



FINDINGS OF THE 2005 MEDICINE HAT POLICING AND SAFETY SURVEY

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wuerscher & Associates Inc. was contracted by The City of Medicine Hat Police Service to conduct a study designed to assess public perceptions concerning 5 areas of police service to the public. This study was driven by a survey (APPENDIX A) consisting of 57 questions that addressed the four core areas (traffic control, bylaw enforcement, criminal investigation, and general patrol duties) corresponding to principal components of the Medicine Hat Police Service business plan. In addition, the survey questions sought public opinion regarding policing in Medicine Hat as a whole.

A summary of the survey results, highlighting demographic characteristics and participation levels, and identifying key findings within the major areas of investigation, are presented below.

A total of 7853 surveys were distributed to the public, of which 7762 were distributed to every third household and 91 were made available, upon request, by the Medicine Hat Police Service. With 2602 completed surveys available for analysis, the response rate was quite high, at 33.1%.

The greatest proportion of respondents ranged in age from 41 to 60 years old, reported being employed, were educated beyond the high school level, and live in the Southridge and River Heights areas.

(1) TRAFFIC CONTROL

Respondents strongly endorsed the importance of using of photo radar around schools and playgrounds. At the same time, a majority registered their doubt that photo radar contributes to safer roads in general. More often than not, persons agreed that red light cameras are effective in preventing the running of red lights. They most frequently identified high density traffic areas and areas with high accident rates as being most important locations for placing red light cameras. Among the three traffic control measures surveyed, citizens showed the greatest support for Check Stop programmes, believing them to be an effective way to prevent drinking and driving. This is an important finding given that almost half of respondents knew someone who drove while under the influence during the past two years. The four top priorities for traffic enforcement, beginning with the most frequently identified priority, were 'sober driving', 'speed limits', 'playground/school zones', and 'safe operation of vehicles'. 'Safe operation of vehicles' stands out as the area most often identified as requiring greater education.



(2) BYLAW ENFORCEMENT

Fewer than one in ten residents responding to the survey reported coming into contact with a Bylaw Officer for a violation, and they were just as likely to be satisfied as dissatisfied with the handling of the situation. About one in six respondents made complaints to Bylaw Officers and more indicated satisfaction than dissatisfaction with how matters were handled. Even so, a significant proportion of both complainants and violators reported being 'not at all' satisfied. Most respondents indicated that receiving a callback after lodging a complaint was very important to them. The two most important bylaw enforcement issues were keeping streets and sidewalks clean and ensuring property standards.

(3) CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

About one in five respondents reported having been a victim of crime in the past 24 months. The most frequently occurring category of crime cited by victims was property damage. Three quarters of those who were victims of crime reported the crime to police and most were satisfied with the response. The remaining one quarter of crime victims most often cited the minor value of the property involved as the reason for not reporting the crime. Approximately one in seven respondents reported having witnessed a crime during the past 24 months. The most frequently witnessed crime was impaired driving. About half of the witnesses reported the crime to police and were satisfied with the police response more often than not. A strong majority of persons who have been affected by police investigations indicated that they wish to be contacted on a regular basis or when a major development occurs.

(4) GENERAL PATROL DUTIES

Most persons who responded to the survey indicated that they feel safe or absolutely safe living in their neighbourhoods specifically and in Medicine Hat generally. Only a small minority avoid areas of the city due to a fear of crime. The areas most frequently avoided were the Flats and the Downtown areas, with fear of assault being the main reason given for such avoidance. Drug use and young offenders were cited as the main factors contributing to crime in the areas avoided. On the other hand, property crime, especially break and enter, was identified as the crime of greatest concern in respondents' own neighbourhoods. Young offenders were perceived to be the single greatest cause of neighbourhood crime. Respondents deemed prevention activities (such as recreational activities and community lectures) and education in schools by consultants such as AADAC and police to be the two most effective ways of reducing youth alcohol and drug abuse. Increased enforcement of youth substance use was cited as the third most effective strategy. More often than not, respondents believed that crime had increased in Medicine Hat in the past 24 months. However, half did not believe that the incidence of crime in Medicine Hat is



higher than in other Canadian cities. Respondents identified avoiding certain places and installing burglar alarms as the two most important security measures.

POLICING AS A WHOLE

Over the past 24 months, less than one in ten respondents had come into contact with police for a public information session. Of those who did, a great majority indicated satisfaction with those sessions. Somewhat more people indicated satisfaction than dissatisfaction with how often the police communicates its activities through various media. Of those that were dissatisfied, a vast majority thought that more information should be given. In terms of assessing how well the Medicine Hat Police Service supplies information to the public on ways to reduce crime, the majority of respondents were more often satisfied than dissatisfied. Fewer than one in ten respondents reported using the Medicine Hat Police Service website. A substantial majority of respondents indicated satisfaction with how the police enforce the law. The majority of citizens reported being satisfied with the responsiveness of police to calls, the approachability of officers and overall, the services provided by the Medicine Hat Police service. The two main areas identified as needing the most improvement were 'vehicle patrols in residential areas' and 'relations/communication between police and community'. The area of police services that was identified most frequently as showing most improvement was 'bike patrols'.

Comparisons between 2005 and 1999 survey results can be found in the Discussion section of this report.



II. BACKGROUND

The Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey (APPENDIX A) was conducted in November of 2005 to systematically assess and examine public perceptions of the Medicine Hat Police Service. In this report, we summarize the results of the data analysis of the completed surveys which Medicine Hat citizens mailed directly to Wuerscher & Associates Inc. Specifically, for this report, all of the data are presented at an aggregate level to protect the identities of the individual respondents. Thus, all responses are entirely anonymous and confidential.

The 2005 Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey represents a significant departure from the 1999 Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey. In contrast with the previous survey, the current survey was designed so the major areas of inquiry would be aligned with the main categories of the Medicine Hat Police Service business plan. By creating the survey to reflect key areas of the business plan, the hope was to increase the value of the survey results for refining planning processes in the future. Whenever appropriate, questions from the 1999 survey were used in the 2005 survey for comparative purposes.

The survey underwent a series of revisions, based on feedback received from a variety of both internal (i.e. within the police department) and external stakeholders. The final version reflects an effort to incorporate recommendations regarding wording and content while at the same time safeguarding the scientific integrity of the survey.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The 2005 Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey was distributed to 7762 households in the city of Medicine Hat in November 2005. Surveys were hand-delivered by students of the Medicine Hat College Police and Security Programme to every third house or living unit or every third resident at an assisted living lodge. Distribution included apartments, assisted living and independent living homes. If a house appeared to be vacant, a survey would be given to the next house. If a resident refused a survey, it would be given to the next house. No surveys were given to residents of full care or nursing homes or to businesses. Surveys were delivered in a quasi-randomized manner to prevent any systematic bias in the collection of information.



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Only one survey was provided to each household, with participation being completely voluntary. The survey was designed so that one person would answer on behalf of an entire household.

As well, an additional 91 surveys were distributed through the police department to individuals who requested a copy. Providing surveys to citizens who requested them was felt to be an important way of engaging interested individuals. While this latter method of distribution cannot be considered random, the number of surveys thus provided constitutes less than 4% of the final sample size. Consequently, there is no substantial threat to the overall validity of the survey results.

Out of 7853 potential respondents, 2602 surveys met the requirement for inclusion in the study: they were received at our office by December 15th, 2005, and they were not spoiled by physical damage or inaccurate completion of the form (thereby precluding scanning into the data base). 63 respondents did not use the answer sheets provided and instead, they indicated their responses on the question sheets. We transferred the responses to the answer sheets and double checked the transfer. An additional 27 surveys were received after the deadline and have not been included in the analysis.

Thus the response rate was 2602/7853 or 33.1%. This is a very high response rate for a mail-in survey and appears to reflect a high level of interest and engagement by the citizens of Medicine Hat.

For maximum cost effectiveness, questions were designed to be strictly multiple choice. That is, there was no space allocated for short answers or other comments. Some respondents nevertheless wrote comments on the survey, or on a separate sheet, and sent these along with the answer sheets. With the exception of two comments that were directed at specific police officers, we recorded all written comments and have included them in Appendix B.

We also conducted some second order analyses, in order to see if specific subsets of the respondents answered questions differently. The relevant tables have been included in Appendix C, with the differences described in the 'Results' section of the main report.

The margin of error for the Survey in its entirety is +/- 1.9% at the 95% confidence level. This means that there is a less than 5% chance that survey respondents' opinions differ from those of all Medicine Hat citizens by more than 1.9%.



IV. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Please note that some respondents did not answer some of the demographic questions, or their answers could not be scanned because of damage to the paper or multiple answers given per question. Thus the 'grand totals' below do not always equal the total number of surveys processed (2602).

