

NO: R002

COUNCIL DATE: January 10, 2011

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **January 6, 2011**

FROM: **Crime Reduction Strategy Manager
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Officer in Charge, Surrey RCMP** FILE: **7450-30**

SUBJECT: **City Watch Program**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to inform Council about the City Watch Program and its implementation in Surrey. A description of the City Watch Program is attached as Appendix "A".

BACKGROUND

The City's Crime Reduction Strategy contains 106 recommendations focused on the following four primary objectives:

- Reduce crime and increase community safety;
- Increase public involvement in reducing crime ;
- Increase integration between all stakeholders involved in crime reduction; and
- Improve public awareness around the reality and perception of crime.

The implementation of the City Watch Program, which is a CUPE-BC sponsored program, will assist in achieving each of these objectives. The Program has been implemented in at least a dozen communities throughout the province to date. City Watch is operating in Vernon, Victoria, Burnaby, Kamloops, Ladysmith, Smithers, Quesnel, Chilliwack, Prince George, District of Kent, Township of Langley, North Vancouver, and Delta. The most recent addition is the City of New Westminster, which launched its program in June 2010. Based on staff contact with some of these local governments, no concerns have been encountered in relation to their implementation of the Program.

DISCUSSION

The City Watch program acts to prevent and deter crime and to facilitate the apprehension of offenders in communities within which it is implemented. Under the Program, municipal staff is trained to be alert to suspicious activities that they might witness during the course of undertaking the normal duties of their jobs. The staff training under the Program emphasizes an “observe and report” approach. City employees have the capability of being “eyes and ears” within the community. City Watch formalizes this role and sends a message to the public that city workers are alert to the activities taking place in the community. Under the Program City employees do not become directly engaged in the apprehension of criminals but rather are trained to be alert to signs of criminal activity and to promptly report any such observations to the local RCMP.

Representatives from each City Department and the RCMP have been appointed to a City Watch Committee along with the Crime Reduction Manager and representatives from Surrey’s CUPE local. It is noted that the Executive of the Surrey CUPE local is fully supportive of implementing the Program in Surrey. The Committee is responsible for implementing the Program and to address matters related to the operation of the Program as they are encountered. The Committee has met during the latter part of 2010 with a view to a full roll out of the Program across the City during 2011. It is expected that the Program will be operational by the spring of this year.

Police involvement is essential to the success of the City Watch program and support for this project by the Surrey RCMP has been formalized. The Surrey RCMP will be involved in providing the necessary training for City employees including what constitutes suspicious activity, the importance of reporting such activity, when and how to make reports, the details that should be noted in their observations and reports and the steps that should be taken in follow-up. This training will assist employees in better understanding their role in the Program and the positive impact that they can have in the area of crime prevention and community safety.

It should be noted that the Program is entirely voluntary in relation to CUPE staff engagement and does not constitute a change to the formal responsibilities of any position.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The City Watch Program supports action item SC11 in the City’s Sustainability Charter, which identifies the Crime Reduction Strategy and the Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents as the foundations for building a safe community.

CONCLUSION

The Council-approved Crime Reduction Strategy sets out a vision for crime prevention and reduction in Surrey. The City Watch Program fits well with the Crime Reduction Strategy by engaging City employees, who operate in all areas of the City, in reporting to the local police any suspicious activities that they observe during the normal course of the duties of their respective jobs.

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Appendix "A" – City Watch Program

Appendix A

City Watch Program

The City Watch Program is a partnership between local government, CUPE (CUPE BC and Surrey Local 402) and the RCMP. The Program recognizes the opportunity for City workers who are out on the road during the normal course of their duties to watch for and report on criminal or suspicious activity in the community. Such reporting assists the RCMP in responding more quickly to suspicious activities and helps to ensure that the community is safe and secure.

Under the Program, staff who volunteers to participate are trained and encouraged to be observant of the areas of the City within which they travel during the course of their regular duties.

How The Program Works - If suspicious activities or accidents are observed by a city employee the employee reports the activity to the RCMP in an accurate and timely manner in accordance with established protocols related to the Program.

Training - The RCMP will provide employee training using interactive sessions that will ensure employee and public safety are maintained. The training includes effective observation and reporting techniques. Staff is also supported in their safe participation through the provision of written materials.

Who Benefits? - Everyone benefits from this program. The RCMP benefit by having trained, watchful eyes and listening ears on the streets to assist in addressing community safety. Staff members benefit as they are proud to support the community where they work. The City benefits by having improved public safety. Most importantly, Surrey's citizens benefit through the Program reinforcing the security of their communities.