data below show the numbers and rank for the Downtown versus the second highest recorded area in the city (additional supporting statistics can be found in appendix of the Roundtable Report).

	The Downtown	**Next Highest Districts**
	1st	**2nd**
Assaults (1043)	502	223
Sexual Assault	67	25
Weapons (C-109)	174	95
Robberies	115	60
MVA / IF (1075)	126	92

It must be remembered that these data reflect only those cases responded to and reported by police. Many incidents go unreported and never make it into official statistics. Anecdotal evidence from Downtown bar and restaurant owners and employees validate the picture of a Downtown that late at night (1-4) pm is often noisy, disorderly and sometimes dangerous. Emergency medical staff persons also confirm that they see many young intoxicated victims or offenders with a range of medical injuries late at night on key nights of the week.

Though a variety of crime and security problems were identified, two distinctive Downtown problem areas were identified and, though related, were better understood and addressed separately

a) The Night Time Public Disorder and Safety Problems

b) Spring Garden Road and Street Disorder and Security

A) Late Night Public Disorder and Safety Problem:

This Downtown problem was described primarily as being composed of two dimensions:

1. ***Intoxicated young people as offenders*;** young (mostly 18 –25) mostly male, persons who get intoxicated at home and or in the Downtown bars and create a variety of problems in such as public disorder, assaults, drunkenness and noise problems and vandalism in residential areas.

2. ***Intoxicated young people who become crime victims of assault and robbery*** by individuals and groups who take advantage of the opportunity they provide for easy victimization.

Discussion ranged over a *variety of causes* but most of the discussion was on the over-consumption of alcohol or public drunkenness as the primary cause of the troubles for both offenders and victims. Large numbers of young, often university students, are drawn to Downtown bars and not surprisingly some become intoxicated. However this intoxication can produce various public order and safety problems. While this has always been part of the Downtown bar scene and perhaps university life, it seemed to the group that in the last few years these problems have become more extreme and regular in nature, the number of people involved has increased, the number of days of the week these problem happen has also increased (now including Sunday and Wednesday nights) and the disorderly and sometime violent nature of the public behaviour has become worse.

Problem 1: Intoxicated young people as offenders

The group, recognizing that it would be neither possible nor desirable to eliminate all alcohol use, nevertheless identified several causal factors that they feel contribute to the problem.

> **Cheap, unregulated drink prices:** (e.g., 0.99 cent drink nights): The recent introduction of the 99 cent drinks and extended happy hours in some bars on Sundays and Wednesday nights was seen by the group as a new development that was producing a number of undesirable public order problems. Police statistics confirm that Sunday night and early Monday morning have become their busiest night of the week for alcohol related offences in the Downtown. It was agreed that an ongoing drink pricing war among some bar owners is detrimental to all businesses in the area, and may even be leading to other illegal practices among bar owners, as well as encouraging excessive intoxication in the Downtown core.

Inadequate police and or security presence: The limited number of visible and available police officers in high-risk areas at high demand times (1am to 5am) was discussed as a problem by the group. Though the group noted, positively, that this has been partially addressed by the recent introduction of more police patrol and foot patrol in the area, they nevertheless supported even more Downtown police presence (particularity at key locations and in hours when trouble is most likely to happen) and, also, more rapid police response to reported problems.

Provincial Liquor Licensing, Regulation and Enforcement: There was critical discussion, especially by representatives of the bar and restaurant industry of some aspects of provincial liquor licensing, inspection and enforcement process. It was suggested that the Liquor inspectors are inconsistent and uncertain in their application of the laws; some seem inadequately trained and are not rigorous regarding some liquor infractions. Bar licences are thought to be granted liberally despite some owners' questionable backgrounds. Bar staff or servers in theory are trained but while training schemes for servers exist, nobody monitors them. The training of bar security personnel is based on "voluntary, establishment-initiated programs". In general there was a feeling that the current system of regulation and governance of bars and drinking establishments could be improved and that failure to enforce certain rules and regulation was contributing to the problem.

Inadequate late night transportation: Simply put there are not enough taxies or buses available to move people out of the Downtown and get them home directly. Many taxi drivers do not wish to work at night and there usually are no buses available. These shortfalls mean that large numbers of young intoxicated patrons are waiting around for transposition out of the area and this is when large crowds gather and assault take place. In addition it is why large numbers of inebriated patrons walk home late at night disturbing residential neighbourhoods or become easy targets of assault and robbery

Universities' failure to adequately educate, monitor and sanction student alcohol consumption and bad behaviour: It was agreed that universities could do more to take more responsibility for the behaviour of their students in the Downtown core and surrounding neighbourhoods. Though the new "good neighbour" program and the HRPS-Dalhousie patrol projects were cited as positive steps there was sense that the university could do more to educate, monitor and sanction student behaviour. However the legal authority of the university to regulate and sanction students off campus behaviour is uncertain but worth exploring further.

Recommended Responses

The following recommendations to address the problem of intoxicated public disorder were advanced by the group:

1. **Regulate minimum liquor prices and abolish cheap 99-cent drinks:** (See appendix, Roundtable Report for more details). While there was some dissent about increased government regulation on the service market, most agreed that a minimum drink price and limitations on happy hours would manage the public order and safety problem of Sunday - Monday morning and Wednesday / Thursday mornings. All bars would be forced to raise their prices to a more expensive minimum, thus increasing the cost of excessive alcoholic consumption, thereby reducing consumption but not necessarily profit. As liquor regulation is a provincial matter, provincial officials were invited to join the group discussion to explain the provinces position on this issue and discuss options. Though sympathetic to the Downtown problem the group was informed that the province is moving away from expanding liquor regulation and enforcement and that, at least in the short run, introducing a minimum price regulation was unlikely. However the regulation of drink prices through municipal by- laws was suggested as an alternative to provincial regulations.

2. **Increase Police Presence:** It was agreed by the group that, despite improved police presence in the Downtown area, continuing and increasing police presence on the street was still desirable and that it would have a positive impact on the problem. Measures could include more beat cops, targeted patrols, community stations etc. Alternative lower cost police and security options should also be explored such as, the use of community ambassadors (e.g. as in Vancouver), community officers, and hiring private security. The use of paid duty or off duty police serving as security for stores, bars, clubs, and events was seen as effective for the most part but too expensive for some establishments. A concern was raised that these bars/clubs who had hired police officers got more rapid and cooperative service than those who did not hire police.

3. **Improved Late Night Transportation: more Taxis and Buses:** There was significant agreement on this point. Either “black-light” taxis, safe-corridor style bus service or university-sponsored shuttle service would be options; but it was agreed that increased transit options should be a strong recommendation. Limited taxi licensing problems have to be addressed more satisfactorily by HRM. As well, safe pick-up/drop off sites, with adequate lighting and monitoring, were discussed as a way to make taxi service safer for both patrons and drivers. It was also suggested that safe passage areas be developed such as the Spring Garden corridor where security or police personnel, signed camera presence and so on ensured safety.

4. **University Responsibility:** Universities in HRM must play bigger role in student governance; types of measures could include student alcohol education

campaigns, increased student-neighbourhood interaction, or extra-penalties imposed by the universities on students for off-campus indiscretions. It was also noted that some of these ideas are already in use or are being discussed, and some have shown success. The group discussed a code-of-conduct approach for universities in HRM. Under this approach, students who wished to attend these universities would be given notice, during application, of an expected code of conduct and possible consequences for violation . Presumably, within this code, students would be responsible to the university for conduct off-campus, which is not presently, officially, the case. It was also noted that this type of code may represent a "double jeopardy" problem and may be outside of the university's jurisdiction

Problem 2: Intoxicated young people who become crime victims of assault and robbery

Though part of a larger problem of street crime, gang violence, group swarming / assaults, and drugs use and dealing, the Downtown's night-time economy provides special opportunities for gangs – or groups involved in criminal violence and assorted crimes. While the solutions to this problem are part of the larger HRM response, there were some distinctive aspects of the problem in the Downtown that can be addressed and responded to separately.

While there was disagreement about how persuasive and persistent this problem of group violence was in the Downtown, but there was general agreement that at the least it was an occasional but serious problem. The Downtown offers both a "stage" for groups/individuals to display their street identity and power, as well as providing easy opportunities for groups to exercise their power through random or targeted assaults and robbery. The Downtown night scene thus provides an easily accessible supply of intoxicated and vulnerable victims.

The responses and recommendations suggested by the group were to focus on limiting access and mobility of these groups, and to increase protection and surveillance on victims and offenders respectively.

Recommended Responses

1. **Enhanced police presence in the area** – more police protection, presence, and surveillance. It was agreed by the group that some form of increased proactive police presence on the street was desirable. Selective and proactive police strategies targeting known individual or groups of offenders should be developed to increase the chances of arrest and the costs and risk of public displays of gang or group power in the Downtown area.

2. **Limit access to cars and groups by closing off key streets** late at night to vehicles cruising busy crowded streets. Police officers, with some success, are

already doing this occasionally and the group was supportive of more aggressive and regular use of this strategy as a way of limiting groups cruising key streets and looking for trouble.

3. **Extended and Monitored CCTV** to be used as a deterrence or for use as evidence for convictions. There was some dissent on whether or not more cameras as a mode of surveillance were an appropriate solution. It was agreed that that despite the possible loss of privacy this was an effective measure at least for gathering evidence for successful prosecutions, though less likely to deter spontaneous disorder and the "worst 5 per cent" or habitual offenders. It was not clear how the interaction between private CCTV operations and police CCTV surveillance was to be conducted. Generally it was felt that the planned police monitored CCTV program was a legitimate part of a broad policing and security strategy.

4. **Peace Bonds against Repeat Offenders.** This practice is already in effect, and evidence was offered that it was effective here and elsewhere in deterring the presence of known offenders in the Downtown core. It is assumed that most of those in the 95-per-cent group would be effectively deterred from chronic misbehaviour if a peace bond were seen as a possible consequence. The use of peace bonds as a means to remove individuals who cause repeated problem in the Downtown area was raised. It was noted that this is only a possible solution when an individual has been convicted of illegal activity. It was also noted that it is a simple matter for a business to ban someone it believes to be a problem, but much more complicated to ban them from a public area.

5. **Repeat Offender Prosecution and Sentencing**. Though no direct recommendations were made regarding this point, there was general agreement that the courts were not taking assaults seriously enough and that even repeat offenders were not deterred by lenient, non-custodial sentences. (Research literature suggests that removing dangerous repeat offenders from the community can have a significant impact on crime).

B) Spring Garden Road: Public Order and Security Problems

The discussion group distinguished the visible public order and security problems of Spring Garden Road as distinctive and specific to the commercial area and public spaces in and around Spring Garden Road, and, to a lesser extent, Gottingen Street.

The Problem

The public, residents and storeowners of the Spring Garden Road area are concerned about the increasingly visible presence of significant numbers of "street people", composed mainly of transient youth, drug addicts, alcoholics, mentally unstable individuals and groups of simply loitering youths. These individuals and groups are concentrated in relatively limited public space – storefront sidewalks - and engage in a

variety of activities and behaviours which some pedestrians and customer/clients find threatening and intimidating. These behaviours include aggressive panhandling, petty theft, loitering, drug and alcohol use etc. Though their presence or behaviours are not necessarily illegal, they are often regarded as disturbing, sometime offensive and occasionally illegal. This makes the public less likely to want to come to Spring Garden Road and use the public streets to do business, shop or live in the area.

These concerns have motivated the Spring Garden Area Business Association under the leadership of Bernard Smith to undertake a variety of innovative, preventative and responsive initiatives in order to try and enhance public security in the area. While they have had some success, they have not been able to resolve the problems. There is a sense that the problem is in fact becoming worse as more transient youth, drug and alcohol addicted, are attracted to the city and especially the Spring Garden area. As Halifax's most "public street" these highly visible indicators of societal failure but also of personal threat and public disorder, are a significant part of the growing concern that the Halifax Downtown in general is an increasingly unpleasant and threatening place to go for recreation, business or entertainment. This perception has negative consequences not only for Spring Garden Road residents and businesses but also contributes to the impression that the Halifax Downtown is a problem area to be avoided.

Causes

Because this very mixed street population has a variety of social as well as criminal justice problems, the causes of this situation are seen as diverse. While root causes such as poverty, education, and culture play a key role in creating the problem, group discussions were focused on more immediate and manageable causes:

1. **Inadequate municipal and provincial social services** Limited and uncoordinated local resources and programs devoted to addressing the various social, psychological, educational training problems are seen a contributing to the problem. The city's limited capacity and responsibility with respect to social services and the province's role in providing those services contributes to the problem. Social programs are sometimes duplicated but perpetuated by insular social service bureaucracies that tend to pass the buck so as to avoid responsibility for an area or type of problem. This leads to cracks in service where troubled individuals fall through.

2. I**nadequate addiction services: T**his was singled out for special attention as a large number of those involved have substance abuse problems; complaints were that either addictions service were unavailable, or are inappropriate and optional

3. **Limited police presence and slow response times** to incidents, though improved by the addition of foot patrol, more police presence is desired.

4. **Inadequate criminal justice response to offences and offenders**. Laws limit capacity to respond to problem people (e.g., aggressive panhandlers) and the criminal justice system provides an inadequate response to problem clientele.

Responses and Recommendations

Discussion on what should be done to address this complex set of problems focused on enhancement of government services for prevention, treatment and enforcement.

1. **Enhanced and Integrated Social Services:** In addition to simply providing social services to the street population, the argument was made to find ways to make provincial and municipal social services more effective and integrated in their approach to the problems of street populations in HRM . There is a need to work more effectively with community representatives and groups who know real service needs. One suggestion from SGAN is the Community Navigations program for Street Individuals – a proactive street outreach workers project to connect individuals with appropriate services.

2. **More and better Addiction Services:** With regards to the street youth and the longer term street populations, it was suggested that more available and effective addiction treatment services would have a significant impact. Make additional services – treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation – court-ordered if necessary as condition of release!

3. **Targeted Employment Services**: Many participants noted that they were having trouble filling many of their entry-level service positions such as dishwasher and room attendant, even while there were unemployed people on the street. One participant noted that their group had been filling the role that should have been taken on by the city or province, in getting many of these street youth into employment situations. Most believed that there was a way for the city to bridge this gap, although others noted that it was not necessarily bad that the private sector was taking on this responsibility.

4. **Enhanced Policing and Security:** The group was supportive of the creation of the recent Downtown HRM police foot patrol initiative and suggested that this program could be developed even further through more training of officers regarding communications, integration of foot and patrol services, location of a store front office on Spring Garden Road and better coordination with private security in the area. Anything that would promote more rapid response to incidents would also be appreciated.

5. **Strengthen Public and Private Partnerships:** It should be noted that the innovative work of Mr. Bernard Smith on behalf of the SGABA (Spring Garden Area Business Association) in developing a variety of programs designed to address employment/employability; housing and a treatment service have had significant impact on the problem. The willingness of this community of

merchants to initiate prevention and education programs as well as private security and policing projects should be considered and encouraged. However, these projects were born out of the limits of government to provide these basic urban services and unless these kinds of community initiatives are supported by government and developed even further they will not survive. Thus SGABA offers a potential private-public and government partnership model that could be utilized more extensively to respond to social issues and public safety problems.

MAKING THE HRM "DOWNTOWN" SAFER

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The Problem

Historically the Halifax "downtown" core entertainment and waterfront area has been a lively mix of bars, restaurants and nightclubs with more than its share of crime and disorder. However, over the last five years crime and disorder problems in the Halifax downtown have become far more visible, violent and disturbing. Serious assaults, stabbings, homicides, gang violence, guns, knives, street robbery and large-scale public drunkenness have given the downtown a "bad reputation"; a reputation as being an unsafe place, especially late at night. A 2004 national victimization survey revealed that the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) had the highest rate of self-reported violent victimization in Canada. This finding was followed by a very public fatal stabbing of an American sailor acting as a Good Samaritan and, more recently, an accidental homicide by a bar bouncer followed by an alcohol-fuelled public riot. Collectively, these events cemented a negative public perception and reputation of the Halifax downtown not just within HRM, but across the province and the country. While many of these problems are not new and are perhaps exaggerated by dramatic press coverage, there is enough substance to both public perceptions and the actual reality of the problem to constitute a serious issue, requiring a vigorous, visible public and political response.