AGE AND GENDER

The greatest proportion of respondents ranged between 41 and 60 years of age. About one third of respondents were over 60 years old and less than a quarter were under 40 years of age. Slightly more females responded than males. Several hundred respondents did not indicate their gender.

Gender	Total	Percent
Males	954	44.2%
Females	1204	55.8%
Grand Total	2158	100.0%

Age	Total	Percent
0-20	32	1.3%
21-30	231	9.1%
31-40	333	13.2%
41-50	580	23.0%
51-60	514	20.3%
61-70	398	15.8%
71-80	326	12.9%
81+	112	4.4%
Grand Total	2602	100.0%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS, HOUSEHOLD INCOME, EDUCATION LEVEL

More than half (64%) of respondents were in the workforce (employed or self-employed), and almost 30% were retired. A number of written comments (Appendix B) indicated that some respondents believe that stay-at-home parents or disabled persons should have been represented by a category in this question. Once again, several hundred respondents did not indicate their employment status.

Employment Status	Total	Percent
Employed	1092	51.9%
Self-Employed	248	11.8%
Unemployed	111	5.3%
Student	35	1.7%
Retired	620	29.4%
Grand Total	2106	100.0%



A little more than half of respondents had a household income between \$25,000 and \$74,999. Approximately one in six respondents had household incomes under \$25,000 while more than 30% of the respondents indicated a household income over \$75,000. Some respondents wrote (Appendix B) that income level was private information, and up to 200 respondents did not answer this question.

Household Income	Total	Percent
Less than \$17,500	189	7.9%
\$17,500 - \$24,999	226	9.4%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	633	26.4%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	622	26.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	354	14.8%
\$100,000 or more	372	15.5%
Grand Total	2396	100.0%

Two thirds of the respondents have had some post-secondary education, with 47% having achieved a college certificate/diploma or university degree. Less than 10% of respondents had not completed high school.

Highest Level of Education in Household	Total	Percent
Less than high school	229	9.1%
High school	608	24.2%
Some post-secondary courses	496	19.7%
Community college diploma/certificate	667	26.5%
University Bachelor's degree	365	14.5%
University Master's degree	106	4.2%
University Ph.D. degree	44	1.7%
Grand Total	2515	100.0%

HOUSEHOLD

The majority of respondents reside in the Southridge and River Heights areas. Very few resided in the SW Hill and Flats areas.

Area of Residence	Total	Percent
Southridge, Meadowlands, Southview, East Glen, Ross Glen and Taylor Areas; Southview Drive to South Boundary Road to City Limits	930	37.0%
River Heights and Crescent Heights Area: north from South Saskatchewan River to City Limits	650	25.9%
Crestwood/Norwood Area: TransCanada Highway to west of Seven Persons Creek to Southview Drive	293	11.7%
Downtown, Southeast Hill and Southwest Hill east of Gershaw Drive	270	10.7%
SW Hill Area: west of Gershaw Drive and TransCanada Highway to east of Seven Person Creek to South Saskatchewan River	167	6.6%
Flats Area including Kingsway Avenue and South Railway Area	125	5.0%
Other	77	3.1%
Grand Total	2512	100.0%



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The vast majority of respondents live in houses.

Place of Residence	Total	Percent
House	2057	81.6%
Apartment/condo complex	334	13.2%
Mobile Home	75	3.0%
Other	56	2.2%
Grand Total	2522	100.0%

Almost half of the respondents live in a two person household, with 95% of these being a two adult household.

Number of people in your household	Total	Percent
One	458	18.1%
Two	1162	46.0%
Three	372	14.7%
Four	373	14.8%
Five	116	4.6%
Six	28	1.1%
Seven	8	0.3%
Eight or more	7	0.3%
Grand Total	2524	100.0%

About one third of the respondents came from households with children. Almost 10% of the households with children are headed by only one adult.

Describe your household	Total	Percent
Single	475	18.7%
Single with child(ren)	81	3.2%
Two adults with child(ren)	694	27.3%
Two adults, no children	1110	43.7%
More than two adults with child(ren)	44	1.7%
More than two adults, no children	138	5.4%
Grand Total	2542	100.0%



V. RESULTS OF SURVEY ANALYSIS

The following outlines the results of the survey which was created to assess 5 major areas concerning Medicine Hat Police Service. These assessment areas include Traffic Control, ByLaw Enforcement, Criminal Investigation, General Patrol Duties, and the Overall Picture – Police as a Whole. Each assessment area is organized according to sub-topics. Both survey results and narrative comments (found in APPENDIX B) were recorded and organized according to this assessment framework.

Note: ‘No response’ indicates the number of times the question was left blank by the respondent. ‘NA’ refers to an inappropriate response which could not be qualified by analysis.

Assessment Area: TRAFFIC CONTROL

The traffic control area of assessment included assessing the two most common issues of traffic infractions (traffic violation and alcohol-related traffic violations) and the three most common methods used in preventing/reducing them (photo radar, red light cameras, and Check-Stop programmes).

TRAFFIC VIOLATION

Slightly more than one in five respondents reported coming into contact with police for a traffic violation in the past 24 months.

Survey Question 3: During the past 24 months, have you come into contact with police for a traffic violation?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2019	77.6%
Yes, once	437	16.8%
Yes, occasionally	109	4.2%
Yes, frequently	14	.5%
I don't know/ I can't remember	10	.4%
No response	9	.3%
NA	4	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%



ALCOHOL-RELATED TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not know anyone who drove while under the influence of alcohol during the past 24 months. However, 44% indicated that they knew at least one person, with a somewhat surprising 3.5% indicating that they knew ‘ten or more people, who drove while under the influence of alcohol.

Of those who did know someone who drove while under the influence, more than 70% noted that these people did so ‘occasionally’ or ‘frequently’ rather than ‘once’. From another frame of reference this means that out of the 2602 people who responded to the survey, approximately one third [(669+162)/2602] knew someone who had driven while under the influence of alcohol more than once.

Those who were between the ages of 21 and 70 were more likely to know someone who drove while under the influence than those under 21 or over 70. However, of all age groups, those who were under 41 years old (including those under 21 years old) were most likely to know more than 10 people who had driven while under the influence of alcohol. (Table 1, APPENDIX C)

Persons living in the Southridge area were least likely (5%) to know impaired drivers, while those who lived in the SW Hill (12%) and Flats (11%) areas were most likely to know impaired drivers. Those living in the SW Hill area were also most likely (4%) to know more than 10 people who drive while under the influence (Table 2, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 4: During the past 24 months, how many people you know drove while under the influence of alcohol?

	Frequency	Percent
0	1426	54.8%
1-3	876	33.7%
4-6	156	6.0%
7-9	29	1.1%
10+	92	3.5%
No response	15	.6%
NA	8	.4%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 5: During the past 24 months, how often, on average, did the people you know who drove while under the influence of alcohol do so?

	Frequency	Percent
Once	310	26.9%
Occasionally	669	58.0%
Frequently	162	14.1%
No response/NA	12	1.0%
Total	1153	100.0%



PHOTO RADAR

More respondents expressed doubt than belief that photo radar in speed enforcement has created safer roads. Only 25% believed 'absolutely' or 'very much' that photo radar has created safer roads, whereas over one third indicated that photo radar had either 'very little' or 'nothing' to do with creating safer roads. Another third had mixed feelings about photo radar's effectiveness.

There were 14 written comments about photo radar (out of 2602 respondents). Of these, 7 express disgruntlement and view it as a way for the city to make money. (Appendix B). The other 7 comments reflect mixed feelings or express positive feelings about the use of photo radar in school/playground zones or high traffic volumes or accident rates.

Despite many not being convinced that photo radar has created safer roads, the majority (60%) indicated that it should be used in schools/playgrounds. The importance of this finding is strengthened by the fact that another option 'I don't feel it should be used' was available. Taking the results from questions 6 and 7 together, it

appears that the majority of respondents see a utility for photo radar especially in 'schools/playgrounds' and to a lesser degree in high accident zones or high density traffic areas. It is clear that very few respondents believe that it is of primary importance to use photo radar on highways.

Survey Question 6: Do you believe the use of photo radar in speed enforcement has created safer roads?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	354	13.6%
Very much	297	11.4%
Somewhat	927	35.6%
Very little	525	20.2%
Not at all	424	16.3%
I don't know	56	2.2%
No response	14	.5%
NA	5	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 7: Where do you feel is the most important place photo radar should be used? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Schools/playground	1569	60.3%
Areas with high accident rates	301	11.6%
I don't feel it should be used	286	11.0%
High density traffic areas	246	9.5%
Residential streets	108	4.2%
Highways	57	2.2%
No response	20	.8%
Other	10	.4%
NA	5	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%



RED LIGHT CAMERAS

Twice the number of respondents felt that red light cameras were effective compared with those who felt they were of little or no value. However, more than a quarter of respondents expressed mixed views about the effectiveness of red light cameras.

