

2020 Tofield RCMP Community Engagement Survey

I would like to thank all those that took the time to participate in the 2020 Tofield RCMP Community Engagement Survey. I would also like to thank all the communities that allowed the Tofield RCMP the opportunity to provide access to this survey on their websites and social media and those that supported this venture by advertising it online and in traditional paper media.

The survey obtained great responses, as it appears that participants were from all communities in Beaver County. A total of 119 participants accessed the survey, which is an excellent sample of the 10K+ citizens that call Beaver County home. I would like to take some time in responding to some of the comments and questions raised and highlight some areas of importance. Although this information is not inclusive of all responses, I have tried to identify and answer common questions or concerns raised by the public.

I know that the Tofield RCMP has made some positive strides in the crime reduction and enforcement area (as seen by the statistics later) although I see that there is work that we still need to do and I can assure you that Tofield RCMP is up to the challenge.

Policing is an ever-changing environment, as the crimes change with the types and numbers of criminals, and what worked in the past is not always, what will work in the future. I am fully aware of this perspective and I am always willing to adjust our policing methods and actions and to think outside the box.

Community and public safety is my number one priority and I take all of your comments seriously. I will do my best to try to answer the comments or questions you provided so I apologize for the length although I believe that if you asked the questions, I should give you my most thorough response.

Based on the responses from the survey, here are some of the high level results from the questions asked:

- 1) **72%** of people are willing to participate and be actively engaged in a community/rural based policing strategy (ie. Rural Crime Watch, Citizens on Patrol, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Services),
- 2) **39%** (majority) of people felt that the prime focus of the Tofield RCMP should be property crime – theft from residence, business and vehicles,
- 3) **53%** of people feel that enough is done by the Tofield RCMP and the community to communicate criminal activities, policing and public safety in Beaver County,
- 4) **63%** of people are satisfied with the services provided by Tofield RCMP,
- 5) **88%** of people felt safe within their community and neighbourhood,
- 6) **58%** of people had contact with the Tofield RCMP in the past year,
- 7) **3%** of people did not report their crime to the Tofield RCMP, and
- 8) **13%** of people who reported a crime to the Tofield RCMP, did not get a follow-up call concerning the outcome or resolution of their complaint.

1. What is the crime reduction strategy?

The Alberta RCMP has developed a Crime Reduction Strategy that enables us to more effectively reduce criminal activity in rural communities. **The strategy is working.**

The plan is multi-faceted. We are:

- Promoting a **collaborative approach** with citizens, community groups, enforcement partners, health partners, and the Province.
- Establishing dedicated **Crime Reduction Units** made up of experienced members at the district and detachment levels. These units provide assistance to detachments and specialize in identifying and apprehending repeat offenders.
- Using **intelligence to guide our efforts**. Intelligence Analysts embedded in our Crime Reduction Units gather and analyze massive amounts of data and coordinates to work with enforcement partners to develop a picture of the crime landscape.
- **Implementing new technologies** that help gather intelligence, increase analytical power, and reduce administrative burden. These technologies and administrative advancements provide more time for members to dig deeper in their investigations and engage with the communities they serve.
- **Engaging directly with Albertans and citizen-led community groups** to keep neighbourhoods safe and raise awareness of what citizens can do to contribute to a safer Alberta.

The Alberta RCMP Crime Reduction Strategy is a comprehensive, **intelligence-led** approach to policing that aims to break the cycle of criminal activity over the long term. The Crime Reduction Strategy is a whole organizational response.

- It enables police to identify **repeat offenders, crime hotspots**, and conduct **targeted enforcement** and prevention initiatives.
- A key factor in this dynamic, provincially coordinated crime reduction program is the **collaborative approach** that includes citizens, health and mental health service providers, law enforcement, and community partners.
- Building strong relationships with community and public agencies allows us to address the root causes of crime, breaking the cycle that repeat offenders find themselves in.
- **Approximately 10% of offenders are responsible for 50-60% of crime in Canada.** By focusing on volume crimes perpetrated by a small number of repeat offenders, the RCMP will reduce the instances of crime over the long term.
- The resulting reduction in the number of service calls overall will allow officers more time to focus on investigations and engage with the communities they serve.

