

# **Is the future of community policing in Canada at risk in the wake of recent international terrorist attacks, and increasing violent crimes associated to organized criminal activities?**

## **The Survival of Community Policing Post 911**

### **Introduction**

Richmond Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is committed to the vision of “Safe Homes – Safe Communities”. Richmond is the third largest RCMP detachment in Canada. The City of Richmond is located on Canada’s pacific coast in the Province of British Columbia. Situated within the metropolitan area of Vancouver, Richmond is a series of islands at the mouth of the Fraser River and in close proximity of the United States border. Richmond RCMP Detachment is a large, urban policing service that provides federal, provincial, municipal and contracted police duties to a diverse community. In addition, Richmond Detachment is also responsible for the overall security and policing of the Vancouver International Airport. The Vancouver International Airport is the second busiest airport in Canada. Annually the airport processes over 15.5 million passengers, handles 229,000 tones of cargo and manages 274,400 take-offs and landings.

Richmond has undergone enormous change over the last decade, fuelled by an aggressive national immigration policy. Richmond is a dynamic, multi-ethnic community, with a heavy Asian representation that now comprises over one third of Richmond residents.

Fully committed to the concepts of community policing, Richmond detachment has made many advances over the past few years in order to translate this philosophy into action. At Richmond detachment we utilize five key strategies to advance Community policing:

- (1) Deployment**
- (2) Community Revitalization**
- (3) Legitimacy**
- (4) Customer Service**
- (5) Problem Solving**

In consultation with our internal/external clients and partners we have developed Richmond’s unique community-policing guiding principles. We then transcended these principles into deliverables and built them into our service delivery model. These enhanced principles include:

- **Public accountability by realigning policing services to reflect community concerns and needs.**
- **Decentralized, neighborhood services approach.**
- **Partnerships and collaboration.**
- **Integrated service team approach, and client centered service delivery.**

- **Consultation, transparency and participation.**
- **Proactive approach (anticipating and forecasting community issues).**
- **Community problem-solving (root problem solving using the RCMP CAPRA solving problem model).**
- **Custom designed service delivery for each unique community and culture.**
- **Quality service through assessing client satisfaction and needs, measuring how these needs are being met, and closing the gap between expectations and deliverables.**
- **Principled centered leadership (re-creating a culture of trust at all levels).**
- **Advanced risk management philosophy that redefines failure, yet identifies and controls high-risk activities.**
- **A commitment to employee continuous development.**

Richmond Detachment strives to become operationally transparent and answer those questions from the public, which might have been considered confidential in past years. Since the decision to deliver police service in this manner, Richmond is delighted to report that crime statistics have improved and measurable client satisfaction continues to climb. Richmond Detachment is proud that their community policing service delivery philosophy is seen as one of the most progressive and innovative models in the world. Richmond Detachment looks towards the future with a real sense of optimism.

### **Current Situation**

The terrorist attacks upon the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001 launched Canada into the age of international terrorism. The Canadian public experienced widespread public anger, shock and fear as a result of this international tragedy. At the same time, an increase in violent criminal acts directly associated to organized crime activities has also shaken up the very fabric of the Canadian way of living.

These recent events have raised the fear of crime and criminal victimization within our communities. There is a general increased anxiety within the community directly related to the perception of crime relative to terrorism and organized crime violence. Public expectations and accountabilities on the RCMP have significantly increased. There is a demand for more serious, tactical and enforcement driven responses to deal with the problems of terrorism and violence.

As a result of these recent events, Canada has seen a return to a more traditional and reactionary style of response, somewhat modeling the past professional model of policing. There is a sense of urgency from the public to approach and solve the violence and homeland security problems. The “quick fix” solutions through enforcement, tactical and protection are in the forefront of the public mind. There is not a lot of discussion about proactive, preventative, root problem solving approaches. All these issues have greatly contributed to the public’s fear of criminal victimization and lack of basic safety.

Although, Richmond Detachment has had great success with its community policing service delivery model, it is being overshadowed by a very real, significant threat to public safety and order.

### **The Problem for the RCMP and Richmond Detachment**

*Is the future of community policing in Canada at risk in the wake of recent international terrorist attacks, and increasing violent crimes associated to organized criminal activities?*

*Could we see a return to a more traditional and reactionary style of policing?*

*Could there be a loss of confidence in the community policing philosophy and a retreat back to a more secretive, command and control, enforcement driven model?*

### **How Sharing Best Practices is Expected to Resolve this Problem**

The notion of “sharing best practices” will expose those involved including the RCMP to the global problems and solutions that have been identified in this paper. Through inter-agency cooperation, it is expected that tangible benefits and answers will be obtained from participating enforcement agencies. The sharing of best practices will be an excellent opportunity for all participants to gain greater insight, ideas and lessons learned.

It is globally recognized that the Community Policing philosophy is the fourth evolution of policing in our modern era. Although we have entered this new era, Community policing has been overshadowed of late, in the wake of recent international terrorist attacks, and organized crime activities. We cannot let the fear of violent crime dictate an erosion of the community policing model and allow us to retreat back to the comfort of the previous evolutionary phase, the “professional model”. A “sharing best practices” program will allow the police agencies to share this concern with the global policing community. Now, more than ever, there is a requirement to embrace community policing as a model where community concerns can be re-assessed and citizen mobilization be enhanced to assist the police in seeking solutions. It is hoped that by sharing mutual concerns with other Police leaders, partnerships can be formed to advance these very important matters. In our fight against terrorism and violent crime, we must stay true to the principles of community based policing, and not allow the challenges that we are currently facing erode our past efforts.

Superintendent Ward Clapham  
Officer in Charge  
Richmond RCMP Detachment