Survey Question 8: Do you believe that red light cameras are an effective way to prevent drivers from running red lights in our community?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	593	22.8%
Very much	505	19.4%
Somewhat	744	28.6%
Very little	305	11.7%
Not at all	274	10.5%
I don't know	159	6.1%
No response	16	.6%
NA	6	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

Of those who believed at least 'very little' that the cameras are effective, only 5% of respondents felt that red light cameras should not be used. Three quarters of the respondents reported they should be used in 'high density traffic areas' and 'areas with high accident rates'. Another 10% believe schools and playgrounds are the most important areas to use these cameras. Similar to the photo radar results, this suggests that the majority of respondents see specific rather than general utility for these police service methods.

Survey Question 9: Where do you feel is the most important place red light cameras should be used in our community? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
High density traffic areas	836	38.9%
Areas with high accident rates	771	35.9%
Schools/ playground	221	10.3%
I don't feel it should be used	115	5.4%
Highways	131	6.1%
Residential streets	34	1.6%
Other	8	0.4%
No Response/NA	31	1.4%
Total	2147	100.0%



CHECK-STOP PROGRAMMES

Most respondents (74%) heartily endorse ('absolutely' or 'very much') Check-Stop programmes as being an effective way to prevent drinking and driving. Very few (4%) indicated that they saw them as having 'very little' or 'not at all' value.

Survey Question 10: Do you believe that Check-Stop programmes are an effective way to prevent drinking and driving?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	1162	44.7%
Very much	762	29.3%
Somewhat	537	20.6%
Very little	70	2.7%
Not at all	31	1.2%
I don't know	23	.9%
No response	14	.5%
NA	3	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%

TOP TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES

Respondents identified 4 top areas of spending for police enforcement with regard to traffic control: sober driving, speed limits, playground/school zones, and the safe operation of vehicles respectively. 84% of respondents endorsed these. Interestingly, although red light cameras were seen to be effective, not many respondents (3.8%) saw this as a priority for spending.

Survey Question 11: Where should police spend the most resources on enforcement? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Sober driving	763	29.3%
Speed limits	550	21.1%
Playground/school zones	445	17.1%
Safe operation of vehicle (proper signals, distances, etc.)	441	16.9%
Red lights	98	3.8%
Stop signs	70	2.7%
Remaining at the scene of accidents	60	2.3%
Safe vehicles (everything in working order)	60	2.3%
Seat belt use and proper child restraints	60	2.3%
No response	44	1.7%
NA	8	.3%
U-turns	3	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%



Half of respondents rated 'safe operation of vehicles' as the area the public needs the most education. 'Sober driving' and 'speed limits' were ranked second and third respectively.

Survey Question 12: Where do you feel the public needs more education? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Safe operation of vehicle (proper signals, distances, etc.)	1289	49.5%
Sober driving	339	13.0%
Speed limits	329	12.6%
Playground/school zones	164	6.3%
Safe vehicles (everything in working order)	113	4.3%
Stop signs	95	3.7%
Seat belt use and proper child restraints	91	3.5%
Red lights	66	2.5%
Remaining at the scene of accidents	59	2.3%
No response	46	1.8%
U-turns	6	.2%
NA	5	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%



Assessment Area: BYLAW ENFORCEMENT

The 'Bylaw Enforcement' area of assessment included evaluating contact with a Bylaw Officer for a violation or as a complainant, and giving input regarding important issues of Bylaw enforcement.

CONTACT WITH A BYLAW OFFICER FOR A VIOLATION

Less than 9% of respondents reported coming into contact with a Bylaw Officer for a violation in the past 24 months.

Survey Question 13: During the past 24 months, did you come into contact with a Bylaw Officer for a violation?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2387	91.7%
Yes, once	168	6.5%
Yes, occasionally	16	.6%
Yes, frequently	3	.1%
No response	19	.7%
NA	9	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

While approximately equal numbers of those who were in contact with a Bylaw Officer were satisfied as were dissatisfied, a significant number (29%) reported being 'not at all' satisfied.

Survey Question 14: If yes, were you satisfied with how the situation was handled?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	35	18.7%
Very much	32	17.1%
Somewhat	46	24.6%
Very little	14	7.5%
Not at all	55	29.4%
I don't know	4	2.1%
No response/NA	1	0.6%
Total	187	100.0%



CONTACT WITH A BYLAW OFFICER AS A COMPLAINANT

Just over 15% of respondents have come into contact with a bylaw officer as a complainant, with 77% of these having only one contact in the past 24 months.

Survey Question 15: During the past 24 months, did you come into contact with a Bylaw Officer as a complainant?

	Frequency	Percent
No	2129	81.8%
Yes, once	314	12.1%
Yes, occasionally	82	3.2%
Yes, frequently	12	.5%
No response	58	2.2%
NA	7	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

More complainants were satisfied with the contact than those who weren't satisfied. However, 23% of complainants were not at all satisfied with how the situation was handled.

Survey Question 16: If yes, were you satisfied with how the situation was handled?

	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	89	21.8%
Very much	83	20.3%
Somewhat	82	20.1%
Very little	52	12.7%
Not at all	94	23.0%
I don't know	9	2.2%
Total	408	100.0%



CALLBACK

Most respondents (80%) attached a great degree of importance to receiving a callback after making a complaint.

Survey Question 17: Is it important for you to receive a callback if you make a complaint?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	1471	56.5%
Very much	601	23.1%
Somewhat	315	12.1%
Very little	48	1.8%
Not at all	90	3.5%
I don't know	47	1.8%
No response	24	.9%
NA	6	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

IMPORTANT ISSUES OF BYLAW ENFORCEMENT

Respondents named 'streets and sidewalks' (24%) and 'property standards' (20%) as the two most important areas of bylaw enforcement. These two areas account for approximately half of the total responses. The next most frequently chosen issues were 'domestic animal control' and 'noise', at approximately 14% each. Written comments focussed on streets and property standards as well as noise and parking.

Survey Question 18: Which of the following bylaw enforcement issues is most important to you? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Streets (includes snow removal) and sidewalks	628	24.1%
Property Standards (includes weeds, garbage, etc.)	538	20.7%
Domestic Animal Control	350	13.5%
Noise	349	13.4%
Commercial, heavy truck/dangerous goods routes	245	9.4%
Smoking	164	6.3%
Parking	102	3.9%
Pest Control (including skunk removal)	87	3.3%
No response	72	2.8%
Parks	51	2.0%
Skateboarding	11	.4%
NA	5	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%



Assessment Area: CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

The 'Criminal Investigation' area of assessment included assessing satisfaction with police service when the respondent was a victim, witness, or suspect of a crime.

VICTIM OF A CRIME

Most respondents (78%) reported having not been a victim of a crime during the past 24 months. 20% of respondents reported having been the victim of a crime at least once, with almost 1% being a frequent victim of crime.

Most of the areas sampled show a similar trend except for the Southridge area, where a slightly lower proportion of responding residents had been a victim of crime, and the Flats area, where 32% of respondents had been victims of crime (Table 3, APPENDIX C).

Females were just as likely (21%) to be victims of crime as males (22%). Among those who reported having been crime victims, the age group which was most highly represented was those who were 20 years old and under. Rates of criminal victimization begin to decrease with age for those 51 years old and older.

Survey Question 20: During the past 24 months, have you been a victim of a crime?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2022	77.7%
Yes, once	379	14.6%
Yes, occasionally	125	4.8%
Yes, frequently	20	.8%
No response	52	2.0%
NA	4	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

% of respondents from each age groups who had been a victim of crime in the last 24 months.	
Age group (years old)	Percent
0-20	31.3%
21-30	29.9%
31-40	25.5%
41-50	29.0%
51-60	16.9%
61-70	12.8%
71-80	11.3%
80+	6.3%



FINDINGS OF THE 2005 MEDICINE HAT POLICING AND SAFETY SURVEY

Of the types of crimes reported by victims, property crime (vandalism, theft, break and enter, automobile theft) accounted for 80% of the crimes, with 'vandalism' being the most frequently occurring crime (38%). 8% of the victims had been affected by violent crime.