2. What are we supposed to phone in as an emergency?

All calls in to the RCMP are prioritized when received and are dispatched accordingly. What one person may identify as an emergency, another person may not. The RCMP would ask that when there is an identified and immediate risk to themselves or to the public, that you immediately call 911. We ask the public that when they call in, they be prepared to provide as much information as possible concerning the incident in which you are reporting (ie. Location, description of vehicle/persons, weapons, direction of travel, etc.) so that this information can be dispatched quickly to responding members. For



complaints that do not have an immediate risk or safety concern, that you contact the RCMP through the normal complaint line (provided below).

3. What can we do as residents to help each other & the RCMP to keep crime down? How can we as citizens help support the RCMP in ensuring public safety? How can we reduce rural crime with the lack of staff in our community?

Policing is only one aspect of community safety. We all need to work together on both the prevention side and the enforcement side. We need engaged, involved citizens contributing to community safety just as we need engaged, involved police officers. To use an over-used phrase... we cannot put a police officer on every corner. We rely on our residents to provide additional eyes and ears.

Rural Crime Watch is a great example of engagement from the community and what is possible when people come together with a common goal of reporting suspicious activity and reducing crime in their area. Rural Crime Watch is in need of members and support. To become involved, please contact the Tofield RCMP and become an active and engaged member in reducing crime. Crime Watch costs you nothing but a small amount of volunteered time, there is no fees, and you are not required to handle time-consuming duties and obligations. To get involved or to get more details, you can contact Patrick at 780-497-8889.

4. What can people be doing to help with crime prevention and enforcement?

Everyone has an obligation to be engaged and involved in supporting the safety of their neighbourhoods and communities. Get involved with your community and help organize or become involved with your local Rural Crime Watch or start up Citizens on Patrol Program. Speak with me or get in contact with members of the Tofield RCMP Detachment and advise us of your concerns. Help establish those community safety priorities. Effective policing begins with communities working in partnership. We all know that Alberta is at its best when we all work together. As communities, we must address the root causes of crime - poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, lack of education, family breakdown, etc. Tackling those issues requires entire communities, agencies, governments, police services, and individuals pulling together and partnering in their commitment to building stronger, safer communities.

We cannot emphasize enough that people need to do everything, within reason, to secure their property and protect themselves: Safeguard valuables, outbuildings, and fuel tanks. Remove keys from vehicles. Photograph valuables and record serial numbers. Stay observant. Watch out for your property and your neighbour's. Report crime and other suspicious activity to the police but do not attempt to subdue or pursue suspects.

5. I see that when a violation/arrest takes place, the perpetrator is then to go to court at a further date. How effective is that? Is this the best way to prevent a possible re-occurrence in the meantime? Why are there criminals so openly committing repeat crimes yet they get to walk freely and cause more problems for the community?

When a subject is arrested, it is dependant on a number of conditions if the subject can and will be released from custody. Such things as seriousness and type of offence(s), risk to the safety of the victim if released, risk or potential to re-offend, criminal past and criminal record of the subject are some areas taken into account before the subject is considered to be released. In some instances, the subject may be brought before a Judge or Justice of the Peace to determine opportunity for release. If the subject is released, they may be placed on conditions that they must comply with which would be placed on them to ensure they do not re-offend, to ensure the safety of the victim(s), and to ensure safety to the public. The RCMP would support these conditions and as part of a crime reduction strategy, would conduct compliance checks on the subject to ensure that they are compliant.

With the recent Covid pandemic and restrictions, the amount of subjects being held and remanded into custody within the judicial system has significantly decreased, to ensure the safety of the people held within are maintained. Although unfortunate, this decision is out of the RCMP control. It is for this reason that there has been a noticeable decrease in subjects being held in custody and more released over the current year. With that in mind, the Tofield RCMP has placed more of a focus on ensuring the subjects are compliant with their conditions of release by conducting compliance checks on them.