What makes the downtown public safety and security "problem" especially important is that the downtown is the proverbial "heart of the city." It is still the central commercial, business, tourist and entertainment focal point for HRM and remains its most visible and important public place and face. If the centre or the core of the HRM is seen by many of its residents and visitors alike as an unsafe and undesirable place then the HRM, as a whole, is perceived negatively. As a region and city that relies heavily on attracting new residents, immigrants, students and tourists it is essential that we be seen as a secure and desirable place to visit, live, work and go to school. While the problem of late night disorder and violence clearly does not threaten most citizens and has an impact on only a limited area within HRM, its persistence and visibility as an unsolved problem unfortunately affects how all of HRM and, to some extent, Nova Scotia is seen. As HRM

is now involved in reinventing and revitalizing the downtown core as a place to live and do business through the planning and redesign of its downtown core, it is essential that this new urban vision rests firmly upon a renewed sense of public safety and confidence; one that will inspire people to visit, live, work, play and invest in an lively, diverse but safe downtown urban core. In short, we believe it is essential that Halifax reclaim its reputation as a welcoming city, a place that is vibrant, diverse, lively and most importantly reasonably safe, day or night. We believe that if HRM and its varied partners adopt some of the following policies, practices and strategies this goal is attainable. This, however will require political will and real social and fiscal investment, but the cost of *not* reversing the current situation will be much more.

Downtown Violence and Disorder: Perceptions and Reality

A common argument made during the public and focus group consultations was that the downtown has always had problems. They argue that young people have been getting drunk downtown for years, have getting into fights and other forms of public mischief and that the problems of the downtown are exaggerated by the media and subject to overreaction. While precise and complete statistics for the downtown were hard to locate, various kinds of HRP police data were examined which indicate the following statistical facts and conclusions about the crime and disorder in the downtown:

- In 2007, there were 4,316 liquor related offences recorded in HRM, 57% of these occurred downtown

- The recorded level of violent crime and public disturbances in the "downtown core" is double the next highest area in HRM, and is significantly higher than any other areas of HRM
- Until this year there has been an ongoing escalation in the number of recorded alcohol incidents, violent assaults, robberies and calls for police service in the downtown area;

- Crimes such as assault, robbery and vandalism are often not reported to police and therefore the actual amount or the risk of victimization downtown is in fact higher than official crime rates indicate.

These statistical impressions are reinforced by the personal assessments of police, bar and restaurant owners and staff, street vendors, and student/customers. Based on this range of personal experiences, these sources collectively endorse a description of the downtown, late at night, as an alcohol-fueled area where violence and disorder has become more visible, prevalent, violent and problematic. Thus the perceptions of those who live and work in the downtown support the notion that the crime and public safety problems are real and therefore need to be addressed.

However public "perceptions" of downtown violence and disturbances in the HRM are especially alarming. The telephone survey of 1,207 HRM residents done in 2007 for this roundtable (see Supplemental Report # 1) revealed that 41% designated HRM as a high

crime area, 49% said crime had increased in their area, and 25 % felt very unsafe in HRM. Another recent survey (*Daily News/ Omni Facts*, October 2007) indicated that 44% of HRM residents saw the "downtown" as very or mostly unsafe and that 29% of them "avoided the downtown for safety reasons". These perhaps exaggerated fears are in part explained by the public and violent nature of downtown crimes, as they are what criminologists call *signal crimes*; are well publicized crimes that occur in public places, that are violent in nature, happen to seemingly innocent victims and where there appears to be no satisfactory criminal justice response or outcome. Thus, media reports of swarmings, beatings, assaults and robberies on downtown streets and public parks increase the "perceived risk" of being a crime victim in the downtown and reinforce the perception that the downtown core is not a safe place.

"Commons victim: 'I thought I was going to die there alone"'

"She said the attack has changed her forever. 'I find it difficult to trust people as I walk down the street,' she wrote. 'I am frightened to death to go out alone, as these were to be the best years of my life'....'I no longer live in this wonderful city that I grew up in,' Mr. Bortignon said...´I expect the community to be able to prevent something like this from happening. I don't understand how this can happen in my city. This is still my city. I grew up here. I was born in the Halifax Infirmary. I went to school in the parking lot behind here. ...It doesn't make sense.

The Halifax Chronicle Herald, p. A2 (2008, January 29).

In summary, recorded data, anecdotal evidence and press reporting confirm both the reality and the perception that the downtown area, especially at night, is seen as an unsafe, high-risk area that many HRM residents avoid. While the problem is not unique and is shared by many other Canadian cities, it is unique and immediately present to HRM residents and that's what really matters. Both the reality and the exaggerated perception of the risk of being a victim of downtown violence and disorder needs to be addressed both in real terms by reducing the actual incidence and risk of being a victim or a participant, but also by adopting visible response strategies to address and correct public perceptions and fears. The Mayor's Task Force, and this report, should serve to signal to the public that there is clear political recognition that there is a problem and that something tangible is being done about it. The following analysis of the problems and various recommended strategies is designed to address the problems of downtown disorder and violence and seeks to make the downtown a safer place.

The Public Safety Problems of Downtown Halifax

This analysis of HRM downtown public safety problems is primarily focused on late night alcohol-related public disorder and violence problems in the downtown Bar District and to a lesser extent, public security and street safety problems on Spring Garden Road.

Downtown Public Disorder and Violence Problems: The problem of public disorder and violence in the downtown bar and entertainment area is composed of two distinct but related problems: a) alcohol-related public violence and disorder or assaults and disturbances by intoxicated youth and b) violent group or gang assaults (swarming) and petty robbery of sometimes intoxicated victims.

Alcohol-Related Public Violence and Disorder: The downtown area has 231 liquor licenses, of which 71 are lounges and 4 are cabarets. Police data on calls for service clearly indicate that the most persistent policing and safety problem of the downtown entertainment areas take place between the hours of 12 – 4 a.m., Wednesday to Sunday night. This is the period when large numbers of young intoxicated bar and club patrons sometimes become noisy, unruly and aggressive. Police recorded 3,524 public intoxication incidents in 2006, rising to 4,316 in 2007. The majority (57%) of these incidents were in the downtown area. The downtown area in 2007 officially recorded 303 level 1 assaults, 81 weapons causing bodily harm, 9 serious aggravated assaults, 59 sexual assaults and 68 robberies. (*Source*: Halifax Regional Police presentation to the Nova Scotia Government Interdepartmental Committee on Alcohol Policy). While many of these robberies and assaults were minor in nature, there is evidence that they are becoming increasingly violent and often involve more than one assailant. Emergency room physicians also report they routinely see victims of alcohol-related violence and are treating injuries which often require hospitalization.

Though there are a number of repeat offenders, many of these incidents are unplanned and involve a broad spectrum of young males (occasionally females), most of whom are without previous criminal records. In addition to assaults and disturbances in the downtown area surrounding residential neighborhoods (especially near the city's universities) complain about late night noise and vandalism, as intoxicated groups of students and youth walk from the downtown through residential neighborhoods on their way home.

While there are many contributing social, economic and cultural factors that help explain the rise and nature of the crime and public disorder problems in the downtown, there is one consistent and critical factor that is common to all these offences: the **over-consumption of alcohol**. While alcohol itself does not cause violence or disorder, our research suggests that the amount of alcohol consumed, its ease of access, hours of consumption, low cost, bar size, bar location and the various serving and security practices are key ingredients of this problem.

Alcohol Consumption and Youth Disorder and Violence: The Halifax experience and the research from other urban areas make it clear that over-consumption of alcohol under some predictable circumstances are the root cause of the violence and public disorder problems plaguing the Halifax downtown. A disturbing new culture of excessive alcohol consumption and casual violence and a large pool young people with disposable entertainment income combined with a number facilitating environmental conditions produce a "perfect storm" of predictable public safety and order problems.

While exploring the new culture of alcohol consumption is beyond the scope of this report, the issue of excessive alcohol consumption among young people, many under age, has to be recognized as a growing social problem. The streets and parks of Halifax on any weekend night are often populated by groups of intoxicated (often under age) high school and university youth. While issues such as drug use, smoking and bullying are receiving government and public attention, the increasing use and abuse of alcohol in both frequency and amount among high school, university and other students remains largely ignored or tolerated as being inevitable. However a shift in the norms governing excessive alcohol consumption among young people glamorizing "partying and getting drunk" and even "going to rehab" has become an influential part of modern youth culture. While the results of responsible drinking public education campaigns are not impressive to date, there nevertheless appears to be a real need in HRM to create more awareness of the problems of over-consumption by young consumers. It would seem from the evidence that more aggressive and targeted public education programs aimed at over-consumption should be developed for schools and universities students in the hope of shifting current cultural norms toward more responsible consumption, making both over-consumption and public drunkenness undesirable and unacceptable behaviors. High schools and universities in HRM need to examine their role and responsibilities in prevention and education in relation to student alcohol consumption. Universities and student unions especially need to examine the increasing role and influence of alcohol as sponsors of social and sporting events on university campuses. Many community members in our focus groups believe that universities should play a more educational and preventative role regarding binge-drinking and at times a more vigorous disciplinary role in relation to alcohol related student offences. While issues of responsibility are legally complex, universities can play a more vigorous part in giving students the information they need and setting a tone for responsible drinking on and off campus.

<u>Recommendation:</u> That the HRM schools system, local universities and municipal and provincial governments set up a working group to explore student alcohol consumption and abuse issues and collaborate on a new targeted prevention effort aimed at developing more responsible drinking in young people.

University Students and the Problem of Downtown Safety and Disorder: HRM has 6 degree granting Universities and Colleges with approximately 35 thousand students. Students are typically young (average age;17–21) and have significant disposable income, making them important sources of revenue and employment in HRM, especially for those in the downtown restaurant and entertainment industry. While

estimates vary they are said to contribute over $300 million dollars annually to HRM's economy**.** Their business is essential to the viability and vitality of downtown Halifax.

Traditionally one of the attractions for out of town and out of province students has been the vibrant nightlife and music scene of downtown Halifax and it is often cited as a significant influence in their choice of a Halifax-based university. Until recently parents and students have seen Halifax as a safe and friendly city for university attendance. However, recent bad publicity and student experience of downtown problems have begun to change this perception for students and perhaps their parents. For example, the recent HRM student survey in this report revealed the following: though students are traditionally an age group with the lowest concerns about personal safety (while ironically having the highest risk of actual victimization) the Halifax survey revealed that 24% were unsatisfied with their personal safety, 30% agreed it was dangerous to go downtown in the evening, 41% agreed there is a lot of violence in the downtown, 30% worry about being mugged and/or molested and 37% carried something to defend themselves or each other. Clearly a significant number of university students, disproportionately female, are worried and fearful about crime and their personal safety in HRM and the downtown core.

Students however, are not just innocent victims of downtown disorder and violence, they are also frequently involved as offenders. In other words, “students” are sometime the source of the problem, as they are often are the ones who get drunk in public, cause disturbances, get in fights, verbally abuse the police and have loud neighborhood parties. As a result the response of city officials and criminal justice agencies like the police are sometimes unsympathetic and allegedly unresponsive when these “students” are themselves victimized. While it is undoubtedly true that some students are often the problem, viewing students as a group as the authors of their own misfortune tends to obscure the fact that it is a minority of students who are offenders and most are law-abiding residents. However, because of their age and lifestyle, they are a high-risk group in need of protection and whose general safety and security as residents and valued customers in the downtown is vital to the economic interests of the downtown and HRM in general. The student survey and student commentaries suggest that this growing sense of insecurity about the lack of safety and the unwelcoming nature of some downtown bars and HRM police, could affect downtown business as students seek “safer” more friendly alternative entertainment locations and may reduce the attraction of Halifax as a place to go to university or community college. Student alienation may also reduce the potential of students’ positive contributions to HRM, such as crime prevention initiatives like the Saint Mary’s University student mentoring program.

Therefore, we believe it is in the interest of all parties (students, university administrators, the city, downtown merchants and the police) to engage in collective dialogue on issues of common concern. While we recognize that Dalhousie and St. Mary's universities, police and student governments have recently begun this process with positive effect, the focus of this arrangement has been largely limited to the management of student disorder in the community. We feel that extending this collaborative process and mandate to also address student safety issues and the disorder problems of downtown would bring even more positive results.

<u>Recommendation:</u> We recommend that the city government, the Halifax Regional Police, the five Metro University Administrations and Student Governments and the two downtown business representatives create a Metro Student Public Safety Working Group to address student-related security and disorder issues. This may require working with the existing Dalhousie (DUCC) and SMU committees and also include community colleges. The mandate should include consideration of both student safety and disorder. This working group could open channels of communication among the key stakeholders involved and develop new collaborative and innovative strategies to address general problems of student safety and disorder. This approach will also help restore the reality and perception that Halifax is a safe and welcoming place for students and provide them with a better understanding of the need for more responsible public behavior and community citizenship.

Downtown Policing Strategies: The police are a critical and central part of any response to violence and public order problems. HRP have been especially aware and concerned about the growing problem of downtown disorder and violence and have responded in variety of ways. In addition to conventional police responses, the HRP have added new police resources in the form of more visible foot patrols, more frequent motorized patrol, and the assignment of street crime units, a warrant detail, a quick response unit and some initial experimentation with CCTV. Police report that these varied initiatives aimed at enhancing police presence, response and investigative capacity appear to be having an impact on both perceived and actual levels of public safety.

There was strong public and business support for more police presence and enforcement activity in the downtown, especially at high-risk locations and times. While the addition of extra police resources and the adoption of new policing strategies are significant steps toward addressing the problem, it is clear from the persistence of these problems that additional policing tactics may also need to be explored. The following policing or police-based strategies and approaches are drawn from our

review of the relevant policing literature on best practices in other urban jurisdictions in Canada, the U.S. and the United Kingdom. These strategies are offered for further examination and possible adoption by the HRP and the proposed Downtown Public Safety and Security Committee.

Increased Police Presence: In the last year there has been a notable increase in police presence in various forms in the downtown area, both as foot and motorized patrol. Research and common sense indicate that visible police presence and active enforcement has a clear and direct impact on reducing public violence and disorder and enhancing perceptions of public safety. Research has also shown that the level of police presence, location and mode of deployment (foot, fixed, motorized, etc.) can have varied impacts that change over time. This suggests that the effectiveness of increased police presence should not be assumed but monitored and assessed in order to be responsive to changing circumstances and demands.

Foot Patrol and Bar Walks: Foot patrols can be seen as an accessible and highly visible form of police presence in high-risk locations. Foot patrol has been linked to the deterrence of street violence in patrol locations and also significantly increases public perceptions of personal safety and neighborhood security. The current downtown HRP foot patrol program is well regarded and should be maintained and where necessary strengthened. It should also be monitored and evaluated in order to enhance its impact. One reportedly effective foot patrol strategy in entertainment districts, are regular "bar walks". Walking through bars by uniformed foot patrol officers is used in some jurisdictions to establish police presence and authority and provide useful surveillance information and communication with bar staff.

Police and Regulating Bar Security: The development of joint security protocols and communication strategies involving police, bar management and bar security staff can insure better co-operation and communication. In some jurisdictions police play a major role in the licensing and training of bar security and staff. The Edmonton Police Service "Bar Watch" program is one good example. This regulatory approach might be considered for HRP.

Off-Duty Police Officers: The current practice of using off-duty HRP officers in order to provide extra or special forms of private security in some downtown bars has become routine. While its practice has proven to be an effective method for enhancing downtown security in various ways, it has not prevented some of the "inside bar" problems (e.g., assaults, drug use, liquor violations, etc.) nor some of the security problems outside bars. The current use and effectiveness of off-duty police should be examined by HRP and the public safety committee to see if there are ways to

improve their impact and enhance their role while also addressing some concerns expressed regarding their cost and use as a form of "private" security.