Survey Question 21: If you were a victim of crime, select the most frequently occurring crime.		
	Frequency	Percent
Vandalism/mischief/graffiti (something was damaged)	197	37.6%
Theft under \$5000	89	17.0%
Break and enter (illegal entry or attempted entry into your residence or other building on your property)	68	12.9%
Automobile theft/attempt (vehicle or vehicle part/accessory was stolen)	66	12.6%
Other	27	5.2%
Assault (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon but no theft or attempted theft)	23	4.4%
Fraud/scam (in person, via email, or telephone)	18	3.4%
Family violence	7	1.3%
Robbery/attempt (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon and theft of property)	7	1.3%
Sexual Assault/attempt (rape, attempted rape, molestation attempted molestation)	6	1.1%
Impaired driving	4	0.8%
Shoplifting	4	0.8%
I don't know	3	0.6%
Indecent act (voyeurism, flashing)	1	0.2%
No response/NA	4	0.8%
Total	524	100.0%



Survey Question 22: If you were a victim of crime, did you report the crime(s) to the police?

	Frequency	Percent
No, never	116	22.1%
Yes, for some of the crimes that were committed against me	168	32.1%
Yes, for every instance	231	44.1%
I don't know/NA	9	1.7%
Total	524	100.0%

Of those that indicated having been a victim of crime, 44% always reported the crime while 22% never did.

Of those that reported being a victim of a crime, twice as many were satisfied with the police's response compared with those who were not satisfied. 23% of respondents reported being 'somewhat satisfied' with the response

'Minor value of property' was the most frequently indicated reason for respondents not reporting when they were victims of a crime. However, about one fifth of those who did not report the crime cited lack of faith in the police or justice system as the primary reason for not reporting.

Survey Question 24: If you reported the crime against you, were you satisfied with the police response?

	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	99	24.8%
Very much	99	24.8%
Somewhat	90	22.6%
Very little	43	10.8%
Not at all	48	12.0%
I don't know	9	2.3%
Not applicable/no response/NA	11	2.7%
Total	399	100.0%

Survey Question 23: If you did not report the crime, what was the main reason why you did not report the crime? (Select one)

	Frequency	Percent
Minor value of property	100	35.2%
Lack of faith in police	40	14.1%
Other	28	9.9%
Lack of faith in justice system	17	6.0%
It was not considered important	15	5.3%
Fear of retaliation	14	4.9%
Known offender	10	3.5%
Not applicable/NA /no response	60	21.1%
Total	284	100.0%



WITNESS TO A CRIME

Survey Question 25: During the past 24 months, have you witnessed a crime?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2153	82.7%
Yes, once	156	6.0%
Yes, occasionally	167	6.4%
Yes, frequently	54	2.1%
No response	65	2.5%
NA	7	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

14% of respondents reported witnessing a crime at least once.

Of those that witnessed a crime, almost half the witnesses did not report the crime. 24% reported the crime all the time and 26% some of the time.

Of those who reported the crime they witnessed, 42% were very or absolutely satisfied, and 27% were somewhat satisfied with the response. However, about one in four who reported a witnessed crime were not satisfied.

Survey Question 27: If you witnessed a crime, did you report the crime(s) to the police?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	175	46.4%
Yes, for some of the crimes that I witnessed	99	26.3%
Yes, for every instance	91	24.1%
No response/NA	12	3.2%
Total	377	100.0%

Survey Question 28: If you reported the crime(s) you witnessed, were you satisfied with the police response?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	41	21.6%
Very much	39	20.5%
Somewhat	52	27.4%
Very little	24	12.6%
Not at all	22	11.6%
I don't know	12	6.3%
Total	190	100.0%



Survey Question 26: If you witnessed a crime, what crime did you witness the most often?		
	Frequency	Percent
Impaired driving	77	20.4%
Drug trafficking	58	15.3%
Vandalism/mischief/graffiti (something was damaged)	49	13.0%
Other	46	12.2%
Assault (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon but no theft or attempted theft)	40	10.6%
Shoplifting	22	5.8%
Sexual Assault/attempt (rape, attempted rape, molestation attempted molestation)	18	4.8%
Theft under \$5000	13	3.4%
Family violence	10	2.7%
Break and enter (illegal entry or attempted entry into your residence or other building on your property)	10	2.7%
Automobile theft/attempt (vehicle or vehicle part/accessory was stolen)	10	2.7%
Fraud/scam (in person, via email, or telephone)	9	2.4%
Robbery/attempt (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon and theft of property)	3	0.8%
Indecent act (voyeurism, flashing)	1	0.3%
I don't know	4	1.0%
NA/No response	7	1.9%
Total	377	100.0%

The crime most frequently witnessed was 'impaired driving' (20%). To a lesser degree, respondents witnessed 'drug trafficking' (15%) and 'vandalism' (13%). 30% of witnessed crimes were property crimes, and 19% were violent crimes.



Just under 30% of the witnesses who did not report the crime gave 'other' as the main reason for not reporting. There were no written comments about this particular issue and there is no way of knowing from this survey what 'other' refers to. Almost one quarter of the witnesses who did not report did so primarily because of a lack of faith in either the justice system or the police.

Survey Question 29: If you did not report the crime(s) you witnessed, what was the main reason why you did not report the crime? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Other	79	28.8%
Lack of faith in justice system	37	13.5%
Lack of faith in police	28	10.2%
Fear of retaliation	25	9.1%
Minor value of property	24	8.8%
Known offender	21	7.7%
It was not considered important	18	6.6%
No response/NA	42	15.3%
Total	274	100.0%

SUSPECT OF A CRIME

Only 1% of respondents reported having come into contact with police as a suspect at least once in the past 24 months.

In light of the small number of respondents to question 31, the use of percent to characterize the distribution of responses may overstate the importance of any differences. Nevertheless, it appears that there is about as much satisfaction as dissatisfaction among suspects with how police handled the situation.

Survey Question 30: During the past 24 months, did you come into contact with police as a suspect in a crime?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2522	96.9%
Yes, once	29	1.1%
Yes, occasionally	3	.1%
Yes, frequently	3	.1%
No response	43	1.7%
NA	2	.0%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 31: If yes, were you satisfied with how the police handled the situation?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	12	34.3%
Very much	3	8.6%
Somewhat	6	17.1%
Very little	2	5.7%
Not at all	11	31.4%
I don't know	1	2.9%
Total	35	100.0%



CONTACT WITH UPDATES

When it comes to frequency of contact regarding investigations that affect them, about as many respondents wanted to be contacted only when there is a 'major development' (42%) as 'on a regular basis at predetermined intervals' (40%). Only 4% did not deem contact necessary.

Survey Question 32: When would you like a police officer to contact you with regard to actions and findings in investigations that affect you?		
	Frequency	Percent
Never, I will hear it on the news if it is important	101	3.9%
When there is a major development	1086	41.7%
When there is a minor development	244	9.4%
On a regular basis at predetermined intervals	1045	40.2%
No response	118	4.5%
NA	8	.4%
Total	2602	100.0%

28% of respondents had come into contact with the Medicine Hat Police Service for reasons other than traffic violations, bylaw issues or criminal investigations.

Survey Question 42: During the past 24 months, have you come into contact with the Medicine Hat Police Service for any reason other than what has already been asked?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	1835	70.5%
Yes, once	419	16.1%
Yes, occasionally	250	9.6%
Yes, frequently	53	2.0%
No response	33	1.3%
NA	12	.5%
Total	2602	100.0%



Assessment Area: GENERAL PATROL DUTIES

The 'General Patrol Duties' area of assessment included assessing perceived degree of safety, degree of crime, and security measures used in Medicine Hat.

DEGREE OF SAFETY

The vast majority (79%) indicated that they feel quite safe living in Medicine Hat. Less than 1% feel unsafe, while 20% have mixed feelings about safety in Medicine Hat.

This pattern was evident across all areas of the city as defined in the Sample Demographics, with the exception of the Flats area. Fewer responding Flats area residents (66%) indicated that they felt quite safe living in Medicine Hat, with another 33% reported having mixed feelings. (Table 4, APPENDIX C).

Most respondents (78%) indicated that they feel safe in living in their neighbourhood. 20% indicated that they feel 'somewhat' safe in their neighbourhood.

This pattern was evident across most areas of the city as defined in the Sample Demographics. However, only 57% of Flats area respondents felt quite safe in their own neighbourhood with 38% having mixed feelings (Table 5, APPENDIX C). 9% of respondents felt less safe in their own neighbourhoods than they did in Medicine Hat as a whole. This was especially true of the respondents from the Flats area (22%) and the SW Hill area (15%). Respondents from the River Heights and Southridge areas expressed the greatest feeling of security about their own neighbourhoods. (Table 6, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 1: Do you feel safe living in Medicine Hat?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	599	23.0%
Very much	1443	55.5%
Somewhat	526	20.2%
Very little	11	.4%
Not at all	7	.3%
I don't know	7	.3%
No response	7	.3%
NA	2	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 2: Do you feel safe living in your neighbourhood?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	696	26.7%
Very much	1338	51.4%
Somewhat	520	20.0%
Very little	22	.8%
Not at all	7	.3%
I don't know	9	.3%
No response	8	.3%
NA	2	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%



The majority of respondents (65%) indicated that fear tends not to prompt them to avoid certain areas of the city. Nevertheless, 31% of respondents were at least somewhat fearful of going into one or more areas in Medicine Hat.