6. How can repeat offenders be caught in a more timely manner instead of letting them continue on their crime streak without consequences?

The RCMP is aware of the struggles with Prolific Offenders and the scourge they place on the communities and victims. Those 10% of offenders that are responsible for 60% of crime take away the time and ability of RCMP resources and continue to victimize the public. The Tofield RCMP is aware of this plague and is focussing on an approach to quash it. The RCMP is focused on a crime reduction strategy that will enable them to identify repeat offenders, crime hotspots, and conduct targeted enforcement and prevention initiatives toward these offenders. In the coming months, the Tofield RCMP will be rolling out a new program, which will identify and enforce compliance on these Prolific Offenders. With this targeted and intelligence led approach, the RCMP feels that the long term result will be a reduction in crime, increase in the safety felt by the community and will maintain the public confidence in the RCMP. As this process and the results obtained are not immediate, this is a long-term strategy. As part of this initiative, the RCMP still needs the assistance from the communities and community groups to ensure the success of the strategy. The Tofield RCMP again wants the public to report suspicious or criminal behaviour when they see it.

7. What are you doing about drug activity in the community?

The RCMP ask the public to report crime when they see it in their communities, neighbourhoods and rural areas. The RCMP is focussed on investigating all crimes including drug offences, which has a significant effect on safety of our communities and neighbourhoods. It is the belief that drugs and alcohol are an underlying component of a majority of criminal investigations and crimes that occur. The

RCMP ask that when you see suspicious or criminal activity, including drug activity, that you immediately report it to the RCMP.

8. What is response time estimated at?

This is dependant on a number of situations and factors. I RCMP cannot speak to specific response times in terms of averages or estimates as they vary significantly from area-to-area and incident-to-incident based on a number of factors including: geographical challenges that come with the vast size of many of our detachment areas; road and weather conditions; the level of urgency of the call for service in question; as well as the volume and level of urgency of other calls for service we may be responding to at the time.

To address the geographical challenges our members face, the Alberta RCMP implemented a new Closest Car service. Dispatch closely monitors the location of frontline members on patrol in order to send the closest car to a call for service, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries i.e: A Viking member might be closest to a call in Tofield jurisdiction and that member will respond as opposed to waiting for a Tofield member to respond. Once the Tofield member is available, they will then attend and take over further investigation.

9. When do you call in other Detachments to help?

Tofield RCMP will utilize resources in the detachment to handle the majority of the calls for service placed within Beaver County, although sometimes, assistance is required. Beaver County has a number of Detachments, which surround our jurisdictional area (ie. Vegreville, Sherwood Park, Viking, Killam, Ft. Saskatchewan, Leduc, Camrose). Depending on the nature of the complaint and type or seriousness of investigation, various resources from these detachments can be utilized to assist. These resources can come in the form of Police Dog Services, Traffic Services, Air Services, Crime Reduction Unit, General Investigations Section, Forensic Investigation Section and Major Crimes.

10. I would like to see calls answered quicker. When the RCMP is called, can specific details be asked at a later time?

When you contact the RCMP, the call taker needs to determine the priority of the call immediately to determine if immediate police attendance is required (ie. Public safety) or if the complaint can be attended when resources are freed up and available. During this initial process, the call taker also needs to obtain pertinent and as much information as possible concerning your complaint in order to properly relay those details to responding resources. While the call taker is obtaining this information from you, there is a dispatcher that is already relaying your complaint details to an awaiting police resource. As this appears to be an irrelevant and slow process of gathering information, these details are very important to responding police resources, as they require as much detail as possible to safely and quickly respond.

11. What active role do the RCMP have in the community aside from law enforcement? What can be improved between members and communities?

As we appreciate the response from this recent survey, there is always room for improvement. As members of the RCMP, we are members of our communities as many of us live in the communities that we are responsible for policing. We are committed to our communities and take responsibility in being involved in community events, supporting initiatives, developing the youth, educating the public and supporting local businesses. The RCMP will always welcome concerns raised by the public concerning issues with policing or public safety. The RCMP needs the support and participation of the public in various community groups and safety organizations to assist in keeping their communities, neighbourhoods and properties safe. Such groups as Rural Crime Watch and Victim Services are partnerships that are very important to safe neighbourhoods and communities. Both these organizations exist and are in need of membership support as they provide such value to our collective needs. I would ask that all who are interested please immediately contact the Tofield RCMP and take ownership and the level of satisfaction that you are responsible for the creating and supporting of safe neighbourhoods and communities.