Police and Liquor Inspectors Teams: In some jurisdictions the police work directly with liquor law inspectors to ensure that bars are obeying those laws. This makes liquor inspectors' jobs more effective and also allows the police to use liquor violations and regulations to "problem solve" uncooperative bars and lounges in way that that the *Criminal Code* does not address. In general, best practice experience and research establishes that when public police, licensing enforcement, bar security and managers have a clear and co-operative relationship overall security both inside and outside bars improves.

Community Policing: While extra police resources, CCTV and other security and prevention strategies etc should make the core downtown and commercial areas safer, areas close to the downtown such as the Commons, the Waterfront, and some secondary streets and neighborhoods also require a level of increased security that cannot without significant cost be provided by the public police. As extra police efforts and resources are best focused on high traffic, high-risk, and high demand areas of the downtown, lower risk areas may be left with conventional but limited police protection. Given the high cost of regular police services in areas that require only limited and occasional police presence and surveillance capacity, it would perhaps be more appropriate for these areas or neighborhood to create special neighborhood or community policing watch or patrol programs. As there already seems to be genuine community interest in enhancing community or neighborhood safety (e.g., Guardian Angels, Commons Watch, and Community on Patrol) HRP officers should continue to work with and develop neighborhood and community policing efforts in order to enhance community security. Community policing models and strategies can take many forms but to be successful they require commitments by police and community to work actively as partners in the co-production of public safety. While Halifax already has commitment to various forms of community policing they should consider extending and developing these strategies, especially in high-risk neighborhoods or communities.

Private Security and Public Safety: The role of private security remains unclear and undeveloped as part of the overall security of the downtown. The extensive use of untrained and trained private security inside bars and restaurants is largely unregulated and unknown. Earlier estimates suggest that there are at least 200 bouncers (Rigakos, 1999) and security staff and some bars and restaurants employ private security guards and off-duty police officers. There are usually more private security providers at work in the downtown on any given night than public police and they could play

an important role in enhancing public safety downtown. However, because of the private, informal and largely unregulated nature of their employment there are a variety of issues that inhibit their role and effectiveness. These are related to lack of, or limited, training, little external regulation, uncertain legal status, and uneven relations with the public police that need to be explored. It is important that private security be seen as a potential security resource and as part of the public security and policing continuum in the downtown. Private security could play a much more effective and vigorous role in both internal bar security and also as a liaison and partner with police on some aspects of public and street security outside of the bars.

Another question raised in our research was the role of private enterprise or business in funding the additional public or private security required to make the downtown safer. The suggestion was made that if downtown businesses want a higher level of police presence they should be willing pay extra for it, as they are partially the cause of the security problem and are also the beneficiaries of extra security (customer safety). The rejoinder to this argument is that downtown business already pays extra through business taxes and contributes significantly to the economic vitality of the downtown and that the safety of all citizens is a municipal government responsibility. While both positions have merit, it would appear that there is some middle ground or possibilities for useful collaboration between the downtown business sector and the security needs of the downtown. For example, the Spring Garden Road Merchants fund a number of private security guards to provide additional security in the Spring Garden Road area. Public-private security partnerships in urban settings (i.e. Vancouver and the Gas Town area) are occurring in various cities and might be considered as part a strategy for the redevelopment and redesign of the HRM downtown.

<u>Recommendation:</u> that the proposed downtown public strategy committee explore both existing use and possible expanded and innovative use of private security to enhance certain aspects of downtown public safety.

The Criminal Justice System and Public Violence: The Roundtable surveys clearly reveal that public perceptions of the local criminal justice system's response to public violence and public safety in HRM are not positive, indeed they are uniformly negative and critical. While this may in part be explained by a misunderstanding of the facts of cases and the limits of the legal system, most of those concerned about public safety and violence believe that offenders, especially violent young offenders, are not being dealt with effectively and appear not to be deterred or corrected by the current criminal justice responses. In relation to downtown public violence, especially group assault on innocent victims, there is widespread public support that violent offenders should be aggressively policed, when

apprehended, promptly prosecuted in the formal criminal justice system and if found guilty, they should receive appropriate "corrective" sentences that makes public safety and deterrence a priority. If the courts and corrections are unable or unwilling to act more effectively in relation to violent offenders, especially repeat offenders, then we can expect to see further erosion of public confidence in the criminal justice system and an undermining of other deterrence and enforcement efforts to make the HRM downtown safer.

<u>Recommendation</u>: In order to enhance public safety and public confidence in the criminal justice system, the Criminal Justice System should place special priority on the prevention, apprehension, prosecution, and correction of violent, repeat offenders.

Improved Public Transportation: A common complaint in focus groups, letters to the editor, and the district roundtables was the lack of public transportation available in the downtown area at bar closing times. A lack of available taxis and buses means that large numbers of often intoxicated customers remain in congested streets waiting for long periods of time for transportation to go home. This lack of public transportation can often result in increased drinking and driving, unplanned and unnecessary confrontations, street noise and public disorder as intoxicated groups of people wander from the downtown through residential neighborhoods creating noise and vandalism problems, while also making them vulnerable to assault and robbery. A number of suggestions to address this problem were forthcoming from the research and the focus groups. It should be pointed out that transportation issues, including the licensing of more taxies and making more buses available are an HRM, or municipal government, responsibility and as such the solutions are clearly within their mandate.

<u>Recommendation</u>: That a public safety transportation committee be created to consider the following suggestions:

- **Make more taxis available through changes to the current municipal taxi licensing policies**
- **Provide a dedicated and safe pick-up location that would ensure both taxis and their customers a safe exit (through lighting, CCTV and police or security presence).**
- **Explore the possibility of a late night bus service , perhaps with onboard security**
- **Deploy the university bus services to ferry students back to campus, late at night.**
- **Create a "safe walk home" corridor for students back to campus.**

Video Surveillance - CCTV: Closed-circuit television (CCTV) is a surveillance technology system "in which a number of video cameras are

connected in a closed circuit or loop, with the images produced being sent to a central television monitor or recorded." In light of a number of high-profile successes of CCTV in apprehending serious criminals, many districts are looking to the benefits of CCTV in public spaces, particularly open-street and transit exchange areas. In downtown open-street CCTV schemes, the systems are usually overt (as opposed to semi-overt or covert), meaning that everyone in the area knows they are under surveillance. Implementation of a downtown CCTV scheme is often accompanied by a public awareness campaign, both to deal with concerns regarding privacy, and to increase the deterrence factor of the scheme. These schemes are also generally operated by or in conjunction with local police, and generally require that police, local volunteers or employees of the scheme are available to monitor screens, especially during times of increased risk. Since CCTV is an expensive service, different districts have handled financing issues very differently. Often times, local businesses will engage in a cost-sharing scheme through their Business Improvement Area (BIA) or other similar organizations to implement a camera system that is then available to police or security services; also, municipalities and police forces may share some or all of the cost. Though there is much debate about the effectiveness of CCTV as a crime "prevention or deterrent tool" and ongoing concerns about violations of privacy, there is also evidence that CCTV can be useful and effective if deployed appropriately. Studies suggest that CCTV has proven useful in other urban centers as a source of offender identification and evidence for the prosecution of offenders.

<u>Recommendation:</u> The current efforts of HRM and HRP to explore the use of CCTV in the downtown should be encouraged and supported as part of a multifaceted approach to enhancing public safety downtown. However given its cost, potential privacy problems and questionable effectiveness, this experimental CCTV use should be carefully monitored and studied in order to assess its proposed cost-benefits.

Regulatory and Licensing Issues and Strategies: Research and the Halifax experience indicates that government regulation of alcohol consumption in bars, clubs and restaurants can have a significant impact on consumption and the related problems of public drunkenness and violence. The recent liberalization of licensing in Nova Scotia coupled with limited enforcement of existing regulations has helped create conditions that lead to excessive alcohol consumptions and related violence and order problems. For example research in other jurisdictions confirm that certain licensing and regulatory practices such as the licensing of large mega bars, the concentrating of many bars in one small area, extending late night service hours, under enforcement of serving rules governing underage and intoxicated customer and untrained bar and

security staff help facilitate the kinds of problems that now plague downtown Halifax.

Provincial Regulation and Enforcement: The regulation of the sale and consumption of alcohol in bars and restaurants currently lies in the hands of the provincial government and is its direct responsibility. An apparent recent policy shift away from strict regulation and control in order to facilitate a more business friendly model has resulted in a series of new changes to regulations that appear to be encouraging alcohol consumption; changes such as more liquor sale outlets, extended drinking hours and limited regulatory enforcement. There was also some suggestion that the recent movement of the licensing and enforcement from the Alcohol and Gaming Authority to the Utilities Review Board has had a negative impact on the provincial government's capacity and commitment to the governance of alcohol consumptions through licensing, regulation and enforcement. Currently an interdepartmental committee is conducting a review of the alcohol and regulatory issues and may recommend a shift in policy direction one more consistent with its public commitment to public health and safety. A public health and safety approach to regulating alcohol consumption would be more in keeping with our analysis of the problems of the downtown and the experience of other jurisdictions n Canada facing similar problems.

Liquor Pricing and Service Practices: Excessive alcohol consumption has been directly linked to certain pricing and service practices in some bars. The evidence that "cheap drinks and bad drunks" are related is clear in all the research. In Halifax this relationship is clear as police call for service data revels that the two designated "cheap drink nights" (Sunday and Wednesday) have become high demand nights for police service between 1 and 4 in the morning. This transformation of previously quiet nights such as Sunday and Wednesday and of course low business nights have been transformed by the combination of cheap (99 cent) drinks and late service hours (3:30 a.m.). The police, focus groups, addiction experts, public opinion have all made it clear that they believe that a good deal of the downtown problem are caused by the following:

- ***Cheap drinks*** – the introduction of deeply discounted drinks, 99 cent and dollar shots, on selected slow nights of the week (Sunday and Wednesday);
- ***Extended hours of service*** – recent extension of bar hours of service to 2 a.m. and some of the larger popular bars to 3:30 a.m.
- ***Over-serving of intoxicated patrons*** – though it is against existing regulations to serve intoxicated patrons, it is clear that this rule is not being enforced in most bars nor is there evidence that provincial liquor inspectors are enforcing these regulations adequately.

<u>Recommendation:</u> That the provincial government through its relevant departments or agencies undertakes:

- **Establish minimum liquor prices in order to increase the cost of over consumption**
- **Review and reconsider current late closing hours after 2 p.m.**
- **Enforce existing regulations regarding over consumption in bars**
- **Encourage provincial regulatory and enforcement officials to work more closely with city officials and police as part of a more integrated**
- **New approaches to the regulation and management of alcohol consumption.**

Bar Size and Location - Bigger is not better: While there is no necessary relationship between bar size and public safety problem there is evidence that big bars create significantly more policing and public safety problems. According to HRP police data two of the largest bars in HRM are responsible for a disproportionate number of police incidents and call for service. Bar size should be considered in the future when licensing "mega-bars" in Halifax such as the Dome with over 1,000 patrons. While big bars may be good business models they should be carefully scrutinized as also posing potential security problems. Research also suggests that smaller bars are easier to manage and create fewer policing problems and neighborhood bars cause fewer problems than bars in concentrated, designated entertainment zones.

Bar Security: Bars vary in the degree to which they invest in security planning and training. While there are a variety of factors to consider such as customer profiles, entrance security, safety audits, surveillance technology, security staff, customer ratios, server policies, etc., it is important that bars have a carefully develop a "security plan" with explicit policies and protocols for security in relation to staff and customers. This is especially true for large bars with more potentially problematic patrons. A security plan (i.e. number of security staff, waiters per customer, etc.) should be part of the licensing and regulation process and should involve the public police in some advisory or regulatory manner.

Bar Staffing and Security Training: Responsible beverage service programs have been established in North America in many districts. These programs function to clarify the responsibilities of beverage servers and serving establishments as well as to give servers the verbal and other tools they need to refuse service or to limit intoxication levels. These programs can be either mandatory or voluntary, and voluntary programs can be offered with or without incentives from government, licensing, or insurance agencies. In HRM service training is advised but is not required.

A qualified and trained security staff, especially those directly responsible for security and enforcement of bars rules (e.g., bouncers, door screeners, floor managers) are critical to bar safety. Again there appears to be no legal requirements for training and licensing bar security in HRM or Nova Scotia. Given the unfortunate and alarming record of injury and complaints about bar security staff, the most recent being an accidental homicide, and the critical role they play in maintain internal security for staff and patrons this unrelated and untrained nature of bar security needs to be addressed soon. The Ontario Safer Bars Program seems like reasonable models to explore.

Responsible Drinking and Responsible Bars: Research and experience suggest that the conditions that encourage responsible drinking among young consumers are linked to bars and social settings where:

- Alcohol is part of but not the focus of the event or location – food, music and entertainment
- Alcohol is priced so that over consumption is costly
- The bar clearly discourages over consumption by refusing to serve customers who show "obvious" signs of intoxication.
- Bar staff ensures that customers are not harassed or intimidated
- Bars are limited in size and have regular cliental attracted by the ambience and social ability of the setting
- Closing hours are reasonable so that patrons can go home when there is transportation and a degree of security.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Provincial and municipal liquor licensing and bar regulation in HRM should take into account the size, location, management and security practices , a minimum level of security training for all bar security staff, as a condition for licensing, in other words, an assessment of their public safety footprint or environmental impact.

Public Security through Residential Density and Diversity: While police enforcement and security efforts are essential to making the downtown safer it is also true that experience suggests that the diversification of downtown urban areas into complete living, working and entertainment environment or neighborhoods has a significant positive effect on both perception and the reality of public safety. In other words the more people live in the downtown and the more it feel like a neighborhood to them, the more they will use and take ownership of its public streets and spaces and the more eyes and ears there will be to report, intervene and detect would-be security threats and violators. A downtown becomes vulnerable to crime and disorder when they become one-dimensional business and or entertainment centers, busy in the daytime with shoppers and office workers who go home to other neighborhoods at night leaving largely empty streets, visited only by outsiders late at night seeking entertainment. This can leave downtown

residents fearfully looking out their condo or apartment windows afraid to go out on what they see as alien and unsafe streets full of threatening strangers. The HRM downtown may now be at a "tipping point" in terms of being seen as an attractive safe and desirable "living" area. If the Halifax downtown can attract more residents and develop a more normal diverse residential and community character it can avoid becoming like so many empty violence-prone urban downtowns in other cities.

The current *Halifax by Design* process and other city planning efforts which are in part intended to make the urban core a more varied and desirable place to live and work should take into account the importance of public safety in its design and planning processes. The proposed preventative and enforcement measures being recommended in this report will help reassure existing and would-be residents and business owners that the downtown is a safe and secure public environment. This, in turn, should encourage more population density and diversity and a broader range of social and community activities. Under these conditions community security should emerge as natural products of neighborhood stability, vitality and shared interests.

Recommendation*:* that the current design and planning of future downtown development draw on the considerable body of research and experience on urban safety in order to insure that public safety considerations are a key part of the HRM general urban design and planning process.

Group Assault and Victimization: Though part of the overall downtown problem, the issue of group assaults and or swarming are troublesome aspects of the problem that warrants specific attention. One disturbing trend in the evolution of downtown violence is growing evidence that at least some of the assaults are planned and are an expression of possible gang activity. These assaults range from groups of young people who engage in inter-group violence or the targeting of vulnerable victims by groups in the form of "swarming" or group assaults, on an often intoxicated victim. Though evidence is limited, based on victim and police reports there is a pattern to many of these assaults. The downtown night scene attracts groups or gangs of young males often racially composed and sometimes from distinct neighborhoods or communities in HRM. Though white gangs/groups exist and are occasionally involved in group assaults and robberies, a disproportionate number of assaults and swarming are reported to be committed by groups of young black males. The victims of these assaults are typically young, white males and females and are either innocent victims or are occasionally rival gang/group members. Many of these group/gang members are known to police. The frequency of these swarming and gang assaults varies but they tend to take place in public places like streets and parks and appear to be spontaneous and unprovoked. The victim is assaulted sometimes seriously and sometimes

money and minor articles are taken. The motivation for these assaults appears to be the simple exercise of violence and intimidation. The swarming is often done by young offenders who appear not to be not inhibited or deterred by the possibility of being caught or the probability of being punished.