53% of those who are fearful avoid the Flats area most. This means that 31% of all respondents (810/2602x100%) are at least a little fearful of going to the Flats Area. Another 29% cited the Downtown area as the part of the city they would avoid. Fear motivated avoidance of other identified neighbourhoods in Medicine Hat was minimal. (Table 6, Appendix C) Victims did not tend to be more fearful of other neighbourhoods than other respondents.

(Table 7, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 36: Does fear cause you to avoid going to one or more areas in Medicine Hat?

	Frequency	Percent
Very much	164	6.3%
Somewhat	648	24.9%
Very little	723	27.8%
Not at all	974	37.4%
I don't know	53	2.0%
No response	35	1.3%
NA	5	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 37: What part of the city do you avoid the most due to the fear of crime? (Select one)

	Frequency	Percent
Flats Area including Kingsway Avenue and South Railway Area	810	52.8%
Downtown, Southeast Hill and Southwest Hill east of Gershaw Drive	438	28.6%
Other	170	11.1%
Southridge, Meadowlands, Southview, East Glen, Ross Glen and Taylor Areas; Southview Drive to South Boundary Road to City Limits.	15	1.0%
River Heights and Crescent Heights Area: north from South Saskatchewan River to City Limits	14	0.9%
SW Hill Area: west of Gershaw Drive and TransCanada Highway to east of Seven Persons Creek to South Saskatchewan River	12	0.8%
Crestwood/Norwood Area: TransCanada Highway to west of Seven Persons Creek to Southview Drive	5	0.3%
No Response/NA	71	4.6%
Total	1535	100.0%



Survey Question 39: If you avoid one or more areas of the city, what is your main reason for doing so? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Assault (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon but no theft or attempted theft)	286	18.6%
Robbery/attempt (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon and theft of property)	203	13.2%
Drug Trafficking	190	12.3%
Vandalism/mischief/graffiti (something was damaged)	190	12.3%
Other	155	10.1%
Sexual Assault/attempt (rape, attempted rape, molestation attempted molestation)	76	4.9%
Automobile theft/attempt (vehicle or vehicle part/accessory was stolen)	39	2.5%
Break and enter (illegal entry or attempted entry into your residence or other building on your property)	31	23.0%
Impaired driving	16	1.0%
Theft under \$5000	11	0.7%
Fraud/scam (in person, via email, or telephone)	10	0.7%
Family violence	8	0.5%
Indecent act (voyeurism, flashing)	5	0.3%
Shoplifting	3	0%
I don't know	241	15,7%
No response/NA	72	4.7%
Total	1535	100.0%

Many (16%) respondents who avoid areas of the city indicated that they did not know the reason why they felt fearful. Those who articulated the reason for avoiding the areas most frequently named 'assault' as the most important reason, followed by 'robbery', 'vandalism', 'drug trafficking', and 'other' respectively.



DEGREE OF CRIME

Of those that responded, most (22%) cited 'drug use' as the primary factor contributing to crime in the neighbourhood area that they avoid. To a lesser degree, respondents either 'didn't know' (14%), or chose 'young offenders' (14%), and 'intoxicated people' (10%). Lack of police presence was not often seen to be the primary factor.

Survey Question 38: In your opinion, what is the primary factor contributing to crime in the neighbourhood area that you avoid? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Drug use	335	21.8
I don't know	211	13.7
Young offenders	217	14.1
Intoxicated people	154	10.0
Area vacated after business hours	146	9.5
Lack of police presence	117	7.6
Poorly lit streets	113	7.4
Other	81	5.3
Liquor outlets, bars	74	4.8
Abandoned buildings	26	1.7
Prostitution/solicitation	1	0.2
NA/no response	60	3.9
Total	1535	100.0%



Survey Question 33: What type of crime concerns you most in your neighbourhood? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Break and enter (illegal entry or attempted entry into your residence or other building on your property)	946	36.4%
Vandalism/mischief/graffiti (something was damaged)	623	23.9%
I don't know	284	10.9%
Drug Trafficking	191	7.3%
Fraud/scam (in person, via email, or telephone)	85	3.3%
Sexual Assault/attempt (rape, attempted rape, molestation attempted molestation)	75	2.9%
Robbery/attempt (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon and theft of property)	72	2.8%
Automobile theft/attempt (vehicle or vehicle part/accessory was stolen)	60	2.3%
Theft under \$5000	55	2.1%
Other	55	2.1%
Impaired driving	54	2.1%
No response	42	1.6%
Family violence	28	1.1%
Assault (face-to-face threat or assault with a weapon but no theft or attempted theft)	16	.6%
NA	7	.3%
Indecent act (voyeurism, flashing)	6	.2%
Shoplifting	3	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%

More than half of respondents are concerned about either ‘break and enter’ (36%) or ‘vandalism’ (24%) in their neighbourhoods. Respondents are least concerned about ‘shoplifting’, ‘indecent acts’, and ‘assault’ in their neighbourhoods.

Responding residents of the Downtown (12%), Flats (23%), and SW Hill (11%) areas are quite concerned with ‘drug trafficking’. Almost half (46%) the Crestwood area respondents named ‘break and enter’ as their major concern. (Table 8, APPENDIX C)



While all age groups were primarily concerned about ‘break and enter’ and ‘vandalism’, the third most frequently endorsed crime of concern varied among age groups as follows: ‘sexual assault’ (20 and under), ‘drug trafficking’ (21 to 70) and ‘frauds/scams’ (over 70). (Table 9, APPENDIX C)

Most (32%) respondents cited ‘young offenders’ as the primary factor contributing to crime in their neighbourhood. Another third of respondents indicated that they did not know what the primary factor was or that the question was not applicable. ‘Lack of police presence’ was believed to be a contributing factor by only 10% of respondents. ‘Abandoned buildings’ and ‘prostitution/solicitation’ accounted for the least number of the responses.

Survey Question 34: In your opinion, what is the primary factor contributing to crime in your neighbourhood? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Young offenders	831	31.9%
Not applicable/ I don't know	824	31.7%
Lack of police presence	271	10.4%
Drug use	224	8.6%
Intoxicated people	118	4.5%
Poorly lit streets	92	3.5%
Other	88	3.4%
No response	54	2.1%
Liquor outlets, bars	53	2.0%
Area vacated after business hours	26	1.0%
NA	9	.5%
Abandoned buildings	7	.3%
Prostitution/solicitation	5	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

Respondents from every neighbourhood except the Flats most frequently endorsed ‘young offenders’ as the primary factor contributing to crime. In the Flats area, the greatest proportion of respondents chose ‘drug use’ (23%) as the primary factor. Other factors (endorsed by 10% or more of respondents from each neighbourhood) varied according to neighbourhood. Flats respondents identified ‘young offender’ (22%), ‘intoxicated people’ (10%) and ‘poorly lit streets’ (10%) as other primary factors. Downtown respondents identified ‘drug use’ (13%), while of respondents from the Crestwood, River Heights and Southridge areas identified ‘lack of police presence’ (10 to 12%) as major factors contributing to crime. (Table 10, APPENDIX C)

‘Young offender’ was named most often by all age groups as the primary factor affecting crime in their neighbourhoods, except for those under 21 years old. These named ‘intoxicated people’ as being equally responsible for crime as ‘young offenders’. Other age groups named different primary crime contributing factors as their second most frequently endorsed choice: ‘lack of police’ (31 to 70 years old), ‘drug use’ (over 70 years old; 21 to 30 years old). (Table 11, APPENDIX C)



Prevention (31%), education by outside consultants (27%), and increased enforcement (21%) were cited as the most effective activities for reducing youth alcohol and drug use. Of note, education through the school curriculum was least endorsed.

Survey Question 50: What activity do you believe would be most effective in reducing youth alcohol and drug use? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Prevention activities (recreation for youth, after hours events for teens, parent education, community lectures)	831	31.9%
Education in schools by outside consultants (police, AADAC, others)	696	26.7%
Increased enforcement	545	20.9%
School substance abuse prevention and treatment counselors	219	8.4%
I don't know	117	4.5%
Other	85	3.3%
Education through the school curriculum by teacher	80	3.1%
No response	26	1.0%
NA	3	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%



PERCEPTION OF CRIME

Most respondents (71%) believe at least 'a little' that crime has increased during the last 24 months, with 23% 'absolutely' or 'very much' that crime has increased. 4% believe there has been no increase in crime. Almost one quarter indicated that they 'did not know'.

