



Building Safer Communities in Stratford

Findings and Recommendations

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Table of Contents

03 Honouring Indigenous Peoples of Canada

04 Background

09 Limitations

11 Emerging Themes

- Challenges With Civic Engagement And Youth Leadership - Moving Towards Meaningful Youth Engagement
- Building An Understanding Of Youth Gang And Gun Related Crime And Human Trafficking With/For Service Providers And The Broader Community
- Gaps In Service Provision For Youth
- Identification Of Service Provider Needs And Working Towards More Collaboration
- Diversity, Equity, And Social Inclusion
- Youth Homelessness

27 Creating a Critical Path - City of Stratford Youth Strategy / Actionable Next Steps

31 Conclusion

33 Appendix

Honouring Indigenous Peoples of Canada

Our attempts to discuss issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion include our dedication to the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island. The struggle of Indigenous people is unique and distinct from the issues of diversity as discussed in this document. These struggles are centuries old and include the reclaiming of Indigenous lands, the respect of treaties, and redress for the generations of Indigenous peoples who have been harmed by inequity in Canada. All non-Indigenous peoples are in fact newcomers to the land we are on and what we refer to as Canada.

We acknowledge that Stratford is positioned on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples. As we gather, we are reminded that the City of Stratford is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples today. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and play on this land.

We have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals, ancestors that walked before us, and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples for sharing their traditional territory with us. We also recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous people on this land.



Background

Adolescence is a period of development in which many of the risk factors relating to interpersonal violence become more pronounced. More youth die from acts of violence than from all diseases combined and are more than twice as likely as adults to be the victims of violence, most often committed by other teens (Irwing, Berg, & Cart, 2002). In Ontario, one-in-ten students report carrying a weapon (such as a knife or gun), 6% report participating in gang fights, and 2% report carrying a handgun (Adlaf, Pagua-Boak, Beitchman & Worfe, 2005).

Youth crime is real in the City of Stratford and County of Perth with Police making youth crime a top priority. The City of Stratford Social Services as well as community organizations and agencies working within the City and County identified a rise in violent crimes over the years and are working to implement programs and services to reduce the rate of occurrences. Youth violence results from the interplay of individual, family, relationships, community, and societal factors. It is strongly shaped by social determinants of health such as poverty, social exclusion, racism, unemployment, inadequate housing, and community disorganization (CAMH Policy Statement: A Balanced Approach to Youth Violence).

There is significant research and experiences that tell us how important it is to invest in youth. By supporting positive youth development, costs to health care, justice, social assistance, and child protection are minimized. Research indicates that having access to safe places to socialize impacts youth confidence, health, and positive development¹. Research shows that young people who witness crimes are more likely to commit crimes themselves, and less likely to achieve educational and employment success². Furthermore, youth that feel excluded may begin to disconnect from society, which in turn can lead to higher-risk behaviour such as violence, alcohol, and drug use. Some at-risk young people may not have sufficient access to safe and nurturing environments.

Research shows that those who were bullies in childhood and adolescence are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors later in life³.

¹Ministry of Children and Youth Services. 2012. "Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development." Last modified June 13, 2012.

²McMurtry, R., and Curling, A. 2008. "The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence: Vol. 1 – Findings, Analysis and Conclusions."

³Lawson, A., Gardiner, S., Johansson, B., MacLaurin, B., Giray, E., & Crockford, T. 2006. "Addressing the effects of child maltreatment through the lens of domestic violence."CECW Research in Brief #1. Toronto, Canada: Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto.

Children who bully others are 37% more likely to grow up and commit crimes as adults⁴.

The goal of social inclusion is to give all young people an equal chance for participation in our communities, no matter their ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, language, gender identity, economic status, age or disability status. An experience with discrimination, harassment or stigma based on a young person's race, gender, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs can cause them to feel rejected and disconnected from their communities. Systematic oppression and racism can impact a young person's self-identity and life choices. Research indicates that creating an environment that is safe and accepting and that allows youth to recognize their cultural strengths and differences supports positive outcomes⁵.

In response to protecting youth from entering crime and helping residents feel safe in their communities, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada has launched a new federal support - The Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF). The BSCF will help address youth gun and gang violence by funding select communities across Canada, including the City of Stratford. Funding allocations have been put in place for community-led projects to combat gun and gang violence and address knowledge gaps concerning the impacts of interventions in gun and gang violence.