Swarming and groups assaults are especially disturbing because not only do they cause considerable pain and suffering to the victims but they are also **signal crimes, events** that seldom yield arrest, charge or successful prosecution. The possible "racialized" nature of these assaults also needs to be further examined and better addressed. Finally swarming and group assaults, are "signal crimes" that significantly contribute to public perceptions about the lack of public safety in the downtown core and their persistence is a powerful reminder to many people that it is not safe to go downtown and use public streets and parks. HRM police are well aware of and concerned about this problem and have taken various measures to respond more actively, with apparent positive results. While the basic source of this problem may lie ultimately in social causes such as poverty, racism, culture and drugs, and may be best addressed though community development and prevention strategies, there are some short-term prevention and enforcement strategies that could also be explored.

Offender Enforcement Strategies

- Targeted enforcement by street crime or gang related police units – especially in downtown;
- Identification and surveillance of gangs/groups in downtown – limited street access in cars;
- Arrest and prosecution rather than diversions and restorative justice for violent young offenders;
- Media coverage of successful arrests and prosecution of violent offenders to reassure the public that something tangible is being done about the problem
- Bars/police information sharing regarding gangs/group movement and activity.

Victims Prevention Strategies

- Public and victim prevention education – especially re: streets safety
- Better lighting on dark streets or thoroughfares – with high-risk i.e., Commons and Citadel Hill and Waterfront;
- CCTV cameras positioned in selected high-risk areas;
- Identification by police of high and low risk areas/routes for assault based on analysis of police data;
- Better and safer public transportation out of the downtown area.

<u>Recommendation:</u> "Swarmings" in the HRM urban core are signal crimes that require special attention from the community and the criminal justice system. The serious and public nature of group violence against innocent victims in public places, by often young repeat offenders needs to be better understood and more

effectively responded to by the community and the criminal justice system. This requires a coherent and co-ordinate criminal justice and community response, based on a better understanding of the social and racial dynamics of the problem and a willingness to invest special resources to ensure prevention and deterrence.

Spring Garden Road: Public Order and Security Problems

Another downtown public security problem that affects the overall perceived safety and security of downtown HRM, is the visible presence of numbers of "street people" who frequent the public sidewalks of Spring Garden Road and are perceived by some citizens to be threatening or disturbing. Downtown residents, merchants, storeowners and shoppers in the Spring Garden Road area are concerned about the increasingly visible and aggressive presence of significant numbers of transient youth persons, drug and alcohol addicted persons, mentally ill individuals and groups of loitering youth. These individuals and groups are concentrated in relatively limited street space – parks and sidewalks in 4 blocks area, and engage in a variety of legal and illegal activities, including aggressive panhandling, petty theft, loitering, petty drug dealing and alcohol use. Though their presence is not illegal they are regarded by some of the public as "disturbing or threatening" and make Spring Garden a street and shopping area they avoid, day and night.

While the actual threat and risk posed by these groups and individual is relatively low and their presence legally legitimate, it is the symbolic and public nature of the perceived threat to public safety they represent that makes this an issue of concern for the downtown. The problem especially for business and merchants on the street is that their visible presence and some of their threatening activities makes some of the public less likely to want to come to Spring Garden Road and do business, shop or live in the area. As the core commercial street in HRM and a pathway to the rest of the downtown, Spring Garden Road and its perceived security has special significance for the overall viability of the downtown as a living and commercial area. If Spring Garden Road is not consider safe or desirable by the public, the whole downtown suffers, as this insecurity hastens the exit of business and their customer to the perceived security of "suburban" shopping malls and apartment complexes.

This problem is serious enough to have motivated the **Spring Garden Area Business Association (SABA)** under the leadership of Bernard Smith to undertake a variety of innovative preventative and responsive initiatives in order to try and enhance public security in the area. They have also hired private security guards to enhance both store and street security in the area. While they have had some success, they have not been able to resolve the problems. There is a growing sense that the problem is in fact becoming worse as more and more transient youth and persons with drug and alcohol addictions are forced to or attracted to the Spring Garden Road area.

Causes

While the root causes of the population in question are poverty, education, and drugs, there also more immediate and locally located causes such as: Limited and uncoordinated

local social resources and programs devoted to addressing the various social, psychological, educational training problems are seen a contributing to the problem. The city's limited capacity and responsibility regarding social services and the province's role in providing those services also contributes to the problem. Inadequate Addiction Services was singled out for special attention as a large number of those involved have substance abuse problems, complaint were that either addictions service was unavailable, or are inappropriate and optional. Limited Police presence and slow response times, though lately improved by the addition of foot patrol, could still be improved by more police presence. Inadequate Criminal Justice Response to offences and offenders. Laws limit capacity of police to respond to problem people (i.e. aggressive panhandlers) and the CJS provides an inadequate and inappropriate response to problem clientele.

Responses and Recommendations

A variety of recommendations to this complex set of problems are focused primarily on a combination of government and community based prevention, treatment and enforcement services.

Enhanced and Integrated Social Services: In addition to simply providing social services to the street population, the argument was made to find ways to make provincial and municipal social services more effective and integrated in their approach to the problems of street populations in HRM. A good example is the Community Navigators program for Street Individuals – a proactive street outreach workers project to connect individuals with appropriate services.

More and Better Addiction Services: It was suggested that more available and effective addiction treatment services would have a significant impact, additional services needed regarding treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation – court ordered if necessary as condition of release.

Targeted Employment Programs aimed at getting many street people into short and long term employment and training.

Enhanced Policing and Security. Support for the recent downtown HRM police foot patrol initiative and suggestion that this program could be developed further – by more training of officers regarding communications, integration of foot and patrol services, the possible location of a store front office on Spring Garden Road and better coordination with private security in the area.

Strengthen Public and Private Partnerships It should be noted that the innovative work of Mr. Bernard Smith on behalf of the SABA in developing a variety of programs designed to address employment/employability; housing and treatment service have had significant impact on the problem. The willingness of this community of merchants to initiate prevention and education programs as well as private security and policing projects should be considered and encouraged. However, these projects were born out of the limits of government to provide these basic urban services and unless these kinds of

community initiatives are supported by government and developed even further they will not survive. Thus SGABA offers a potential private-public and government partnership model that could be utilized more extensively to respond to HRM social issues and public safety problems.

General Recommendation: A Downtown Public Safety Advisory Committee

Due to the multifaceted nature of the downtown problem, the varied level of governments and departments involved, the broad number of public and private stakeholders who have an interest and knowledge of the issues, any effective response will require a variety of response strategies and a decision making process that incorporates the various stakeholders. Thus we encourage decision-makers to direct the various suggestions or recommendations contained in this report to a Downtown Public Safety Committee which would collaboratively take responsibility for exploring, advising and monitoring the issues and responses impacting downtown public safety. This committee would be composed of the city, business, police, developers, universities, students, planners, etc. and would also serve as useful forum for communication among the various parties involved and would serve to coordinate individual and institutional efforts that affect downtown public safety. The terms of reference for this committee with regard to composition, mandate role, and function need to be developed, but one of the initial tasks could focus on the creation of a downtown public safety and security plan.

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FOCUS GROUP 2: TROUBLED YOUTH

Facilitator: Kit Waters

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS (NOT ALL PARTICIPATED IN ALL THREE MEETINGS)

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2. Gary Holt, Crown Prosecutor, Youth Court, PPS
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5. Jack Godsoe, Director, Choices
6. Yvonne Atwell, Director, Community Justice Society
7. Timothy Crooks, Director, Phoenix House
8. Jake MacIssac, Community Justice Society
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11. Cst. Amy-Lis McKay, Community officer, HRPS
12. Cst. Calvin Byard, RCMP
13. Gola Tarasichi, Department of Justice, Nova Scotia

The Focus Group (FG) on Troubled Youth met on three occasions. Membership of the group was comprised of individuals with extensive involvement in issues related to troubled youth, working in the areas of law enforcement, Public Prosecution Service, group home administration, education system, alcohol/drug treatment, restorative justice and a number of youth-serving community organizations.

Current problems:

The FG identified a number of problems with the current response to troubled youth:

- There are significant barriers to accessing programs and services. Some are financial; e.g. fees may prevent youth from participating in recreational programs.
- The transitory nature of funding has meant that some effective programs for youth are terminated as provincial or federal funding is discontinued. Many youth-serving organizations suffer from chronic underfunding and are forced to dedicate substantial periods of time in fund-raising efforts.
- There is a lack of coordination between municipal, provincial and federal government agencies in the delivery of services to troubled youth.
- The lack of services for youth aged 16-19 is particularly acute.
- Inadequate housing for homeless youth.
- Treatment facilities for troubled youth who do not have a diagnosed mental illness are not available
- Facilities which could provide recreational space for youth (such as schools) are often not open after school and on weekends.
- Many vulnerable youth are not connected to peers, family or neighbourhood and as a result are either not aware of, or resistant to, services which may benefit

them. Youth are not sufficiently engaged in defining the type of services they need.

- The negative stereotyping of youth has resulted in community resistance to programs such as group homes. Municipal politicians do not appear to have a good understanding of the youth-serving programs available in their neighbourhoods.
- Insufficient information about available programs for parents and youth.
- There is "a disconnect" between teachers and the communities they serve, resulting in feelings of alienation on the part of some students/parents.
- Inadequate role models and mentors for youth.

Existing programs

The Focus Group acknowledged that there are a number of innovative programs in HRM that respond to troubled youth; e.g. youth court team, restorative justice programs, alcohol/drug treatment, community care and youth programs (such as those provided by HomeBridge Youth Society, Phoenix Youth Programs, Coverdale, YMCA/YWCA, Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children, Chisholm Youth Services, Rotary House and Edwards House, Leave Out Violence, Laing House, the ARK, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Youth Project, family resource centres, Boys and Girls clubs, police youth liaison officers and the new Attendance Centre).

Recent initiatives to address the issue of troubled youth

The Focus Group was mindful of important initiatives recently undertaken by the Province: i.e. response to the Nunn Commission of Inquiry and the Minister's Task Force on Safer Streets and Communities. These reports provide an overview of the factors that place children and youth at risk and present a list of the protective influences that can reduce the chances that a vulnerable youth will become involved in delinquent behaviour. It is clear that there must be increased support for troubled families, early intervention programs for children at risk, a more responsive education system that builds student attachment to schools and more accessible programs that offer mental health and alcohol/drug treatment services.

The Focus Group strongly urges that increased resources be dedicated to preventive programs and services. Many behavioural problems manifest themselves very early in a child's life and timely, effective responses are likely to have the most positive and long-lasting effects.

Role of HRM in addressing the issue of troubled youth

Need for community engagement: Communities need to be engaged in addressing the problem of troubled youth – to identify neighbourhood strengths and responses that appear to be working and also to identify gaps. There is a role for HRM in facilitating these community conversations. The Focus Group recognizes the importance of youth

involvement in these discussions. Youth must be permitted to participate in planning, designing and operating programs that are meant to address their needs.

The Focus Group acknowledged the importance of mentorship – the difference a caring individual can make in the life of a troubled youth. It is evident that voluntarism is embraced by HRM with many citizens volunteering their time to assist youth in sports, tutoring, and other leisure activities. However, the FG was of the view that there are many more people who would become involved if they were aware of volunteer opportunities. It was suggested that a Volunteer Bureau might be re-established to promote and facilitate voluntarism. It was also recommended that barriers to volunteer involvement, such as liability issues, be addressed.

Community engagement is also necessary to establish a dialogue between service providers for troubled youth (e.g. group homes) and the surrounding neighbourhood. Very few group home residents cause trouble in the community and yet there is resentment on the part of community members based on a lack of understanding of the important role of group homes in addressing the needs of troubled youth.

Recreational space: The Focus Group was concerned that there is insufficient accessible and affordable recreational space for youth in HRM. We are aware that there is space in community centres and schools in the area, but in many instances, school space is not available for youth in the evenings and on weekends. Fees for facility rental or participation in sports and other activities have meant that many youth cannot take part in these activities. For example, it was noted that many youth in the East Preston community cannot afford the fees to participate in activities held in the East Preston Recreational Centre. Some low cost or free programs are offered in HRM, but few of these appear to appeal to troubled youth. We were informed, however, that the drop-in centre at the Halifax Shopping Centre has been very successful in engaging 'at risk' youth and believe that more such activities should be available to youth. The Focus Group recommends that HRM provide more safe, supervised youth "hang-outs" and that consideration be given to waiving or adjusting program fees for recreation centre activities for youth and their families without the financial means to participate.

Information about programs and services: Troubled youth and their families need to know where they can go to get help. Information regarding programs and services in HRM (as well as how to make referrals to these services) should be compiled and made available in a variety of formats.

Youth in conflict with the law: Deficiencies in the response to these most troubled youth must be addressed. The Focus Group suggests that delays in court processing could be reduced by establishing an additional youth court in HRM. The implementation of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* has resulted in the incarceration of fewer youth. Sufficient resources must be committed by the provincial government to enable organizations such as restorative justice agencies to address the needs of the more troubled young offenders admitted to their programs. The Province must also establish treatment facilities for 'out of control' youth whose serious behavioural problems cannot be addressed within group homes.

Establishment of a business unit dedicated to public safety: HRM needs to be more assertive in the role of facilitator of community involvement and networking among services providers in the municipality. It must assume a more effective advocate and lobbyist role vis-à-vis the provincial and federal governments in identifying services that are needed to address the problems of troubled youth. More than 40% of the Nova Scotian population currently resides in HRM with an increase to 50% likely within the next decade. Therefore HRM has a right to demand to be heard in matters relating to public safety and troubled youth. It is essential that a structured process be established to promote collaboration among all levels of government in the provision of programs and services for youth at risk.

HRM must build capacity to address these issues by establishing a business unit dedicated to public safety issues. Focus on troubled youth will only be achieved when such issues are incorporated in HRM's business plan and priorities. The business unit would serve as a focal point for information gathering and dissemination, community engagement, consultation with other levels of government and advocating for services to meet the needs of troubled youth and their families.

FOCUS GROUP 3: NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY
Facilitator: Stephen Schneider

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

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10. Reg Horner, Spryfield and District Business Association
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13. Sharon Martin, Community Development Department, HRM
14. Theresa Scratch, RCMP Volunteer, Sackville area

Focus Group Objectives

The facilitator began the discussion by stating that he did not want the group to provide an analysis of crime and violence in their communities or the HRM generally. Rather, he wanted to focus the discussion on:

1. the nature, scope and impact of crime and violence prevention initiatives in the HRM;
2. criteria that makes crime prevention initiatives successful in terms of (a) mobilizing communities and (b) preventing or controlling crime and violence;
3. obstacles to effective crime and violence prevention initiatives; and
4. recommendations on the next steps that should be taken in relation to crime prevention in the HRM

Existing "Crime Prevention" Institutions, Agencies, Groups and Programs

Following introductions, focus group participants were asked to identify existing crime prevention groups, agencies and programs in the HRM and surrounding areas. The resulting list was not meant to be comprehensive; instead, the goal of this exercise was to prompt focus group participants to think about the range of agencies, groups, and programs that can potentially address crime and violence problems in the HRM in a proactive manner.

A wide array of institutions, groups, agencies and programs were identified, ranging from local government institutions and agencies (schools, police, community centres, recreation programs, the community development department), to non-governmental organizations (Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the YMCA/YWCA) and community-based groups (Citizens on Patrol, Block Associations, Neighbourhood Watch, etc.).

Focus group participants acknowledged that in order to truly address crime and disorder problems, proactive initiatives must revolve around three central institutions: the family, the neighbourhood, and the schools. Indeed, these three institutions represent the chief environments in which criminogenic conditions can be either promoted or ameliorated. Any comprehensive crime prevention plan must ensure that opportunities are created and resources are dedicated to ensure these institutions promote pro-social behaviours and a strong sense of community belonging among children and youth

Focus group participants agreed that outside these institutions there are a number of agencies, organizations, and programs that are dedicated to crime prevention in the HRM including those that address the root causes of criminality and those that serve to reduce the opportunity for crime and violence to take place in a particular time and place. However, these groups and programs are often under-resourced, rely on too few volunteers, and work in isolation from other like-minded and complimentary groups and programs.