Victims of crime were more likely to strongly believe that crime had increased in Medicine Hat. (Table 12, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 40: During the last 24 months, do you believe that crime in Medicine Hat has increased?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	337	13.0%
Very much	248	9.5%
Somewhat	937	36.0%
Very little	332	12.8%
Not at all	105	4.0%
I don't know	604	23.2%
No response	30	1.2%
NA	9	.5%
Total	2602	100.0%

Very few respondents (3%) indicated a high degree of certainty that the incidence of crime in Medicine Hat is higher than that of other Canadian cities. The majority (69%) showed very little or no belief that crime rates are higher in Medicine Hat than in other cities.

Survey Question 41: Compared to other Canadian cities, do you believe Medicine Hat's incidence of crime is higher?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	31	1.2%
Very much	42	1.6%
Somewhat	281	10.8%
Very little	525	20.2%
Not at all	1264	48.6%
I don't know	436	16.8%
No response	18	.7%
NA	5	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%



SECURITY MEASURES

Most respondents indicated 'avoiding certain places' (29%) and 'installing burglar alarms' (27%) as the security measures they deem most important, followed by 'installing new locks'. The vast majority of people did not endorse 'owning a gun' as the most important method of protection.

Victims more frequently chose 'owning a dog' as the most important security measure, than non-victims.

(Table 13, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 35: What personal security measure do you think is most important?		
	Frequency	Percent
Avoiding certain places	745	28.6%
Installing burglar alarms	711	27.3%
Installing new locks/changing locks	393	15.1%
Changing your routine or activities	290	11.1%
Owning a dog	232	8.9%
No response	80	3.1%
Owning a gun	72	2.8%
Taking a self-defence course	56	2.2%
Changing your phone number	13	.5%
NA	10	.5%
Total	2602	100.0%

Most respondents (73%) do not have an electronic alarm at their home or their business. Only 14% had one at their home.

Victims of crime were less likely to have electronic alarms at home and more likely to have electronic alarms at their business.

(Table 14, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 19: Do you have an electronic alarm? (An electronic alarm is one that automatically informs the police if it is triggered).		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes, at home	302	11.6%
Yes, at my business	270	10.4%
Yes, at my home and my business	49	1.9%
No, not at my home nor my business	1894	72.8%
I don't know	41	1.6%
No response	38	1.5%
NA	7	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%



Assessment Area: OVERALL PICTURE – POLICE AS A WHOLE

'The Overall Picture – Police as a Whole' area of assessment included assessing police's communication to the community, the effectiveness of enforcement, police's responsiveness and approachability, and services of the Medicine Hat Police Service as a whole.

COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMUNITY

Only 8% of respondents had come into contact with police in the context of a public information session at least once during the past 24 months.

Survey Question 43: During the past 24 months, have you come into contact with police for a public information session?

	Frequency	Percent
No	2302	88.5%
Yes, once	139	5.3%
Yes, occasionally	73	2.8%
Yes, frequently	9	.3%
No response	74	2.8%
NA	5	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

Of those who came into contact with police for a public information session, most (62%) reported being 'very much' satisfied. Only 5% were 'very little' or 'not at all' satisfied with the session.

Survey Question 44: If yes, were you satisfied with the public information session?

	Frequency	Percent
Very much	137	62.0%
Somewhat	71	32.1%
Very little	6	2.7%
Not at all	5	2.3%
I don't know	2	.9%
Total	221	100.0%



Many respondents (42%) indicated satisfaction with how often the Medicine Hat Police Service communicates its activities through the various media. However, 38% of the respondents think there should be more information given. Very few (1%) think too much information is being communicated.

Most victims of crime were in favour of having more information. (Table 15, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 48: Are you satisfied with how often the Medicine Hat Police Service communicates its activities through the various media?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1102	42.4%
No, I think there should be more information given	985	37.9%
No, I think there is too much information given	39	1.5%
I don't know	436	16.8%
No response	32	1.2%
NA	8	.4%
Total	2602	100.0%

Just under one third of the respondents were quite satisfied with how the Medicine Hat Police Service supplies information to the public on ways to reduce crime. 13% found little or no reason for satisfaction. 42% indicated they were 'somewhat' satisfied.

Victims of crime were less satisfied with how the police supply information on ways to reduce crime than other respondents.

(Table 16, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 49: How satisfied are you with how the Medicine Hat Police Service supplies information to the public on ways to reduce crime?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	162	6.2%
Very much	673	25.9%
Somewhat	1103	42.4%
Very little	263	10.1%
Not at all	79	3.0%
I don't know	270	10.4%
No response	48	1.8%
NA	4	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%



A high proportion (88%) of respondents indicated that they have never visited the Medicine Hat Police Service website: 37% did not know a website existed, 21% have no internet access, and 30% had no cause to visit the site.

Survey Question 45: Have you ever visited the Medicine Hat Police Service website? (www.medicinehatpolice.com)		
	Frequency	Percent
No, I didn't know there was a website	959	36.9%
No, I have no access to the internet or don't know how to use it	541	20.8%
No, I had no cause to visit the website	777	29.9%
Yes, once	116	4.5%
Yes, occasionally	106	4.1%
Yes, frequently	17	.7%
No response	82	3.2%
NA	4	.2%
Total	2602	100.0%

On the whole, those who had visited the website found it to be useful. However, the largest proportion (50%) of these respondents indicated mixed feelings about the usefulness of the website.

Ratings of usefulness increased with increasing visits to the site. (Table 17, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 46: Was the website useful to you?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	30	12.6%
Very much	50	20.9%
Somewhat	120	50.2%
Very little	25	10.5%
Not at all	6	2.5%
I don't know	6	2.5%
No response/NA	2	0.8%
Total	239	100.0%



Those who had accessed the website were most interested in having more information on news, community service/public education programmes, and crime prevention. 14% also indicated 'other'. However, no written comments were received that indicated the nature of the 'other' information desired.

Occasional users were especially interested in more news, and frequent users indicated no clear priorities.

(Table 18, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 47: What subject area should have more information on the website?		
	Frequency	Percent
News	46	19.2%
Community Service/Public education programmes	34	14.2%
Other	33	13.8%
Crime Prevention	32	13.4%
Bylaws	23	9.6%
Careers	14	5.9%
Traffic control measure	13	5.5%
Publications	13	5.5%
Divisions	8	3.3%
Kid's stuff	7	2.9%
No response/NA	16	6.7%
Total	239	100.0%



ENFORCEMENT – RESPONSIVENESS – APPROACHABILITY

More than half of the respondents were ‘very much’ to ‘absolutely’ satisfied with the Medicine Hat Police Service’s enforcement of the law with another 33% being ‘somewhat’ satisfied. Only 7% reported a low level of satisfaction with law enforcement.

Victims of crime were less likely to be satisfied with the police’s enforcement of the law, with dissatisfaction tending to increase with frequency of victimization. (Table 19, APPENDIX C)

Just under half of respondents were ‘very much’ or ‘absolutely’ satisfied with the Medicine Hat Police Service’s responsiveness to calls, whereas 23% were ‘somewhat’ satisfied. Only 6% reported that they were not satisfied. 22% did not know the answer to this question, possibly because they have not called the police.

Victims of crime had about an equal level of satisfaction with the responsiveness of police as non-victims, but they also had a greater level of dissatisfaction than non-victims. Whereas, not surprisingly, more than a quarter of other respondents chose ‘I don’t know’ (probably due to a lack of contact), victims were more likely to express a level of dissatisfaction than to say ‘I don’t know’.

(Table 20, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 52: Are you satisfied with the Medicine Hat Police Service's enforcement of the law?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	332	12.8%
Very much	1066	41.0%
Somewhat	860	33.1%
Very little	109	4.2%
Not at all	59	2.3%
I don't know	136	5.2%
No response	35	1.3%
NA	5	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%

Survey Question 53: Are you satisfied with the Medicine Hat Police Service's responsiveness to calls?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	332	12.8%
Very much	896	34.4%
Somewhat	593	22.8%
Very little	100	3.8%
Not at all	63	2.4%
I don't know	583	22.4%
No response	31	1.2%
NA	4	.3%
Total	2602	100.0%



More than half of respondents (56%) indicated that they thought the Medicine Hat Police Service Officers approachable, with another 24% rating the officers as 'somewhat' approachable. Only 6% thought officers were not approachable. 13% did not know whether they were approachable, possibly because they had no contact.

