

Report on:**Making Downtown Winnipeg Safer and Friendlier Part 3****Background:**

The Manitoba Police Commission issued a report on Downtown Safety that was seriously flawed. In response the Point.Powerline has issued two Reports on “Making Downtown Winnipeg Safer and Friendlier”.

Part one of the report focused on the need to have downtown resident involved in identifying potential crime and reporting crime.

Part Two of the Powerline report focused on communications and identified existing resources which could be mobilized to prevent crime. (Parts one and two of the report are attached)

This is Part 3 of the report.

Addressing Root Causes of Poverty and Crime:

Unfortunately there is a tendency to identify stand alone answers to problems such as crime and lack of civility in our downtown. Our experience in tackling crime in our community of North Point Douglas includes a broad cross section of actions. Many of the actions required are itemized in part one and part two of the report on Making Downtown Winnipeg Safer and Friendlier. Part three identifies several actions that can be addressed that can be considered “Root Causes” of crime. These are not all of the root causes but they are ones we feel can be solved if government and civil society focus’ their efforts.

1. School Attendance must be improved.

Low educational achievement is a root cause of poverty and highly linked to criminal behavior. Presently 26% of children enrolled in school in Manitoba are chronically absent. Children and youth who do not attend school regularly are not benefitting from our excellent education system. Children and youth who do not attend school regularly are unable to access jobs and be self supporting in our modern economy. Absenteeism is unevenly distributed with much higher absenteeism in areas of higher poverty levels and very low absenteeism in areas of adequate and higher incomes. If there is any expectation of lowering the poverty rate, poor educational achievement rate and high crime rate our community faces, immediate attention must take place to ensure all children attend school and benefit from the educational system.

The Provincial government has responded to the Powerline on this issue. Minister Kelvin Goertzen has established a high level task force to address the issue of low school attendance levels. The work of the task Force on absenteeism has addressed the need for multi levels of response to the issue. Of particular concern is the high number of youth on probation and the high level of children and youth who have been apprehended who are either not even enrolled in an education program or are chronically absent.

One of the most important actions society can take to reduce poverty in Manitoba and reduce crime in our downtown is to massively improve school attendance.

2. Youth from poorer families must have summer job experience.

Lack of experience in the work force in the teenage years is a major cause of long term unemployment, low income and increased involvement in crime. Most teenagers from families with adequate incomes obtain summer jobs. Most teenagers from low income families, particularly those families with no adult working, do not obtain summer jobs. The lack of experience working, the lack of understanding of how to produce what the employer needs from the employee, the lack of work experience on the resume results in additional barriers to obtaining work as they grow up. Crime statistics identify a higher rate of criminal activity among youth who are not gainfully employed.

Most jobs are in the private sector and it is the responsibility of the private sector to step up and employ massive numbers of inner city and northern youth who are unable to obtain summer jobs. A minimum of 1000 additional summer jobs are required in Winnipeg alone if we want to make a significant reduction in crime in our downtown area. If all private sector employers made a commitment to recruit and employ youth from poorer families we would see both a significant decrease in crime and in poverty. Of course there is a need for the private sector to increase the number of full time jobs for people from poorer communities as well.

3. Fetal Alcoholism Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

FASD is a preventable disability affecting over 500 live births in Manitoba every year. Children and youths with the FASD disability make up a high percentage of youth involved in crime. It is estimated that 90% of youth sentenced to Agassiz Centre for Youth have FASD.

I am told that a significant percentage of the youth involved in recent liquor store thefts have the FASD disability. Back when Manitoba was the car theft capital of Canada, a significant number of young car thieves had FASD.

It is estimated that each baby born with FASD will cost the various, health care, child welfare and justice systems at least an additional one million dollars each.