Criteria That Makes Community Crime Prevention Successful

Focus group participants were asked to identify factors they believe contributed to the success of crime prevention and community safety initiatives. Some of the key criteria identified by the focus group were:

- Maximizing community participation and the number of active volunteers; All HRM citizens must assume a role in ensuring public safety, which includes participating in local crime prevention initiatives.
- Intensive promotion of community-based crime prevention programs.
- Educating local residents and businesses on personal and collective crime prevention programs and techniques.
- Strong partnerships, cooperation, coordination and communication between government, non-governmental, private sector, and community groups.
- Strong social institutions that are on the “front lines” against crime, in particular families (and other caregivers, such as mentors), schools, and neighbourhoods.
- Sufficient financial and technical support for local crime prevention initiatives.
- Continued research into what works and what doesn’t work in crime prevention and community safety (including effective measures to mobilize communities).
- An active role of government, in particular local governments, which must take the lead in promoting and coordinating crime prevention initiatives

- A comprehensive, holistic approach to community crime prevention whereby the root causes of crime are addressed with alongside "situational" crime prevention and criminal justice responses.
- Crime prevention initiatives must tailored to the needs of each individual community.
- There needs to be a wide variety of after-school programs for children and youth.

Obstacles to Community Crime Prevention

Focus group participants were asked to identify factors that obstructed crime and violence prevention initiatives at the local level. This discussion included identifying obstacles to community participation and factors that undermine the effectiveness of community safety programs. Participants were asked to discuss those barriers and obstacles in the context of the HRM. Some of the obstructing factors identified by the focus group were:

- A lack of civic engagement; too few volunteers and crime prevention program participants; too much work in the hands of a few dedicated volunteers and community activists;

- Residents who are not "integrated" or committed to their neighbourhood; if people don't have a sense of ownership over or belonging to their community, they are less likely to participate in community groups or local social problem solving;

- Pockets of poverty that are spatially concentrated in certain areas of the HRM (North Halifax, North Preston, parts of Spryfield, and First Nations communities), which are incubators for criminal behavior, promote unacceptably high crime rates, and which also serve to obstruct community mobilization;

- Insufficient government support, funding and training for volunteers and volunteer-based crime prevention programs;

- Lack of leadership by the HRM in promoting preventative approaches to crime and violence; the absence of any comprehensive strategic crime control plan for the HRM;

- The inability or unwillingness of the HRM to make full use of its facilities and resources; community groups are denied use of school and recreational facilities without good reason;

- A lack of consistency in and coordination of crime prevention programs across the HRM; a lack of "linkages" between different crime prevention groups; a lack of linkages between local crime prevention groups, on the one hand, and police and the HRM government on the other;

- A lack of community-based (after-school) programs for youth; a lack of mentorship opportunities for at-risk children and youth;

Recommendations

The final task requested of the focus group was to come up with recommendations for the HRM as how to promote more effective crime prevention and community safety. The consensus among the group was that these recommendations must be geared specifically towards the Mayor's Office (in part because crime prevention transcends police and because the Mayor must assume leadership in the area of crime prevention). Some of the key recommendations made by the focus group include the following:

- The Mayor's Office must first acknowledge there is a crime and violence problem in the HRM.

- The Mayor's Office must assume a leadership role in developing a comprehensive, strategic, and coordinated crime control plan that emphasizes proactive crime prevention measures that address both the root causes and symptom of these problems in both the short and long term. The Mayor's office must play a central role in mobilizing and coordinating the various key partners that are central to a comprehensive approach to the prevention of crime and violence.

- There should be increased funding for proactive, community-based crime and violence prevention initiatives

- A Community Crime Prevention Coordinator and/or advisory group, which reports directly to the Mayor, should be considered.

- The promotion of local crime prevention initiatives and opportunities should be enhanced. Particular emphasis should be placed on broadening the volunteer base and mobilizing (high-crime) communities.

- The HRM needs to make better use of its facilities and resources that can aid current and fledgling crime prevention and community development groups and activities

- Community Crime Prevention or Community Police Offices should be located throughout the HRM. These offices should have strong ties with and be accountable to the respective communities they serve

- There is a need for more technical expertise in crime prevention in the HRM, including how to mobilize communities, how to plan and implement crime prevention groups and programs, etc. This technical expertise must be readily available to local communities (perhaps through the community policing offices).

- There needs to be a quicker response by the HRM and community groups to nuisance and disorder problems such as graffiti, noise issues, derelict buildings, etc. (Graffiti enforcement and clean-up resources should be increased.)

- Crime prevention must be preceded or accompanied by community development initiatives that seek to increase local social interaction, social cohesion, community solidarity, community ownership, local integration, etc.

- Crime prevention initiatives must incorporate a social developmental approach that address the root causes of youth crime and violence and which includes providing targeted services for at-risk children and youth. At the very least, the HRM government should work with Big Brothers, Big Sisters and other relevant group to expand mentoring opportunities for at-risk children and youth.

- The HRM should design bylaws to ensure new developments incorporate CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles

- Strategies should be designed to protect the aging population of the HRM especially from frauds and other financial crimes that prey on the elderly

- Continued research needs to be conducted into the nature and scope of crime problems in the HRM, crime "hot spots," the root causes of crime, as well as crime prevention programs that work.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY
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Crime prevention has been broadly defined as "the anticipation, recognition, and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiative of some action to remove it."[1] The defining characteristics of a preventative approach to crime and disorder problems include proactive interventions that address the root causes of criminal behaviour (or at the very least reduces the opportunities for crime to occur in a particular time and place); the participation of local communities in planning and carrying out preventative programs; partnerships between local communities and police (among other key partners); and a problem-oriented philosophy, which ensures the nature and scope of the interventions are commensurate with the problems being addressed.

This characterization of crime prevention was not lost on the focus group participants who, with little guidance from the facilitator, demonstrated an adroit understanding of the principles of crime prevention, the criteria that maximizes the success of crime prevention and community safety interventions, as well as those factors that obstruct community safety projects from realizing their goals.

[1]National Crime Prevention Institute. 1978. *Understanding Crime Prevention*, Vol. 1. Lexington, KY: National Crime Prevention Institute Press.

Focus group participants implicitly recognized that crime prevention encompasses both short-term, "situational" or "opportunity-reduction" approaches (such as citizens patrol, Neighbourhood Watch, and community policing), as well as interventions that address the root causes of criminal and violent behaviour through social developmental programs that target at-risk children and youth (such as Healthy Kidz, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Boys and Girls Club, recreation programs, etc.) Moreover, focus group participants understood that the root causes of criminality and violence can best be addressed, not necessarily through specific programs or projects, but through strong social institutions, in particular the **family, the school, and the local community**.

Indeed, one inference that can be taken from the group's discussion was that these three institutions are central to both crime causation and crime control. Children and young people who are unfortunate enough to live in an environment that experiences a breakdown in all three institutions are particularly at-risk of future (chronic) criminal behavior. While focus group participants advocated for specific community and social developmental programs for children and youth in the HRM, there was consensus that most measures should revolve around these three institutions, whether it is promoting better parenting, fostering socially cohesive, caring, inclusive and vigilant communities, or ensuring schools deliver the best education possible. Given the focus group's theme of "neighbourhood engagement and public safety" much of the discussion pertained to how the criteria for success, as well as the ingredients for failure in the realm of crime prevention, are very much rooted in these three institutions.

Many of the criteria that the focus group participants identified as essential to successful crime prevention programs were grounded in the local "community," such as community-based programs, the central role of volunteers and local groups, the need to build strong, activist, vigilant communities, and the need for children, youth, and adults to feel a strong sense of belonging and attachment to their local community. Concomitantly, the focus group identified the inverse of these criteria as significant obstacles to effective crime and violence prevention in the HRM: the lack of civic engagement by most HRM residents, a shortage of volunteers for crime prevention programs, the inexorable loss of socially cohesive communities, and a lack of attachment by residents to their neighbourhoods.

The focus group findings are reflected in the crime prevention research literature: those neighbourhoods that have the lowest levels of social cohesion and social interaction (i.e., "organic" or "natural" communities) are those that have the greatest difficulty in mobilizing around crime prevention. As significantly, the neighbourhoods that are most averse to local organizing are those that are in the greatest need of community crime prevention programs: low-income, heterogeneous, transient, high-crime, inner-city neighbourhoods. Indeed, one of the most persistent dilemmas facing community crime prevention programs is their inability to effect a broad-based mobilization of local residents, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Central to community-based crime prevention efforts is a collective response in which individuals act jointly to undertake crime prevention activities that they could not accomplish on their own. As

Oscar Newman once wrote, "when people begin to protect themselves as individuals and not as a community, the battle against crime is effectively lost."[2]

The sheer variety of, and inter-connections between those factors that obstruct participation in collective crime prevention initiatives guarantees that no single variable can be held unilaterally responsible for the problems neighbourhoods encounter when attempting to organize around crime. The obstacles to the mobilization of (disadvantaged) neighbourhoods are not simple or mutually exclusive; they are the product of a complex interaction of many factors manifested at the individual, community, organizational, and structural level.

One must first look at the demographics of those who are disproportionately absent from community-based crime prevention groups and programs: the poor, immigrants, members of visible minority groups, the under-educated, and renters. "Socio-psychological" obstacles to participation include a lack of attachment and commitment to the neighbourhood and minimal social interaction with other local residents. At the neighbourhood level, poverty, demographic heterogeneity, a high population turnover, and a lack of social cohesion, all undermine the capacity of a local population to effectively mobilize around crime and disorder problems. Community crime prevention programs and organizers can also unintentionally encumber participation through inappropriate or ineffectual outreach and communications, leadership weaknesses, a lack of resources, and the nurturing of a narrow and exclusionary identity of crime prevention participants (e.g., crime prevention programs tend to be dominated by middle-class homeowners with a strong attachment to their neighbourhood which results in an emphasis on opportunity-reduction programs, which may exclude those who do not share similar demographic characteristics and/or who are perceived as the source of local crime and disorder problems). Structural obstacles to local collective action have been traced to the dominant ideologies and institutions of advanced Western societies, including politico-economic forces that spatially concentrate poverty, crime, social exclusion, and apathy; a culture of pervasive individualism; as well as a reliance on the welfare state for local problem solving.[3]

Research into and project evaluations of crime prevention projects are generally pessimistic on the capacity of (disadvantaged) neighbourhoods to mobilize around crime, let alone the impact on the pervasiveness of crime. The research is far more far more optimistic on the impact of targeted social developmental approaches that address the root causes of crime in "at-risk" children and youth.[4]

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2 Oscar Newman. 1972. *Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City*. New York: MacMillan, p. 3

3 Stephen Schneider. 2007. *Refocusing Crime Prevention. Collective Action and the Quest for Community*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

4 See Lawrence Sherman et al. 1997. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising. A report to the United States Congress.* Prepared for the National Institute of Justice: Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice

There is a profound consensus among criminologists that the most effective approach to controlling crime in society is to address the root causes of criminality within at-risk children and youth through targeted development-based interventions combined with strong universal institutions, in particular the family, the school, and the local community. Irvin Waller and Daniel Sansfaçon cite the following development strategies as most promising when intervening in the lives of at-risk children, youth, and their parents: pre-school and after-school remedial programs to increase the cognitive and social abilities of children; increasing support and assistance to parents; home visitations by professionals to help improve the parenting skills of young, single, low-income mothers; improving the cognitive and social competency skills of children and youth; improving the self-esteem and social integration capacity of children and young people; organizing school and after-school educational and recreational activities; providing incentives to youth and adults to complete secondary studies by offering educational and financial assistance; and providing support and even therapy for families of first-time young offenders.[5]

While focus group participants touched on the centrality of the family, the community, and the school in both crime causation and social problem solving approaches to crime causation, they were also explicit in their criticism of another institution that is central to crime prevention: the local government, and in this case, the Halifax Regional Municipal Government.

While most focus group participants acknowledged the significant challenges that face any level of government in combating crime, they were very critical of the lack of leadership the HRM government has shown in promoting, implementing and coordinating proactive approaches to addressing crime and violence. The focus group cited the absence of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy, a shortage of funding for crime prevention initiatives, the lack of training of government personnel as well as community members, a paucity of community outreach in relation to crime prevention, as well as government-erected obstacles to the use of HRM facilities (e.g., schools, community centres, etc.) by community groups.

If true, these criticisms are particularly dire for local crime prevention efforts in the HRM because municipal governments are perhaps the best placed level of government to foster community safety programs. Despite the primacy of the individual citizen and community groups in crime prevention, there will always be a role for the state. Municipal governments may be the most important level of government in promoting crime prevention because they are closest to local communities, are responsible for urban policing and law enforcement, and are have jurisdiction over other policy areas that can impact on crime and criminality, such as schools, recreational facilities, community (economic) development, social housing, as well as urban planning and design.

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5 Irvin Waller and Daniel Sansfaçon. 2000. *Investing Wisely in Crime Prevention.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The four greatest roles that governments can play in crime prevention are: (1) to implement policies and programs that address the root causes of crime, targeting at-risk families, children, youth, and communities, (2) to help build capacity in neighbourhoods to undertake local initiatives to prevent crime, (3) to play a coordinating role among the many disparate actors relevant to crime control and prevention, and (4) to complement citizen-based preventative approaches to crime through the traditional criminal justice system (cops, courts, and corrections).

At the local level, municipal governments have little or no control over criminal law and legislation. However, municipal governments are responsible for local policing. As such, they play a tremendous role in crime prevention through policing and law enforcement policies, programs, and approaches. In the absence of any leadership from the Mayor or City Council, it is usually the local police that sets the tone for crime prevention; a police department that is not committed to crime prevention and community policing can undermine any progressive policies and programs established by a municipal government (or other levels of government for that matter). Yet, the role to be played in crime prevention by local governments transcends policing, for crime prevention and control is much more than policing and law enforcement.

Perhaps the most important role to be played by governments in preventing crime – whether at the national, state/provincial, or municipal level – is to invest in the social, educational and economic health of its constituents and communities. Certainly, the greatest social development role to be played by governments is addressing at-risk children and families. The most ill-advised approach a government can take towards crime is to exclusively pursue a traditional criminal justice approach to crime control.

In closing, the comments provided by focus group participants very much echoed what the crime prevention research indicates is essential to crime control in society: caring and watchful communities that support vulnerable families and foster the strength of universal institutions, such as schools. These long-term social developmental principles should be complemented with short-term, situational crime prevention approaches that limit the opportunity for crime to take occur in a particular time and place. While local communities are the vortex around which the winds of crime prevention swirl, the HRM government must assume a leadership role in reaching out to and mobilizing local communities around crime prevention and community safety. In their recommendations, the focus group emphasized the development of a comprehensive, short and long-term crime prevention strategy in which the HRM, and the Mayor's office in particular, can play a central coordinating role.

FOCUS GROUP 4: STREET CRIME
CO-FACILITATED BY OWEN CARRIGAN AND CHRIS MURPHY
AND REPORTED BY CHRIS MURPHY

FOCUS GROUP PARCIPANTS

1. Owen Carrigan (Facilitator) Retired president & professor SMU.and member Provincial task force on Crime and Public Safety
2. Chris Murphy: Project Researcher: professor Kings College & Dalhousie University
3. Marcus James – Youth Services HPL and Mayor Advisory Committee
4. Scott Donovan – Architect and planner
5. Stewart Sparks – Dartmouth community activist
6. Cst J. Bennett, HRPS (Graffiti and gangs)
7. Kathleen Jennex – Director Coverdale
8. Sarah Maclaren – Executive Director LOVE
9. Helen Beaver – Youth Attendance Center, HRM
10. Darcy Harvey – Community Action on Homelessness
11. John Giannokos – Sackville community activist
12. Barabara Nehiley – HRM Social Policy Development
13. Cst Mike Cochrane – RCMP Street Crime Unit
14. Michael Poworoznyk – Metro Turning Point Centre

The issue of street crime in HRM was the topic discussed by this focus group. The street crimes addressed by the group focused on a variety of behaviours such as teenage prostitution/strippers, vandalism, graffiti, drug use and drug dealing, and group robbery and assaults (swarming). A number of the group members represented community service providers in various programs for youth and they brought their clienteles' and agencies' perspective to the discussion. Those in the group with broader community and government affiliations tended to be more concerned about the offenders' negative public or community impact.