12. How are officers building relationships with youth?

The relationships between youth and the RCMP has always been very important to the RCMP. It is important that the youth feel comfortable and willing to communicate with the RCMP and being active in the schools is a foundation to develop this. With the recent Covid pandemic and its significant restrictions, the RCMP has had to reduce activity and presence in the schools based primarily on ensuring the safety of the students in this environment. During the pandemic, the RCMP has looked at other ways to be involved and has been available and participated in a number of virtual meetings with various schools in the community in attempt to be visible. Moving forward and with the hopes of reductions in the Provincial Covid restrictions, the RCMP will continue to foster this supportive and open environment in the communities and within the schools.

13. What are the crime stats for various areas? Could you please share statistics with the general public?

The RCMP provides real-time statistical and reportable information online to the public concerning crime throughout Alberta. The Crime Map is a real-time tool that tracks select crime types and records for a two-week period. The purpose is to alert and educate communities and police of activities in their area, so that citizens can be mindful about protecting themselves and their property. The most powerful citizen is an informed and up to date citizen.

We highlight the crimes that residents have the greatest opportunity to reduce by practicing crime prevention strategies: theft from motor vehicle, theft of motor vehicle, break and enter, theft over/under \$5,000, and mischief. We use this information to strategically plan our operations and patrols based on crime trends. The Crime Map is hosted on several municipalities' web pages, but the easiest place to find the map is on the home page of crimestoppers.ab.ca. In 2019, the Crime Map was viewed over 2.85 million times.

The following stats are for the period January to November 2020 YTD and serve as a good indication of how we have done in Beaver County. Criminal Code offences are declining in Beaver County when looking at this period from 2019 vs. 2020.

- 1) Persons Crime – 14% increase
- 2) Property Crime – 6% decrease
- 3) Other Criminal Code – 18% decrease
- 4) Total Criminal Code Offences – 5% decrease

14. I think you do a very good job, but I feel that more communication is better. I feel often, because of the clause “under investigation”, Tofield RCMP is not able to give a more detailed report about certain crimes, which require more clarity.

The RCMP tries to be as transparent as possible concerning their actions and investigations while reporting to the public in the media. The RCMP will not disclose information on an on-going investigation or whereby the release of information may hinder an investigation or possibly result in risking the safety of a victim or the public, or will identify a youth. Specific details such as the name of a subject arrested in an investigation can and will not be released to the media or public until charges are laid before the courts. It is for these reasons that the details supplied in the media in the past have been limited and generic. Going forward, the Tofield RCMP is re-viewing its past practises, will look to provide more informative and detailed information concerning current and past investigations in hopes of educating and informing the public about investigations in their communities, and will look at providing this information through to more mediums. The Tofield RCMP would like to entertain providing this weekly information through to appropriate social media or media platforms. If you are interested, please contact Tofield RCMP.

15. How can detachments of the RCMP work together to reduce property theft and break-ins in vulnerable areas? Thieves and drug addicts seem to find rural areas as easy targets. How can police forces work together to reduce this?

Criminals rarely stay within their communities to commit their crimes; thereby criminals spread their victimization across many jurisdictions. With that being said, intelligence and information sharing between detachments and police forces concerning criminals is very important along with ensuring that the public report crime if and when they see it. Tofield RCMP has a strong and effective working relationship with all RCMP Detachments and Police Forces and share relative investigational information regularly to them. Tofield RCMP also maintains a solid and reciprocal relationship in the Central Alberta Intelligence Sharing Network (CAISN), which meets weekly to discuss information sharing between detachments in Tofield, Leduc, Bashaw, Viking, Killam, Wetaskiwin, Camrose and Edmonton. This information shared supports ongoing investigations and serves value in identifying similar investigations and sharing information on crimes, trends and investigations in their respective areas. This shared information has had a very positive response and led to a number of successful arrests, charges and search warrants, which have resulted in successful prosecutions, and recoveries of stolen property.