Victims of crime were more likely to consider the police less approachable than other respondents, especially those who had been victims of crime occasionally.

(Table 21, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 54: Do you think Medicine Hat Police Service Officers are approachable and easy to talk to?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	601	23.1%
Very much	860	33.1%
Somewhat	623	23.9%
Very little	91	3.5%
Not at all	69	2.7%
I don't know	326	12.5%
No response	26	1.0%
NA	6	.4%
Total	2602	100.0%

OVERALL PERCEPTION OF POLICE SERVICE

The majority (62%) were 'absolutely' or 'very much' satisfied with the police services offered by the Medicine Hat Police. In addition, 27% were 'somewhat' satisfied. Only 4% indicated they were not satisfied.

Victims of crime tended to be less satisfied with the police services overall, than other respondents. (Table 22, APPENDIX C)

Survey Question 57: Overall, how satisfied are you with the police services offered by the Medicine Hat Police?		
	Frequency	Percent
Absolutely	262	10.1%
Very much	1348	51.8%
Somewhat	708	27.2%
Very little	75	2.9%
Not at all	29	1.1%
I don't know	106	4.1%
No response	54	2.1%
NA	20	.8%
Total	2602	100.0%



24% of respondents indicated that 'vehicle patrols in residential areas' need the most improvement. 18% of respondents cited 'relations/communications between police and community' as needing improvement. Quite a number of respondents (18%) did not know what needed most improvement. 'Treatment of minority groups' and 'bike patrols' were named as priorities for improvement least often.

Survey Question 55: Where do you think the Medicine Hat Police Service needs the most improvement? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
Vehicle patrols in residential areas	632	24.3%
Relations / communications between police and community	475	18.3%
I don't know/not applicable	460	17.7%
Relations between police and youth	333	12.8%
Enforcement of laws	274	10.5%
Foot patrol in business areas	158	6.1%
Public education	125	4.8%
No response	43	1.7%
Other	43	1.7%
Bike patrols	37	1.4%
Treatment of minority groups	20	.8%
NA	2	.1%
Total	2602	100.0%



Almost 60% of respondents did not name an area of most improvement ('I don't know', 'Not applicable' and 'No response'). However, among the areas identified as most improved 'bike patrols' was cited most often (14%). The perceived improvement in 'bike patrols' may account for why they were not selected as an area needing improvement in the previous question. Some (8%) indicated that 'relations/communications between police and community' has shown the most improvement.

Survey Question 56: What area of the police service do you feel has shown the most improvement in the last 24 months? (Select one)		
	Frequency	Percent
I don't know	1403	53.9%
Bike patrols	366	14.1%
Relations / communications between police and community	215	8.3%
Relations between police and youth	114	4.4%
Vehicle patrols in residential areas	112	4.3%
Public education	108	4.2%
Enforcement of laws	89	3.4%
Not applicable	74	2.8%
No response	60	2.3%
Foot patrol in business areas	28	1.1%
Other	26	1.0%
Treatment of minority groups	5	.2%
NA	2	.0%
Total	2602	100.0%



VI. DISCUSSION

The 2005 Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey was designed to solicit the perceptions and opinions of the citizens of Medicine Hat on a variety of policing issues. The 4 focal areas of the police service business plan and policing in general were covered in order to assess current public perceptions and to plan for the future.

The demographics of the residents who were polled were similar to those of the 1999 survey in most aspects. The vast majority of residents live in houses, most are employed and another quarter of the population is retired. However, there are fewer respondents in the lower income brackets, especially in the \$25,000 to \$49,999 range (26%, down from 38%) and more respondents whose household income is over \$75,000 (30%, up from 17%). Another change since 1999 is that more respondents have completed high school (91%, up from 86%). In the 2005 survey, it is noteworthy that 17% of respondents did not indicate their gender and 19% of respondents did not indicate their employment status. Some written comments indicate that respondents would like to have additional options under the employment status category such as 'stay at home parent', 'homemaker', 'AISH recipient' or 'disabled'.

Very few respondents indicated that they had come into contact with police for a traffic violation, and most of these had only one contact.

Almost half the respondents knew someone who drove while under the influence of alcohol, with over two thirds of these saying that their acquaintance(s) did so at least occasionally. At the same time, respondents most frequently identified 'sober driving' as the highest priority for traffic enforcement. The public's awareness and concerns regarding sober driving coincide with the fact that impaired driving charges are substantially more prevalent in Alberta and Saskatchewan than the rest of Canada. Impaired driving charges in Alberta and Saskatchewan are 1.5 to 2 times the national average, respectively, based on information provided by StatsCan for 2004. A large majority of respondents felt that Check-Stop programmes are an effective way to prevent drinking and driving. Given that impaired driving seems to be quite prevalent, it seems that the community would support greater use of Check-Stop programmes or investment in other strategies, including education, to combat drinking and driving.

While 'sober driving' was endorsed by the most respondents as being a priority for traffic enforcement, and by many as a priority for education, three other priorities for traffic enforcement and education were also identified: 'Speed limits', 'playground/school zones' and 'safe operation



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of vehicle'. It seems clear that while respondents want speed limits to be enforced, on the whole, they do not support photo radar as a means of doing so, and they did not believe that photo radar lead to safer roads. This appears to be a shift in public opinion since 1999 when most respondents indicated that photo radar made them pay more attention to speed and had reduced the overall speed on roadways. On the other hand, respondents are highly supportive of using photo radar for playground/school zone enforcement. Respondents also support more education on 'speed limits'. The fourth priority for enforcement and first priority for education is 'safe operation of vehicles'. This category could be seen to encompass the first three priorities and is perhaps best addressed through education, and secondarily through enforcement. One respondent wrote that he thought that people, himself included, become sloppy drivers with time.

Generally speaking, respondents felt that red light cameras are very effective at preventing drivers from running red lights, with the majority of these endorsing the use of cameras in either 'high density traffic areas' or 'areas with high accident rates'.

Very few people came into contact with a Bylaw Officer for a violation or as a complainant. Complainants were more satisfied than dissatisfied with this encounter. However, those contacted for a violation were about equally divided between being satisfied and dissatisfied. It is interesting to note that significant numbers of both complainants and those complained about indicated dissatisfaction with how matters were handled. 'Streets' and 'property standards' were most often seen to be important bylaw enforcement issues whereas 'skateboarding' and 'parks' were least often chosen. Narrative comments (APPENDIX B) asked for improved enforcement of the noise bylaw, with some mention made of general public curfews.

One in five respondents indicated having been a victim of crime. This seems to be an encouraging statistic, given that the 1999 survey revealed that a higher number of respondents (more than one in four) had been victimized by crime. These results also seem to echo a 2004 StatsCan 'Crime Statistics' report which documents a national decrease in the crime rate since 1991 (with the exception of 2003). While most neighbourhoods exhibited similar trends to the above, the Flats areas stood out as having the highest proportion of victims of crime (30%). Young citizens (under 21 years old) seem particularly vulnerable to crime.

Despite the reduced rate in crime victimization (as reported in the 1999 and 2005 surveys), a majority of respondents (59%) believed, at least somewhat, that crime had increased in the past two years. Understandably, more victims believed 'absolutely' that crime had increased than the general population. Only 4% of all respondents believe 'not at all' that crime has increased,



whereas in 1999, one third of respondents believed that crime had either remained the same or decreased.

Similarly, while in 2005 half of the respondents believe the crime rate in Medicine Hat is less than that in other Canadian cities, in 1999 84% of respondents believed the crime rate was less or the same in Medicine Hat as in other Canadian cities *of comparable size*. The fact that 2005 survey respondents were asked to compare crime with any other Canadian city, reinforces the finding that 2005 respondents perceived an increase in crime in Medicine Hat. It would be interesting to look at actual changes in crime statistics for Medicine Hat over the years in question to see if public perception is supported by the evidence.

A large majority of respondents (79%) reported feeling 'very much' or 'absolutely' safe in Medicine Hat. In 1999, 49% reported feeling 'very safe'. Unfortunately, a direct comparison between the two years is difficult because a four point scale was used in 1999, while a five point scale was used in 2005. Although the words sound the same, respondents may have chosen differently based on the number of alternative responsive. Similarly, 78% of respondents feel absolutely or very safe in their own neighbourhoods, which is down from 1999 (85%). More than 20% of respondents from the Flats, 15% from the SW Hill area, and 12% from the Downtown area feel less safe in their own neighbourhood than in Medicine Hat in general, while only 7-9% respondents of other neighbourhoods felt less safe in their own neighbourhoods. The respondents from the Flats felt least safe in Medicine Hat as a whole and in their own neighbourhood compared to respondents from other areas.