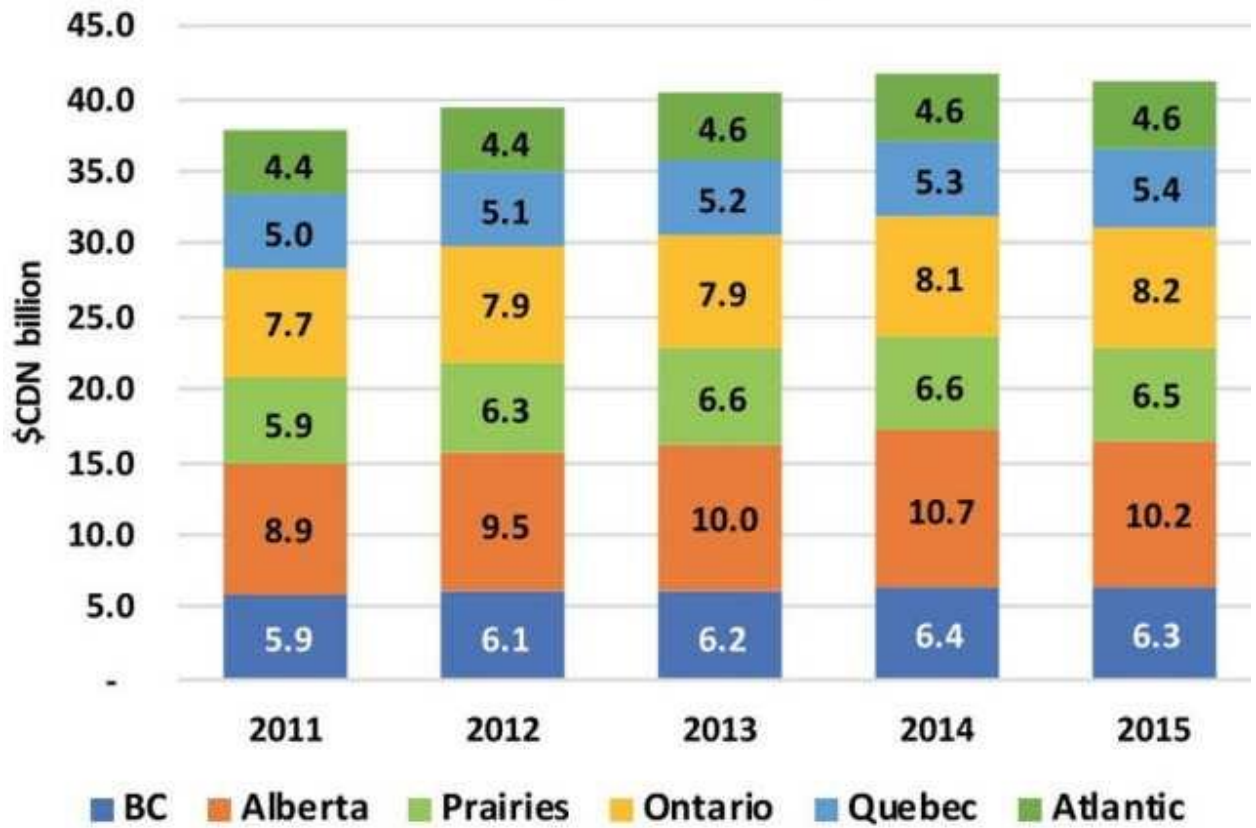
While governments have set up specialized programs for people who have FASD no government has implemented a serious prevention program. With an additional 500 children with FASD being added every year, many who become involved in criminal behavior, it seems inevitable that crime will increase rather than decrease.

4. Money Laundering:

Over three billion dollars of dirty criminal money is laundered out of Manitoba every year. The CD Howe Institute, a very highly recognized economic think tank, has issued a paper "Why We Fail to Catch Money Launderers 99.9% of the Time". (Attached) Money laundering is a very relevant root cause of crime in downtown Winnipeg. While the meth crisis is a major cause of much of the crime we face, there would be much less availability of the drug if the financiers of the drug trade were not able to clean the dirty money and send it to the business people who profit from the drug trade.