16. How many repeat victims of property crime are there within our area and did they receive the enhanced follow-up from the RCMP and if so did the break-ins stop?

The RCMP works with victims of crime and utilizes the support of the Victims Services Unit (VSU) within the Tofield Detachment. With both the RCMP and VSU, follow-up is provided the victim concerning initial support, updates on the investigation and trial preparation when/if a suspect is arrested and charged. Repeat victimization is always a concern and the Tofield RCMP has worked with property and business owners on methods and ways to prevent crime from happening again. It is very important that victims understand and utilize the opportunity of victim impact statements to be used during court proceedings. These statements give the victim an opportunity to put into perspective what this crime has done to them personally, financially and emotionally. It supports in the sentencing of an individual and humanizes the impact of what crime and repeat crime does to the public. There are always challenges to successfully stopping the victimization although working with the victims directly and working through the challenges to find manageable solutions will always be important.

17. What is being done to stop the vicious cycle of repeat crime, theft of property and break and enters? What strategy is being used to try to reduce the amount of crime in rural residences and yards?

The Tofield RCMP is aware and is actively working on the issues facing property crime. We know that much of crime is committed by prolific offenders. Only 10% of offenders are responsible for approximately 60% of all crime. The best way to apprehend these offenders is by compiling and collating information. Targeted, intelligence-based policing is the key to enforcement around rural property crime. Working in partnership with our communities is the key to prevention and that includes reporting any and all crime. Even if we are not in a position to respond immediately, the information you provide can be critical in identifying chronic offenders, which can prevent future crime. Intelligence can also help guide us as we determine how to most effectively conduct patrols and assign resources.

We have worked with the property and business owners to identify and minimize their risks going forward and continue to work with and educate the public on how to make their property less enticing to criminals. The Tofield RCMP provides weekly information through the media to identify and disclose the types and locations of criminal activity to be aware of. We have worked with and will continue to work with local agencies and associations, like our local FCSS, to continue to educate the public on various things such as crime reduction techniques. Resources and access to Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods (SCAN) is another association that has provided assistance and will continue to in the future when we are dealing with unsafe and dangerous properties that are being used for specific illegal activity. Associations like this improves community safety, targets the properties and not the specific individuals and holds property owners responsible and accountable for actions on their properties.

The RCMP has worked with other RCMP Detachments in information sharing and utilized the assistance of K Division Crime Reduction Units to assist in providing resources in attempts to focus on criminals and locations that are involved in property crime. The Tofield RCMP has and continues to focus and direct local resources to those areas and those offenders that are involved in property crime and have seen successes in prosecutions and retrieval of stolen property to their owners. Tofield RCMP will continue to push on obtaining intelligence and information on prolific offenders and prolific locations where

enforcement can continue to be utilized to ensure the safety of the public is maintained and these offenders are prosecuted accordingly. Information obtained from numerous agencies like Parole and Probations has assisted in the compliance of offenders in the area.

18. Can you do something about excessive speeding on Hwy 14? I would like more traffic control in front of CW Sears. Too many people speed through when school is going in and out.

Safety and speed in the school zones is important and Tofield RCMP monitor and enforce it regularly. It is common for people to become complacent and forget that they are travelling through school zones and not paying attention to children in the area. Tofield RCMP utilizes the K Division Traffic Enforcement Services based out of Edmonton and Sherwood Park. This roving traffic enforcement unit is supported by a combined team of RCMP and Sheriff Highway Patrol members where their focus is highway safety. This team will focus traffic enforcement on the roadways where we have seen significant serious accidents and have the high potential for such accidents. In 2020, we have seen two fatalities on Hwy 14 and we receive numerous complaints daily concerning dangerous driving and speeding.

19. I'm interested in learning what the current staffing levels are in regards to both members and non-members of the Tofield Detachment, and if the RCMP feels they are adequate?