The group met three times, though the third meeting involved only 3 members from the original group. While there was good group interaction and a sharing of ideas and experiences, the make-up of the group ensured that the discussion was broad and the opinions diverse. For clarity purposes the discussion on the problems of street crime can be generally categorized into two different kinds of approaches to the issues.

1. **The Preventative or Treatment Oriented Response:** discussion and analysis for this group was focused on the young offender as a victim**,** as product of poverty, racism, drugs, homelessness, lack of opportunity and unavailability of program services.

2. **The Public Safety or Correctional Responses:** discussion focused on offenders and their impact on victims and the public harm caused to community safety and

property, and they focused mainly on responses that would prevent deter, apprehend and correct or punish offenders.

The report treats their analysis of the problems and their recommendations to address the problem, separately;

1) The Community Based Prevention and Treatment Analysis and Responses:

Causes: This discussion focused on the various *social causes* of these behaviours, the youth in question were seen as either potentially or already *young offenders*; involved in assaults, drugs, petty crimes: Discussion tended towards generalities, but offenders were seen as products of or caused by:

1. **Poverty and inequality**. The location of urban youth crime and the front line services suggest that young offender disproportionately come from poor and often visible minority communities.

2. **Failures of parents, community and schools**: not unrelated to power and inequality, again little concrete analysis offered, but some argued that parents and some communities do not provide adequate direction or support to young people.

3. **Schools:** seen as not addressing the problems and the needs of poorer marginalized students, increasing their frustration and the likelihood of their doing poorly and dropping out of school.

4. **Drugs:** seen as direct cause of much youth crime, either because of abuse or addiction or because they are dealing drugs for financial reasons. (Some street assault and robbery is motivated by need for drug money or turf conflicts)

5. **Youth media culture**: here the argument was that some aspects of youth violent and drug oriented subculture contribute to violence; for example, gangster rap was cited as not a cause but a bad influence.

6. **Mental health issues that results in behavioural conflicts are n**ot being dealt with apparently but are handled by default by the criminal justice system which cannot and does not address their needs appropriately.

7. **Lack of positive alternatives** to crime reflected in limited recreation options and alternatives

Recommended Responses

1. **School Based Programs** for troubled youth: the participants believe that community schools can and should do more with troubled youth.

2. **More Drug Treatment Programs**: drug treatment is not easily available for youth, with waiting lists to get in, so an obvious need for more spaces and resources.

3. **School and Community Recreation Programs: community** schools should be open at night, and there should be more community recreations programs, not just sports but art & crafts etc.

4. **Community Based Employment and Training Programs:** recognition that good employment opportunities would be helpful, but some youth need life and skills training to get good jobs, so there is a need for both.

5. **Mental Health Treatment: N**ot enough treatment services are available for those with mental health issues; too often they are treated as criminals whereas treatment not punishment is required; there is a need for special courts.

6. **Others**: Community support for single parents with youth at risk

2) Public Safety and Corrective Responses

While there was less time spent discussing this subgroup's agenda, the members expressed strong concerns about street crime such as swarming, graffiti and minor street theft and its negative effects on the community and public safety in general.

Causes: While causes were acknowledged to be social, this group said there was also other more immediate factors, such as a lack of prenatal discipline and guidance, community and school not active enough in prevention, but especially the lack of effective criminal justice response to young offenders, who have no fear of the consequences of committing offences, as result of the courts, weak sentences and the YCJA.

Recommendations:

1. **Community Empowerment**: more support for community programs in general but participants emphasized community crime protection programs like *citizens on patrol* (cited as a good program with potential to do more).

2. **More Enforcement and Punishment:** theses action should be endorsed when other options fail, especially for repeat and violent offenders; it is necessary to provide some negative consequence for those who need it, also it may deter some young offenders, and it gives the public a scene of justice.

3. **Change the Young offenders Act**; to allow police and courts more punitive options, as some young offenders need corrections.

General Recommendation:

Preamble

One issue that was clear is that those involved in "community based" prevention, treatment, housing and employment programs or service agencies feel that their programs do make a difference, but that they are limited by a number of problems such as a) inadequate funding, b)limited and short term funding c) excessive accountability and paper work. But there is also a real need to fund and run programs at the **community level**. There is **lack of co-ordination and consultation between** community programs and linkage to other community and government services. The point being that community prevention and community justice programs are often operating in the "community" or the various communities of HRM – independently of each other, sometimes in competition, sometimes in duplication of each other. They are introduced to meet the priorities of a provincial or federal government department or agency and not necessarily the local community's needs or priorities. HRM as a region or municipal government has no overall public safety and prevention plan or priorities and very few of its own programs.

Recommendation: HRM Community Public Safety and Crime Prevention Council/s:

It was felt by some of the group that it might be wise in the future to look at some sort community or neighbourhood based public safety and services council established for HRM, a council, representative of the communities or neighbourhoods, and their services and agencies. This council would act as a sort of advisory or decision making group that would have influence and help establish **public or community safety and crime prevention program needs and priorities in HRM a**nd provide **coordination of different programs for different levels of governments.** The point being that public safety and justice program in the community should reflect the communities' needs as defined by the community; this community council could do this and help insure cooperation among governments, community and all the agencies involved.

Conclusions:

This group's discussion shows that how you define problems determines how you see both the causes of the problems and more importantly the solutions. It also demonstrates that these two approaches are often in conflict with one another. A world of limited public and political interest and resources often means favouring one cause and response over another. For example, more police will mean less money for other community solution; fund one kind of community response then you don't fund another!

However, given that the problem of street crime has many dimensions and aspects, to deal adequately with the problem will need a range of response options: from broad social prevention such as investment in healthy communities and families to more targeted community prevention programs and services, as well as a range of criminal justice based responses from restorative justice to detention and corrections. No one of these responses is wholly adequate nor do they work effectively without each other.

While the group suggest that we need more resources and programs, we have in fact already an impressive number and variety of programs and projects hard at work in HRM. A number of them are doing impressive work with encouraging results. However we do not appear to have a systemic response that is coherent and integrated. Instead we operate as different and distinct level of government and competitive communities with different agendas and priorities, programs often in competition, sometime in conflict, and seldom partners in a "common enterprise". While we need varied responses and programs, we need them be focused on some generally agreed on targets, as part of some coherent regional plan which draws on various community and governments resources and efforts in way the compliments and enhances the overall effectives of our current inadequate and fractured response.

PS: We did not adequately explore or address the biggest street crime problem of public concern, **individual and group street assault (swarming) and robbery**. This I suggest was in part because the group had other priorities, lacked adequate information and expertise and were reluctant to contribute to a punitive response to young often minority youth who they tended to see more as victims than offenders.

FOCUS GROUP 5: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY
Reported and Facilitated by Stephen Kimber

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

1. Darrell Beaton, Inspector, RCMP
2. Valerie Pottie Bunge, Department of Justice, Policy and Planning
3. Tony Burbidge, Deputy Chief, HRPS
4. Richard Cuthbertson, Reporter, The Daily News
5. Michael Fleury, reporter, The Coast
6. Pat Gorham, Director, Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program
7. Phonse Jessome, CBC
8. Rocky Jones, lawyer and community activist
9. Stephen Kimber – journalist and professor Kings College (facilitator)
10. Dan Leger, senior editor, Mail Star and Chronicle-Herald
11. Denise Levangie, special projects, HRL
12. Steve Perrott, ex-police officer and professor MSVU
13. Orest Ulan, retired, CBC

Our group was asked to consider how we think and talk about violence and public safety in our community, and then ask ourselves what Halifax Regional Municipality can and should do to change that.

It isn't as simple as it may sound. For starters, there is the reality that any discussion of the social construction of violence inevitably spills over into areas that have already been assigned to other focus groups: the Downtown bar scene, street crime, troubled youth, minority communities, etc. And any conversation about how violence is portrayed and understood just as inevitably leads to a discussion about the role of the media. As interesting and important as that discussion can be — and we certainly did discuss it — we understand our role is not to instruct members of the media in how to do their jobs but to come up with concrete recommendations to help Halifax Regional Municipality develop strategies to deal with violence, the threat of violence and the fear of violence.

We met twice — for an hour on June 4, 2007, and for two additional hours on June 18, 2007. Our discussions were wide-ranging, the opinions varied, thoughtful and, we hope, constructive. Though we came to our discussion from many different perspectives — media, police, justice system, academia, interested citizenry — there were a number of basic points on which we agreed:

1. Violence is a community issue, not just a matter for governments or police forces to deal with.
2. We need a communications strategy that deals with violence, but also with the fear of violence.
3. Comprehensive, timely, quality information, well disseminated, is critical to the success of any strategy to deal with violence and the fear of violence.

Building on those basic agreements, we are pleased to forward the following recommendations for the consideration of the Roundtable:

1) Halifax Regional Municipality needs a new communications strategy for dealing with violence and the fear of violence.

- The goal of such a strategy should be to provide proactive, comprehensive, comprehensible, contextual and useful information to citizens on crime and violence in our community.
- The strategy should include and involve all of the key players involved in community safety, including police, justice officials, educators, mental health professionals, community groups, youth, businesses and citizens.
- While continuing to provide complete and transparent statistics on the incidence of crime in our community, the police should attempt to provide context to help citizens understand the scale of the problems and their own vulnerability to crime or violence. Where are crimes happening? What sorts of crimes are most prevalent?
- Other agencies, departments and organizations involved in justice issues — such as restorative justice, community-based anti-crime efforts such as those in Uniacke Square and on Spring Garden Road, etc. — need to make the public aware of their various programs and initiatives. The municipality should take the lead role in coordinating these efforts to make sure that these "solutions-oriented" messages reach the larger community.
- One of the goals of the strategy should be to foster an understanding of the context and social causes of crime in the community, and the various options for dealing with them.
- The strategy should take advantage of tools like the Internet to communicate with citizens. A "safe community" citizens' website, for example, might include practical information on how to protect your home, regular reports from the police chief on community safety issues and backgrounders on how other communities are dealing with similar problems, as well as user-friendly, interactive blogs to encourage citizens to communicate with officials and with each other.
- The strategy should also incorporate, as appropriate, paid advertising in conventional media to enable the municipality to get comprehensive, contextual information on crime and violence issues to all citizens.

2) Halifax Regional Municipality should develop a social marketing campaign designed to positively influence community attitudes and values — respect, responsibility, accountability — around issues of violence and crime.

- The municipality's own recent successful campaign to encourage citizens to recycle could serve as a model for the proposed initiative.
- Such a campaign could involve community leaders, business people, educators, entertainers, athletes and other role models, who could serve as champions for the initiative, especially among young people.

- Such a campaign should include real-life stories about responsibility and redemption to show positive change is possible.
- Such a campaign should focus on practical things we as individuals can do to make our community safer.
- Such a campaign should involve non-traditional partners and use non-traditional means of communication to ensure that its message reaches those who need it most.

3) Halifax Regional Municipality should use the current Roundtable process to develop a continuing community dialogue around these issues.

- The Roundtable process itself should be as open, transparent and inclusive as possible in order to help citizens understand not only the issues but also their individual roles in dealing with violence in our community.
- The Roundtable should develop a series of measurable goals for making our city safer, and the municipality should report regularly on progress in achieving those goals.
- The municipality should undertake research to find out about innovative efforts in other communities to deal with similar issues — the restorative justice program in Minnesota, for example, or the crime prevention website in the United Kingdom —and then organize future conferences and workshops to showcase what we can learn from them.
- While recognizing the dangers of "meeting fatigue," we believe existing forums such as community councils and the police chief's annual neighbourhood town hall meetings should be encouraged to frame and focus public discussion around the issue of developing safer communities.

FOCUS GROUP 6: ORGANIZED CRIME AND COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL ISSUES
FACILITATED AND REPORTED BY KERRY CHAMBERS

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

1. Dr. Wanda Bernard – Dalhousie School of Social Work
2. Donnie Bennett – Direction 180 Methadone Clinic
3. Inspector Brian Brennan – RCMP Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement
4. Rev. John den Hollander – Salvation Army Offender Reintegration Counselling
5. Jim Donovan – Halifax Regional Municipality Planning Department
6. Scott Lekas – Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre
7. Staff Sergeant Peter McTiernan – RCMP Integrated Special Enforcement
8. David Meadows – Atlantic Public Prosecutions Service of Canada
9. Justin Murray – Insurance Bureau of Canada
10. Rene Ross – Stepping Stone Program
11. Fred Sanford – Safe Communities, Department of Justice, Nova Scotia

Two focus groups pertaining to organized crime and community based social issues were held June 4, 2007 and June 18, 2007. Representatives from HRM, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, RCMP, community agencies and the business sector took part in both sessions. An individual from the Dalhousie School of Social work also participated in the second group. Representatives from Nova Scotia Legal Aid, the Nova Scotia Seniors' Secretariat and a community-based advocacy group could not attend the sessions, but have been provided the opportunity to comment on observations made in the groups.

Problem Identification

Participants in the first group identified three major issues associated with Organized Crime and Community-Based Issues in HRM:

- the 'demand' aspect of illicit drugs;
- sex-trade work;
- offender integration and / or socially isolated individuals.

The participants found it too difficult to rank the three issues in order of importance. Furthermore, they felt that poverty and racism are the *root causes* of much illicit drug use in HRM, entry into sex-trade work, and difficulties offenders and marginalized persons arriving in HRM face when attempting to integrate into mainstream society. Finally, a representative from the RCMP explained that 'organized crime' is a broad term that encompasses small groups of individuals in addition to well-organized syndicates of criminals with hierarchical structures.

It is also important to note that the following summaries understate the complexity of each issue as discussed in the groups. A more detailed account is attached at appendix A.

Poverty and Racism

The participants felt that the basis for most illicit drug use, sex-trade work and inability for persons to become integrated into the community was poverty, racism and the problems associated with each. Chronic unemployment, a lack of adequate housing and an overall inability to live daily life as those in mainstream society causes frustration, anger, hopelessness and despair. In many cases, racism against African-Canadian and Aboriginal residents of HRM understandably increases these feelings. As a response, many turn to alcohol and drugs, sex-trade work and / or crime. Violent behaviour often follows. The community aggravates the situation by stigmatizing the homeless, substance abusers, those involved in sex-trade work and offenders. The community's response reduces pressure on all levels of government to provide adequate resources for addictions treatment, to establish safe working environments for sex-trade workers, create programs for offender integration, to eliminate racism and so forth6. The participants felt that much of the community's response was due to ignorance and a lack of empathy. However, they also felt that myths and misconceptions concerning all of the issues are somewhat institutionalized at the municipal and provincial levels.

Illicit Drugs

With regard to illicit drugs, several participants revealed that drug use is rising in HRM, that much of the increased usage involves highly addictive drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine (often mixed together) and that organized groups have capitalized on this situation by entering into street to middle level drug dealing. They further explained the situation has been exacerbated by a shortage of resources for drug education, addictions treatment, provision of services for persons at risk and drug enforcement. Representatives from the RCMP stated that no 'meth' labs currently exist in HRM. However, they considered it a matter of time before these labs would be established, and that it would create considerable problems for HRM and law enforcement agencies.