While most respondents expressed very little or no fear of going into other areas in Medicine Hat, one in three were at least somewhat likely to avoid going to an area for fear of crime. Interestingly, victims of crime were not any more inclined to avoid areas of the city than the other respondents. As in 1999, the Flats and Downtown areas were most likely to be avoided. The Crestwood/Norwood area was least likely to be avoided. The main reason for avoiding areas was the fear of being assaulted, and the primary factor thought to be contributing to crime was drug use. The most frequently cited crime and primary factor contributing to crime for the avoided area are both different from those cited most frequently regarding respondents' own neighbourhoods.

Whereas the 1999 respondents were victimized by a broad spectrum of crimes, the vast majority of 2005 respondents were victims of property crime, especially vandalism, theft under \$5000, break and enter, and automobile theft. 17% of respondents had been victimized by property crime, with very few having been victimized by violent crimes.



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In their own neighbourhoods, citizens were most concerned about property crimes, specifically break and enter and vandalism. While theft was a significant concern (14%) in 1999, it did not appear to be so in 2005. This is interesting given that victims reported theft as being one of the crimes encountered most frequently. Most neighbourhoods followed this pattern except the Flats. Flats area respondents were as concerned about drug trafficking (23%; up from 14% in 1999) as they were about break and enter and vandalism in that neighbourhood. All age groups identified break and enter and vandalism as being of major concern, while endorsing differing crimes as the next most frequently identified concern. Those under 20 years old and under were concerned about sexual assault, those between 21 and 70 years old were concerned about drug trafficking, and those over 70 years old were concerned about fraud.

'Young offender' was named most often as the primary factor contributing to crime in their own neighbourhood, although less often than in 1999. It would be interesting to compare the actual crime statistics regarding young offenders with the perceptions in this survey.

The next most highly endorsed factors contributing to crime differed depending on neighbourhood and age. Flats and Downtown area respondents named 'drug use' as a primary factor, while respondents from the Crestwood, River Heights and Southridge areas felt that 'lack of police presence' contributed significantly to crime in their neighbourhood. It is interesting to note that 'lack of police presence' was seen to be more of a contributing factor to crime in respondents' own neighbourhoods than in the neighbourhoods they avoided. Young respondents (under 21 years old) tended to put less emphasis on young offenders and named 'intoxicated people' just as frequently. Middle aged people named 'lack of police presence' as a major contributing factor, while the elderly (over 70) and also the 21 to 30 year olds identified 'drug use' as contributing significantly to crime.

Respondents cited 'avoiding places' and 'burglar alarms' most frequently as being important security measures. In 1999, the question was worded differently so as to reflect actual adopted measures, and 'changing routines/activities', 'changing locks', and 'avoiding certain areas' were the most frequently adopted measures. Victims of crime tend to view 'owning a dog' as an important security measure more often than other respondents. Victims are also more likely to have electronic alarms at their business, and less likely to have them in their homes, than the other respondents.



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Respondents highly endorsed prevention activities, consultants (AADAC and police) in schools, and increased enforcement of substance abuse as strategies to deal with youth alcohol and drug abuse. Narrative comments (APPENDIX B) requested more of a 'zero-tolerance' stance toward illegal drug use.

In 1999, one in six respondents was a victim of an unreported crime while in 2005, one in nine were victims of unreported crimes. This seems to indicate that people are more willing to report crimes in 2005 than in 1999. 'Minor property value' is still the main reason why some victims do not report crime. There were fewer witnesses than victims of crime among the respondents, with 'impaired driving' being the crime witnessed most often. 'Other' was the reason most often given for not reporting a witnessed crime, followed by lack of faith in the justice system and in police, respectively.

Over half (58%) of the respondents had had some contact with the police. This is down slightly from 1999, when 64% of respondents had contact of some kind. The most frequent interaction was as a result of a traffic violation (22%), followed by as a complainant regarding a bylaw (16%), as a victim of crime (15%), in the context of a public information session (8%), as a result of a bylaw violation (7%), as a witness to a crime (7%) and as a suspect in a crime (1%).

Usually more were satisfied than dissatisfied with their contact, especially those involved in the public information sessions (94% vs. 5%) and to a lesser degree, victims and witnesses of crime. Suspects of crime and bylaw complainants were marginally more satisfied than dissatisfied with their contact. Levels of satisfaction of traffic law violators were not assessed. Interestingly, the most dissatisfied with their contact were either bylaw violators or bylaw complainants. There may be numerous reasons for this, including existing conflicts between neighbours, a relative lack of clarity in understanding when a bylaw has been breached, and so on. Post-contact follow-up or focus groups might be two ways of assessing the source of dissatisfaction.

A higher proportion of victims, than of the general population of respondents, was dissatisfied with how the Medicine Hat Police Service communicates through the media. They were also less satisfied with how the police supply information regarding ways to reduce crime, with how the police enforces laws, and with overall services. Victims' assessment of the responsiveness and approachability of the police was similar to that of the general population, with the exception of those who had been victimized by crime more than once. These indicated 'very little' satisfaction with the responsiveness of police more often than the rest of respondents.



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In 1999, respondents were asked to respond with 'excellent', 'good', 'average' or 'fair', and 'poor' to questions regarding various aspects of policing. The 2005 survey has given 'absolutely', 'very much', 'somewhat', 'very little', and 'not at all' as rating choices. For purposes of comparison between the two surveys, 'excellent' and 'good' have been equated with 'absolutely' and 'very much', 'average' or 'fair' has been equated with 'somewhat', and 'poor' has been equated with 'very little' and 'not at all'. Overall satisfaction with the police service is similar to 1999, with 89% at least somewhat satisfied. In 1999, respondents were more inclined to use the extremes in the scale, with 10% more respondents rating the service good or better, and 7% more rating the services 'poor'. In 2005, only 4% were not satisfied. Satisfaction with the responsiveness of police is similar to 1999 with about 70% at least somewhat satisfied. Very few respondents were not satisfied with the Medicine Hat Police Service's enforcement of the law, responsiveness and approachability. Although the majority of respondents still rate approachability and enforcement effectiveness of police as being good or excellent, there has been a 10% shift in satisfaction from 'absolutely' and 'very much' to 'somewhat' since 1999. Respondents' satisfaction with how police supply information to the public on ways to reduce crime has gone down 20% from 'absolutely' and 'very much' to 'somewhat'. Most respondents are now only 'somewhat' satisfied.

In general, there is a desire for greater communication. While 42% of respondents were happy with the frequency of communication, 38% would like more information. Similarly, the second most frequently endorsed area of improvement in both 1999 and 2005 was 'relations/communications between police and community'. Respondents also indicated that they would like to be kept informed about the progress of criminal investigations, either at regular intervals or when major developments occur. The vast majority of respondents also indicated that it was important for them to receive a callback if they lodged a bylaw complaint. Respondents generally appreciated public information sessions and would like better/more information on how to reduce crime. There is also a strong desire for further/continuing education on the 'safe operation of a vehicle'.

Very few respondents had visited the police website. The majority of respondents did not visit the site because they either did not know it existed or felt no cause to visit it. Making the site a destination of choice, perhaps by adding more news or information on community service and public education programmes (as suggested by visitors to the site), and then telling the public about it through other communication media, may make it a more effective tool. It would be helpful to have an integrated public information and communication programme.

While many saw communication as the main area for improvement, even more felt that there should be an increase in the number of 'vehicle patrols in residential areas'. This corresponds to



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a perceived 'lack of police presence' as one of the primary factors contributing to crime in neighbourhoods in which most respondents lived. However, the proportion of people who endorsed 'vehicle patrols' is almost double that of those who identified 'lack of police presence'.

Interestingly, although young offenders are still mentioned as the primary factor contributing to crime in all neighbourhoods, respondents did not heavily endorse 'relations between youth and police' as an area requiring improvement, as they did in 1999. Does this mean that most respondents feel that the relationship between youth and police is as good as it can be? Or have communication with the public and vehicle patrols become more pressing needs?

The majority of respondents had not noticed or did not know what area of the police service had shown the most improvement. Nevertheless, of the areas identified, 'bike patrols' were mentioned most often. Similarly, 'bike patrols' were not highly endorsed as an area needing improvement.

In summary, the 2005 Medicine Hat Policing and Safety Survey was developed to provide the public with the opportunity to provide input regarding key operational areas of the Medicine Hat Police Service. As in 1999, results of the 2005 survey suggest that citizens appear to feel a significant degree of safety and are satisfied with the performance of the police. It is hoped that the findings contained in this report will stimulate initiatives which will lead to further improvements in crime prevention, safety and public confidence in their police.