The Tofield RCMP Detachment consists of a Sergeant, a Corporal and four Constables. We maintain an administrative staff to support the membership, which consists of two Public Servants. The Detachment also maintains a Victim Services Unit, which consists of a four-person team along with a number of advocates that assist with the victim of crime support. At this time, the Tofield RCMP Detachment is fully staffed.

Earlier this year, the Government of Alberta announced increased funding for added RCMP resources, specifically 75 police officers and 60 civilian support positions. Approximately 500 RCMP officers and civilian positions will be added across the province over the next five years, including the new positions announced for 2020/21. The RCMP has a set number of resources that they deploy as efficiently as we can, based on a thorough analysis of calls-for-service, operational intelligence, and emerging crime trends. Reporting crime impacts how the RCMP deploys our members. The RCMP needs to know where the needs are before they can assign the resources in the most efficient, effective manner possible.

The RCMP has been gradually increasing our number of employees in Alberta and will continue to do so. The new funding will allow the RCMP to address rural crime by directly and indirectly supporting frontline policing across rural Alberta through additional RCMP resources at detachments and within centralized front-line support and specialized units. The new resources allow the RCMP to increase visibility and increase community and proactive policing efforts. Having more members on the road and out in the community helps the RCMP respond to issues and contributes to reducing crime. The RCMP deploys resources across the province based on an analysis of calls for service, local knowledge, intelligence and current trends. The RCMP will continue to focus on ensuring that rural Albertans feel safe by supplementing our resources in rural detachments and increase our investments in specialized units.

Resource deployment is based on workload analysis in addition to considering the needs of individual communities. Workload analysis includes factors such as travel time, call volume, the type of crimes occurring in the area, amount of time required for investigations, size of detachment, and time available for proactive policing, which includes: strategic patrols, community engagement, visiting schools, and attending community events.

20. The Tofield RCMP Detachment needs to open, Covid or not. We all work with precautions, so should the Tofield RCMP Detachment?

The Tofield RCMP Detachment is open and has been throughout the Covid pandemic. In following suit and ensuring compliance with Federal/Provincial and Municipal guidelines and the Government of Alberta Public Health Order, our office has limited access although remains open to the public. In an effort to reduce direct contact with customers face to face, to ensure the safety to the public and with the updated restrictions placed by the Province of Alberta on December 8, 2020, we again are modifying our delivery to accommodate the restrictions while ensuring that we are not effecting the services we provide to the communities and public in Beaver County:

- The detachment door is locked, although when required, the lobby is limited to one individual,
- Signage on the door specifies instructions on making contact with or reporting an incident,
- Reporting incidents/accidents is now done electronically. Instructions on this process will be provided when calls are placed with our office,
- People will be encouraged to make appointments for service ahead of time,
- Criminal Record Checks and Vulnerable Sector Fingerprint services will be limited to essential needs only and will have to be scheduled by appointment. Essential needs are difficult to define because of the variety of circumstances that may be encountered. As a rule, be as accommodating as possible with requests related to employment, family, and child custody related issues, as examples.
- All emergency situations must still dial 911.

21. I would ask the RCMP what is one thing you wish we could change that would help you do your job?

This is a tough question, as I believe that the public does what they can, with what they have to ensure that they keep themselves safe. I think that Beaver County and all the communities within it has a very supportive and engaged public. I would ask that they take an honest look at the current situation facing their communities and ask if there is something that they could assist with to help reduce crime and making their communities and neighbourhoods safe. Volunteer and see how beneficial and rewarding a neighbourhood watch or Rural Crime Watch can be.

Tofield RCMP can be contacted at the following:

- 911 (emergency)
- 780-662-3352 (complaint);
- ktofieldadmin@rcmp-grc.gc.ca (email)

From myself and all the staff from the Tofield RCMP, thank you all for your participation. Please have a happy holiday and be safe.

Sergeant Lee Knelsen
Detachment Commander – Tofield RCMP Detachment
PO Box 540
Tofield Alberta
TOB 4J0