Sex-Trade Work

A few participants noted that while sex-trade workers are often drug addicted, most are forced into sex-trade work because of poverty, unemployment and an inability to secure affordable housing. Furthermore, organized groups have continuously sought to entice women and men and recently teenage girls and boys into sex-trade work, at times to move them outside the province. The overall number of sex-trade workers appears to be on the rise in HRM, which has increased demands for stricter law enforcement. When combined with a Supreme Court of Canada ruling on solicitation an unintended

6 For example, Elizabeth Fry Society recently moved into a facility in a Dartmouth Neighbourhood. The new facility will dramatically augment the organization's capacity to assist female offenders reintegrating into HRM. However, the organization faced resistance from the community and allegedly one municipal councillor.

consequence has been sex-trade workers relocating to residential neighbourhoods and / or working alone, which poses a grave threat to the worker. As a result, community complaints and demands for police enforcement have increased, as has brutal violence among many workers. The key issue arising from the focus groups involved street level sex-trade workers, who are more likely to face poverty, drug addiction and are more vulnerable to violence and harm. Street level workers may also draw more attention in residential neighbourhoods leading to complaints and demands for increased enforcement.

Offender/ Socially Isolated Individuals' Integration

Several participants explained that persons who migrate to HRM and / or offenders often have no strong positive social networks in the city, which leads to difficulties in their attempts to integrate or reintegrate into the community. They further pointed out that many have substance abuse problems, fail to quickly find adequate housing and have problems finding employment. Poor coordination of health and housing services aggravate the situation. Community attitudes of 'not in my backyard' have also decreased the potential to provide housing for homeless youth / adults, offenders and / or the mentally ill preventing the opportunity for them to integrate into non-marginalized communities. Few programs exist between corrections and community agencies and those that do are badly coordinated. The participants felt all of these issues meant that many coming to HRM to live and / or offenders attempting reintegration might join or return to maladaptive networks creating the possibility for increased crime and violence.

Strategic Responses

The participants felt that one of the first steps in developing appropriate strategies for organized crime and community-based issues was to first examine other jurisdictions' successes and determine the appropriateness of adoption for HRM. They also thought that any strategic response should combine both prevention and intervention. The participants cautioned that a strong and sustained commitment is required. The current process will raise expectations and cynicism and apathy could develop if HRM does not act or if a change in political leadership undermines the process. Finally, the group felt policies should be implemented with short-term and long-term objectives. The initial successes need to be widely publicized.

The groups' proposed strategic responses are listed below. As with problem identification, the group found it too difficult to prioritize the strategies and they are accordingly not presented in any order of significance.

Problem: Absence (lack) of communication and coordination among municipal and provincial institutions, stakeholders, police and community groups who share a common interest and goals.

The focus groups provided for many the first opportunity to network with other professionals who share a common interest and could improve the situation in HRM by working more closely together.

Response: HRM should coordinate and facilitate ongoing networking and discussion of existing and emerging issues among representatives from: the RCMP, Provincial and Municipal governments, community service agencies, community organizations and individuals who share an interest and can contribute to changes in Organized Crime and Community Based Social Issues in HRM.

Problem: There is a lack of coordination among government institutions designing programs and the agencies delivering them. In addition, many programs are currently delivered under a 'one size fits' all approach.

Response: HRM needs to work with the provincial government and community agencies to promote coordination of programs. Government agencies and community agencies need to begin using a community level holistic approach that would identify personal issues first and then address them through integrated service delivery. Consequently, the provision of services needs to be coordinated among community agencies, municipal and governmental agencies and community treatment specialists.

Problem: Increasing drug use, potential emergence of methamphetamine labs and increased methamphetamine use and declining resources for agencies assisting the drug addicted.

Response: HRM needs to work together with the province to increase awareness among youth of the dangers of drug use, in particular cocaine and methamphetamine. Those who are drug addicted might be encouraged to take part in such education.

HRM must work with the Federal and Provincial governments to increase funding and resources so that agencies that come into contact with drug addicted individuals can reinforce existing programs and establish new initiatives to deal with drug addiction at the street level.

The RCMP and HRM law enforcement must be given more resources to reduce the availability of drugs, and to prevent the establishment of crack cocaine houses and methamphetamine labs in the city.

HRM must work with the province to establish a drug treatment court model that involves a range of governmental departments, community agencies and community representatives. The objectives of the drug treatment court are to refer offenders who qualify to drug rehabilitation and community integration in lieu of incarceration.

Problem: Law enforcement has pushed street-level sex-trade workers into residential neighbourhoods, which has led to community complaints and further enforcement. Sex-trade workers are facing increasingly unsafe working environments and violence.

Response: HRM must create safe working conditions for sex-trade workers where they are less likely to encounter violence. It was noted in the group that a safe

'stroll area' would not be an appropriate response. Instead, there is a need for decriminalization or new policies with regard to enforcement. Agencies that work with and assist sex-trade workers must have full input into any policy decisions before implementation.

Problem: **A lack of affordable housing or interim housing for offenders and marginalized persons arriving in HRM increases homelessness and can prevent integration. It should be noted that gentrification of marginalized neighbourhoods is adding to the problem.**

Response: A requirement exists for affordable and interim housing, and other forms of shelter.

Problem: **There is currently little awareness and knowledge of existing services for vulnerable populations and some agencies that provide assistance.**

Response: Create awareness and knowledge of existing services. A 'street survival' guide pamphlet that used to be available in HRM should be reintroduced. A 24-hour help line would be very helpful.

Problem: **Myths and misapprehension exist among the general public with regard to poverty, racism, homophobia, sex-trade work and offender reintegration. This leads to a lack of empathy and understanding while giving rise to what are most often unwarranted fears.**

Response: HRM should design and implement communications strategies that increase awareness and knowledge of issues surrounding poverty, homelessness, sex-trade work, offender integration, racism and homophobia. Three target populations would consist of youth and students, the general public, and municipal and provincial employees.

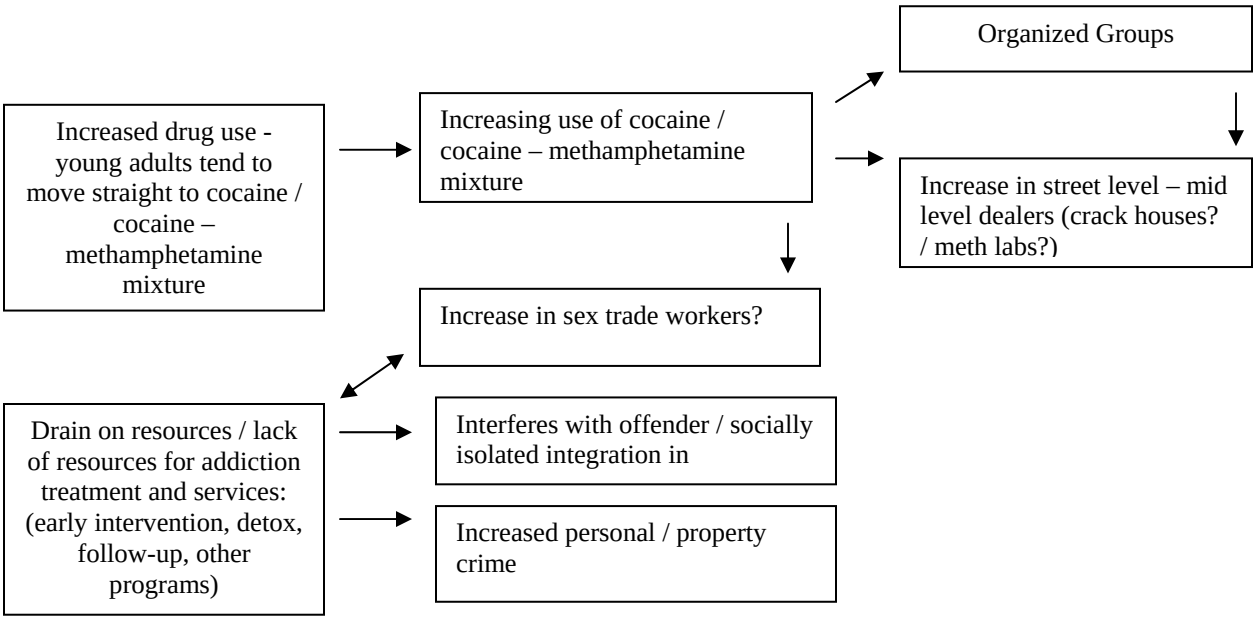
Intended outcomes would be to create empathy, and reduce fear and violence directed at these groups.

HRM should initiate programs to move communities to proactive involvement in community-based issues based on knowledge and understanding and not fear and misapprehension. Such community-based programs need to be coordinated with initiatives to move those involved in the issues to become involved in the programs. This could create trust and understanding between the two groups and enhance the possibility of integration into the community.

Appended: ORGANIZED CRIME AND COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL ISSUES

Detailed Problem Identification

Community Based Issue: Illicit Drug Use / Demand



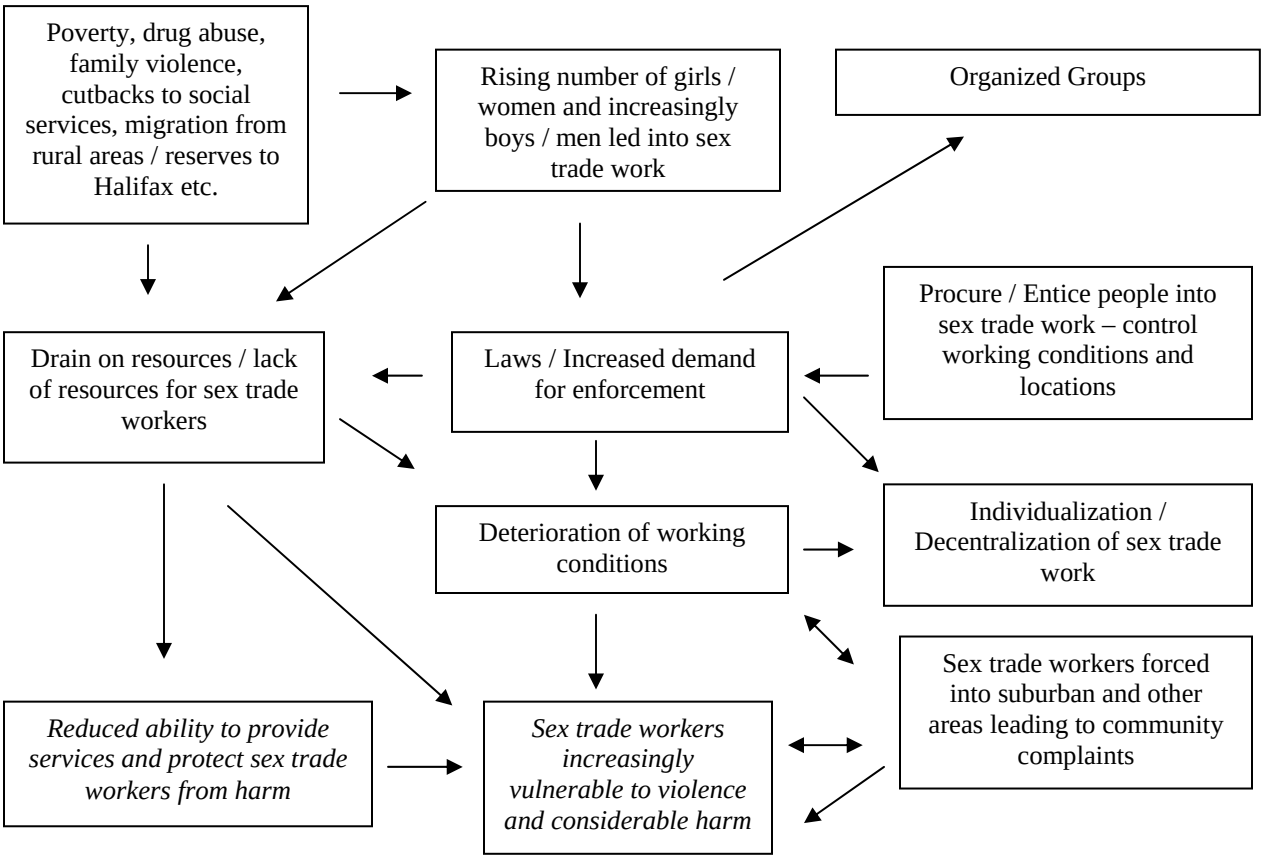
Key Issues: Lack of resources; lack of communication / coordination between various stakeholder groups, police, community leaders and so forth.
Related Issues: Lack of knowledge, understanding and empathy for persons addicted to drugs.

Illicit Drug Use / Demand Side

Organized groups of criminals respond to the demand from rising drug use and / or the increasing tendency for young adults to use cocaine and cocaine / methamphetamine. The rise in cocaine and cocaine / methamphetamine use also increases the street level to middle level dealers, who may or may not be arranged in organized groups. It may also increase the presence of crack houses and methamphetamine labs. Cocaine, and particularly, methamphetamine are very addictive substances. Increased demand for addictions services places an added strain on existing addiction services resources, which are already stretched thin. The inability to deal with drug addiction may lead some to enter the sex trade and / or become involved in personal or property crimes. Those who are coming from outside Halifax as individuals with pre-existing problems and / or criminal offenders may already have a drug addiction or begin using drugs to overcome social isolation, deal with a lack of employment opportunities and so forth.

The lack of resources for drug education, addictions treatment / services and drug enforcement does not help reduce and may actually increase drug usage. A lack of communication and coordination between stakeholders, police and community groups exacerbates the problems at all levels. There is potentially a lack of knowledge among potential drug users concerning methamphetamine in particular. A general lack of understanding and empathy for people battling addictions lessens public pressure for additional resources for addiction services and treatment.

Community Based Issue: Sex Trade Work



Key Issues: Street level sex trade workers most visible (leading to more complaints) and more vulnerable to harm; Street level sex trade workers more likely to be in poverty and / or drug addicted; Lack of resources; Lack of communication / coordination between various stakeholder groups, police, community leaders and so forth.
Related Issues: Existence of client demand, predispositions of clients etc.; Lack of knowledge and understanding of causes of sex trade work and empathy for sex trade workers.