The majority of the dirty money is cleaned and sent out of the province through established financial institutions located in our downtown. If the money made from the drug trade could not be successfully sent out of province there would be less crime.

Figure G-1: Money laundering in Canada by region



Source: BC Government Money Laundering study

Amounts are billions of dollars per year

Manitoba, estimate 3 billion dollars per year

Over 7.5 million dollars per day

It would take fifty million \$20 bills to make one Billion dollars, a stack about four miles high

150 million \$20 bills to make 3 Billion dollars, this would weigh about 150 tons, as much as three small houses.

While Winnipeg police, the RCMP and crime prevention groups like the Powerline focus on local small and medium drug distributors and dealers the real money making sector of the drug trade faces little investigation by the criminal justice system.

My understanding is that there are presently no police officers in the Winnipeg Police Service committed to investigating money laundering.

My inquiries of the Court of Queens Bench and the Provincial Judges Court indicated there had been no prosecutions of money laundering in Manitoba in the last few years. The RCMP Integrated Investigation Units which included trained forensic accountants were disbanded several years ago. While we chase, disrupt and often arrest the local distributors the big money is moved through our financial institutions in the downtown with no possibility of arrest.

The CD Howe Institute on page 7 of its report reinforces the linkage between dirty money and crime and poverty.

“International dirty money is a derivative of its underlying crimes. From drug trafficking to human trafficking to political corruption...”

If we want to significantly decrease crime in our inner city the Financial Industry located in our downtown must turn its attention to the dirty money flowing through their books. Reporting items to FINTRAC is not sufficient. Recommendation #4 of the CD Howe identifies the need to empower ordinary citizens. **“By adding the eyes and voices of those ordinary citizens...Canada could revolutionize the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect, investigate and prosecute money-laundering crimes.”**

Further it recommends a tip line similar to the one operated in Point Douglas so informants can communicate information on money laundering to authorities.

It is easy to identify the impact of street crime, aggressive panhandling, needles strewn in doorways. It is more difficult to identify the criminal world of finance but dealing with dirty money will have a greater impact on street crime than we understand.

5. Social Services need to work evenings and weekends

To effectively prevent crime and make our downtown a friendlier place we cannot leave all of the work in dealing with problem situations to the police. We have a large, well trained number of social workers and other social service delivery staff who are working office hours of 8:30 to 4:30, Monday to Friday while much of the non-criminal behavior that requires intervention is happening in the evening, night and on weekends. Both to more effectively deal with situations such as mental health issues and to relieve the police from having to deal with situations that are not criminal in nature we need to switch social service working hours to cover evenings and weekends, with social workers starting at different hours to cover the work period.

Other jurisdictions that have mental health worker working evenings and weekends have shown a significant drop in police involvement with persons with mental health issues. This is healthier for the clients and takes a huge work load off police so they can be involved in dealing with criminal activity.

Presently police, nurses, emergency room doctors, and para medics work shift work. There seems to be no rational reason why social workers are not available evenings and weekends. Social service oriented people are strong supporters of dealing with the root causes of poverty

and crime. To have an impact they need to be available to their client base. Clients of social service agencies who go to work, which is a goal of many agencies, should be able to see their worker without missing work, which in most cases would be outside of the present social service work schedule. We need the skills and abilities of social service workers to be available to their client base both in crisis and non crisis situations evenings and weekends.

6. Illicit Drug Task Force Report:

The Tri Government Illicit Drug Task Force identifies many of the actions required to deal with the crime and incivility in the Downtown of Winnipeg. This report will not repeat those recommendations. However we believe there is a need to ask the three levels of government to report on their actions in fulfilling the recommendations of the task force.

Conclusion:

It is possible to reduce the level of crime in our downtown. No one is satisfied with living in the crime capital of Canada. However, unless the various groups and governments working on the issue pay attention to some of the root causes of poverty and crime identified above as well as involve the residents of the downtown area as identified in Part One and Part Two of this report, efforts are bound to fail and no one wants this crucial problem to continue.