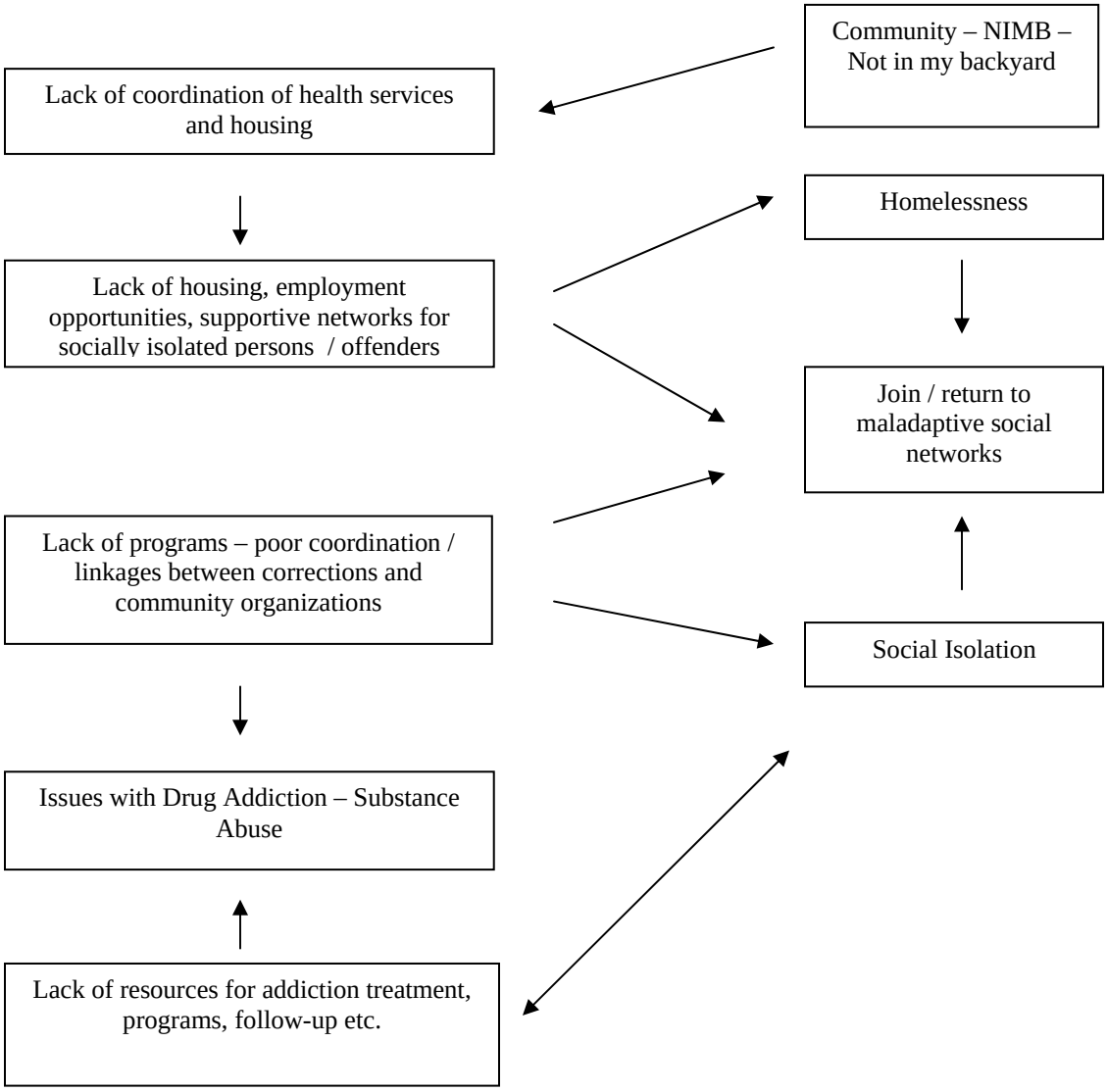
Sex Trade Work

Poverty, drug addiction, family violence, migration involving social isolation and so on increases the number of persons who are enticed or forced into sex trade work. Organized groups of criminals see an opportunity to procure / entice people into sex trade work and control the working conditions and locations of the workers. This may increase the number of people who enter into sex trade work. The increasing number of sex trade workers and cutbacks to social services places pressure on existing resources, which are already stretched thin. The rise in the number of sex trade workers also leads to increased demands for law enforcement, which forces sex trade workers to move into different areas of HRM, and this in turn may lead to additional pressures on police to crack down. A Supreme Court of Canada ruling on solicitation has led to an individualization / decentralization of some sex trade work. This has led some to move

off the streets and into residential neighbourhoods, again increasing the possibility of community complaints and demands for police enforcement. A drain on resources, enforcement and forcing sex trade workers into residential neighbourhoods and other spaces leads to a deterioration of working conditions. For example, women who might have worked the streets in small groups thereby providing some level of protection may be forced to work alone. The deterioration in working conditions increasingly exposes the sex trade worker to violence and harm, possibly death. The drain on resources reduces any institutional or organizational ability to respond to this situation, which also increases their vulnerability.

The key issues involve street level sex trade workers who are more likely to face drug addiction, poverty and are more vulnerable to violence and harm. Street level workers may also draw more attention in residential neighbourhoods, leading to complaints and demands for enforcement. A lack of resources for addictions treatment and assistance for sex trade workers combined with a lack of communication and coordination between stakeholders, police and community groups exacerbates the problems at all levels. A lack of knowledge of the underlying causes leading people into sex trade work and little or no empathy for sex trade workers reduces public pressure for resources and calls to create a safe working environment for sex trade workers. Very little attention is given to clients of sex trade workers and the role they play in the above scenario.

Community Based Issue: Socially Isolated Persons / Offender Reintegration



Key Issues: Lack of programs and coordination of services; Lack of communication / coordination between various stakeholder groups, police, community leaders and so forth.
Related Issues:Community acceptance of group homes, halfway houses etc; Lack of empathy for socially isolated persons, offenders etc; Mental Health problems

Socially Isolated Persons / Offender Reintegration

Individuals who migrate to HRM from rural areas or First Nations reserves and / or offenders without strong social networks may have difficulty becoming integrated or reintegrated into the community. Two separate populations could have different problems adjusting to life in HRM that may require different consideration. A primary issue for both is drug addiction and other substance abuse. Those who have an addiction may become socially isolated from the mainstream community and join or return to

maladaptive social networks. On the other hand, social isolation often leads individuals into drug and substance abuse. Consequently, a lack of resources for addiction treatment, counselling, follow-up and so forth will exacerbate the issues for those with substance abuse problems. In addition, a shortage of housing, employment opportunities and the inability to connect with strong support networks could lead both migrants and offenders to become homeless (either living on the streets, staying with friends for as long as they can or seeking out temporary shelter) and join or return to maladaptive social networks. Poor coordination of health and housing services will aggravate these problems. Community attitudes of 'not in my backyard' will also worsen the ability to provide housing for homeless youth / adults and facilities for offenders to reintegrate into the community. Housing and other facilities in the 'marginalized' areas of the city will provide areas where maladaptive social networks can be established and maintained. Finally, a lack of coordinated programs between corrections and community facilities will leave offenders vulnerable and could reduce the possibility of reintegration.

The key issues appear to be a lack of resources for addictions treatment, a shortage or deficiency in programs and the coordination of services and poor communication / coordination between various stakeholder groups, police, community leaders and so forth. Secondary to these are community acceptance of homes designed to integrate migrants and offenders into the community and a lack of empathy for the socially isolated, mentally ill or offender.

FOCUS GROUP 7: PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES
FACILITATED AND REPORTED BY LAUGHLIN RUTT

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

1. Laughlin Rutt, Human Resources, Halifax Regional Municipality
2. Marianela Fuertes, Community Justice Society
3. Gordon King, Micmac Native Friendship Centre
4. Shayla Jamieson, Gay and Bisexual Project
5. Hugo Dann, Gay Men's Health Coordinator
6. Mira Musanovic, Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association
7. Jason Skinner, YMCA
8. Tracey Jones, Halifax Public Library
9. Lee Cohen, Immigration Lawyer

This focus group discussed violence and public Safety from the perspective of minority and marginalized social groups whose voices are frequently omitted from general accounts of crime and violence, save in a negative manner. Statistics show that many crimes in this group are never reported. A number of solutions were put forward that actually crossed what is often perceived as differences between the participating minorities. Still other solutions were unique in nature. Two separate focus groups were held on June 4th, 2007 and June 18th, 2007 respectively. The following persons attended either one or both of the focus groups on public safety and security in minority communities (see addendum).

Executive Summary

The focus groups recognize the relative lack of safety and security in minority groups compared to the general population has foundation in a lack of cultural competency within the Halifax Region. This is caused by a number of factors which includes systemic barriers, systemic fears and a lack of education and understanding. Generally speaking the community of Halifax Region is not prepared for the reality that in the sum total of membership, the group of minorities often exceeds what might be considered the "so-called" general population. Halifax Region has not embraced the true nature of its population. Persons in minority groups have been perceived as being of lesser value and even as threats. Therefore, their safety and security needs have not been recognized and valued in the same interest relative to other members of the community.

Not all the responsibility for this situation lies with the municipal government. Other levels of government including the school boards have not kept pace with the reality of diversity. A stronger emphasis must be placed on embracing diversity and fostering cultural competency. Diversity being a top down initiative requires the involvement and leadership of the highest levels of administration and requires the will of elected officials.

There is certainly a role for the Halifax Regional Municipality to play in the increase of safety and security in minority communities as well as the reduction of violence and the reduction of the number of victims among members of minority communities. This role includes active participation in the direction and support of programs and secondly as a liaison and advocate with other levels of government and administrations.

The Problems

1. Immigrants are not a homogeneous group. It is often easier to look at a group with all the same lens. This is especially true regarding immigrants. The reality being that immigrants are not all the same and many have very different cultures, beliefs and traits. Too often this is not recognized. Attention is paid to negative situations that are not tied to culture but are related to culture for an explanation. This creates negative stereotypes that contribute to the lack of cultural competence in the community.

2. Some immigrants have little confidence in authorities. Immigrants come to Canada for a variety of reasons. Some are voluntary while others do so as a result of less than voluntary situations and do so for survival. The place of origin may have had a history of authorities contributing to violence. This includes the police. Therefore, they have no trust in Canadian authorities to offer protection. They are not familiar with the Canadian legal system and may not be able to communicate with the police.

3. Some immigrants have language barriers. Not all immigrants can communicate in English. At times it may be that only certain members of the family have any capability with English. For those individuals with no or little English ability they may have extraordinary waits for any available English courses. They may not be able to communicate with any authorities including police. Immigrants may rely on peers in their own community to be interpreters. This is problematic as the peers may not have the required fluency in English. A second problem is that there may be reluctance for immigrants to share their own private affairs with peers in their own community. Often in situations of emotion it is difficult to speak in a second language and this may impact on some immigrants. A three year waiting period is not uncommon as a wait time for English language training for immigrants.

4. Certain immigrants may not have their credentials recognized. Many immigrants come to Canada after having spent a great deal of human and financial resources in gaining their credentials. When immigrants arrive in Canada they may have situations where their credentials are no longer recognized. Therefore, their social and economic status changes, even within their own community of peers. These people may have difficulty in accepting this new status and can become frustrated in attempting to restore their credentials and self image.

5. Certain minorities have fears of existing support systems. Persons with disabilities and immigrants may have fears of the social systems in place. Reporting situations such as abuse may trigger a social work system response. This system may remove children from a home of immigrants for activities that have been acceptable in the culture from which

they have lived. Persons with disabilities who report abuse may find them removed from their narrow scope of relationships, lose their independence and even be considered for placement in an institution as a way of offering them protection.

6. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans Gendered persons may not report crimes. Certain individuals in this group may not be comfortable with their self image or have not come "out". Therefore, they may not report crimes, especially those crimes related to homophobia. May persons in these groups rely heavily on other advocates and agencies to advocate on their behalf.

7. Historical effects still relevant in African Nova Scotian and Aboriginal communities. The history of the poor treatment of Canada's first people and of African Nova Scotians is deeply remembered in these communities. At times, the "hurt" (that is often misunderstood by others) results in these two communities not having confidence in authorities other than those from within their own community structures. Moreover, the "hurt" has been passed on by older generations. Equally, the more general population appears to pass on their resistance to measures made and suggested to correct their lack of understanding and the "hurt".

8. School system is not prepared for students who are minorities. Students who are members of minority groups often feel isolated. Certain new immigrants attending school have difficulties in understanding the working of the school system as it may not be their past experiences in their own culture. There is no system of orientation that is noticeable. All students have little or no training in cultural competency which is the reality of Nova Scotia today. Teachers seem not to be prepared in this area and often their own lack of cultural competence is readily seen. Some minority students have chosen to hide their true self image to fit the environmental cultural indifference and in some cases hostility.

9. Certain minority communities resist the police presence. Certain minorities do not wish to contact police. When police respond in these communities to an incident or an emergency great concern is exhibited over the police presence. Many fear that bystanders from their own community may exhibit some degree of reprisal or hostility to members of the community who get involved with the police.

10. *Certain persons with disabilities who use caregivers are too dependent on these caregivers.* Some persons with disabilities use caregivers to support their independent living functions. These functions include assistance from in and out of bed, dressing, meal preparation and more. Therefore, these persons with disabilities are dependent on their caregivers. This puts the caregivers in power positions that can lead to all forms of abuse. Often these persons are isolated in their homes with no escape. They have no way to replace the caregiver that removes them from immediate harm. They may be physically confined to their home as a result of physical barriers in the home or no accessible transportation to a safe place.

The Solutions

The focus group came up with a number of solutions or recommendations. A number of these are specific activities that can be followed and are the result of best practices. Still others need further exploration to refine their concepts and activities. The following are the recommendations of the focus group on Public Safety and Security in Minority Communities.

1. **An attendant registry must be established.** This registry would hold the names and qualifications of both caregivers and persons with disabilities who either wished to work as caregivers or hire caregivers. Each individual would have a completed criminal records check. Persons wishing to work as caregivers could register for work. They would be prescreened by those persons administering the registry. It would have a component of casual workers that could be activated as temporary caregivers in sudden situations.

2. **Shelters for both men and women should be reviewed** for the access needs of persons with disabilities and be retrofitted to make this solution to abuse accessible.

3. **Public housing** must be reviewed and renovated as there are few options for persons with disabilities. This has denied persons with disabilities a choice in living options to protect them from dependence.

4. **The trend to make improvements to public transportation** such as Access a Bus and the fleet of low floor buses in Metro Transit must continue. In addition, the crisis in having few or no accessible taxis must be corrected. All three mean options to remove the isolation of persons with disabilities and make escape from abuse situations more possible.

5. **Training, education and other services** for the police force must be improved. Police officers need continuous training to counter act what might be called "hardening experiences". One-time training in cultural competency is not enough. Volunteer opportunities in various minority communities should be explored for police officers to become more sensitive and gain the confidence of communities. This will present a positive image of the police to the public. At the same time the inner culture of police must be changed to ensure a safe place for minority officers, especially those who are gay or lesbian.

6. **School programs must be changed** to place a high emphasis not only on standard education but in cultural competency to better prepare students for their lives as adults. The schools should be used as safe places for students to assemble after hours to take part in activities that will ensure bonding and growth of their own neighbourhood communities. These activities should attempt to cross the cultural boundaries but should still find a place for cultures to flourish and allow members to have pride and improved self image. This would be especially true for

gay and lesbian cultures although not solely for this one culture. These activities should create a sense of local culture and pride that will spread in the community and to the households.

7. **Teachers and other staff in schools as well as other community leaders and volunteers** must have increased training in the area of cultural competency to meet the realities of our diverse community. Teachers who are gay and lesbian must feel safe and respected. School policies must be developed and maintained to ensure all students and staff of all cultures, are respected and valued.

8. **Institute and expand the community justice program.** Such a program would utilize the entire community affected by a crime to discuss the appropriate consequences to persons committing offences with the individual present in a justice circle. The legal court system would be a part of the application and consideration of consequences. Such methods have often worked well in the aboriginal communities in such activities as friendship circles. They might prove to be easily transferable to other cultural communities and foster involvement and belonging.

9. **Examine how persons are released from prisons** and returned to the community and institute methods of involving the community in the rehabilitation of offenders. This would involve safe places for offenders to go so they can have support. Housing and jobs for offenders is a key component in this rehabilitation. A registry should be established to facilitate the employment and housing needs. Support in finding jobs, resume preparation, interview coaching, mentoring and other initiatives to becoming job ready must be readily available. The isolation must be reduced.

10. **Increased language training and education** in the norms of the community are essential. English language training must be accelerated for immigrants and the wait times must be eliminated. Immigrants must also be trained in becoming culturally competent as it is seen as a two way street. The training in cultural competency for immigrants must be offered in their own language to remove the language barrier. A registry of skilled translators must be established to assist immigrants with a wide range of situations so they receive the services as do other Canadians. This is especially true in relation to justice system and administrative situations facing immigrants.

Solution Delivery

The focus groups and the facts around the public safety and security in minority communities show that much must be done in this area. It is not realistic to think that the solutions indicated could reasonably be implemented by existing structures within the municipal government. The focus groups in the other six areas of this initiative on public safety and security might reasonably indicate that, likewise, a significant body of work remains.

The breadth of the recommendations requires diligence and significant “hands on” effort. Human resources will not be enough. Financial resources of the Halifax Regional Municipality are required. The focus groups did not attempt to capture the financial cost of the problems or the recommendations.

Significant research has shown that diversity is a top down initiative. This means a senior level of responsibility within the Regional Municipality to ensure the public safety and security in minority communities.
The structure of the implementation of solutions, while not discussed in the focus groups, requires considerable thought. It will require appropriate consideration by the roundtable and the mayor’s office that has shown interest in this project.

Conclusion

The focus groups on safety and security in minority communities indicated a significant group of problems exist that must be addressed. There is not one single answer or solution to the problems. There is a role to place by Halifax Regional Municipality. It is not solely their responsibility.

Demographics indicate that the population of Halifax Regional Municipality is diverse in nature. The current problems will only get more acute as time goes forward. Therefore the time to act is in the present.

The ability and skills of the residents of Halifax Regional Municipality in the area of cultural competency are certainly linked to the outcomes in the public safety and security of citizens in minority communities.