The goals of the BSCF are to:

1. Develop local and community-based strategies and initiatives
2. Build capacity to better understand the nature, scope and impacts of the types of prevention and intervention initiatives implemented
3. Enhance evidence-based and targeted prevention and intervention activities
4. Advance knowledge and evidence of what works, and
5. Develop a data collection strategy and system

⁴Public Safety Canada. 2011. "Bullying Prevention: Nature and Extent of Bullying in Canada." Last modified July 18, 2011.

⁵Collaborative Community Health Research Centre, University of Victoria. 2002. "Research Review of Best Practices for Provision of Youth Services".

To support the goals of BSCF as listed above, in the Summer of 2023, Taneja Consulting Inc. was contracted to host conversations across Stratford and Perth to build a localized understanding of youth crime, specifically with guns and gangs, to gather more insights on intersecting issues with crime such as drugs, diversity, and youth engagement, and to provide recommendations on how to address youth crime. This work with the City and resulting data collection is shared below through themes and recommendations. A primary goal of this report is to act as a starting point for a community-wide conversation with youth in the service area and to work with providers in the development of a Youth Strategy.

With the City of Stratford experiencing population increases between 2016-2022 of 5.3%, it is seeing a growing number of racialized communities. Through an integrated anti-racism anti-oppression lens, the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded in the analysis and resulting recommendations.

Change begins with our youth, our systems, and the collective co-creation of wraparound supports that can potentially change the life trajectory of youth who are involved in or at risk of falling into gang life. In the City of Stratford, many organizations, individuals, and communities are involved in supporting youth. The intention of this report is to broaden the collective understanding of challenges faced by today's youth, enhance and scale up existing programs and services, provide opportunities for new collaborative and innovative solutions, support capacity building of community organizations, and increase public awareness regarding the issues faced by Stratford youth and service providers.

Through the Building Safer Communities Project, there was an opportunity to speak to diverse service providers (please refer to Appendix A for the list of providers consulted; Appendix B for the key informant script) across Stratford with the goal of gaining an understanding of their awareness and challenges with youth in gangs and crime with a focus on the change in gang and gun crime, an

exploration of the factors affecting the issues, the risk factors leading youth into crime, the availability of preventative and/or intervention supports, the current gaps, and approaches used to support youth crime. Fourteen (14) organizations across Stratford and Perth participated in key informant interviews. Furthermore, a service provider survey (please refer to Appendix C for the provider survey questions) was created and disseminated across the City to explore providers' experiences, thoughts, and insights on youth crime across the City and County. The survey yielded 14 responses from providers across both Stratford and Perth.



Limitations

The methodology used aligned with the tight timelines of the project. With the primary data source for this project being key informant interviews with providers [n=20], the consulting team wanted to give more providers an opportunity to share their voice through a survey. The survey was disseminated by the City and shared with key informant participants to share with their networks with the survey yielding 14 responses in total. Even though the diversity of participants was broad as providers identified being from different geographies and sectors, more respondents would have given consultants more insights and experiences to shape the recommendations with.

The most significant limitation of the project was the absence of youth engaged in consultations. A Youth Campaign was launched through the City and community collaborators with an incentive for youth to participate. Unfortunately, the campaign yielded only 3 responses of which none of the submissions gave the project team data to use. As recognized in the recommendations put forward, it is the Consulting team's suggestion to continue creating opportunities to engage a diverse range of youth in the creation of a youth strategy and corresponding actions.



Emerging Themes

The emerging themes are composed using both key informant and survey data and align with the intent of the BSCF. There is an understanding with providers that youth with intersectionalities may be more vulnerable to experiencing multiple barriers and challenges in their lives. These intersectionalities include newcomer youth, Indigenous youth, racialized youth, youth with disabilities or special needs, youth in and leaving care, LGBTQ2+ youth, youth living in rural and remote communities, youth from low-income families, and youth in conflict with the law etc. As a result, within the activities and recommendations listed below, these youth may need more targeted supports and opportunities to ensure they experience positive impacts of Stratford's continued efforts.

THEME 1

Challenges with Civic Engagement and Youth Leadership - Moving Towards Meaningful Youth Engagement

Participants indicated that there are limited activities for youth to be engaged in and cited that post Covid-19, they are seeing youth lacking social skills and the ability to develop relationships. Furthermore, engaging youth between the ages of 12+ in recreation and community programs is very challenging and providers expressed that when given the opportunity, youth do not always contribute to conversations and planning around youth programs. They spoke to not only providing opportunities for youth to engage but also meeting youth where they congregate.

Providers expressed that youth are nested and interconnected with several different community partners such as parents/caregivers and schools. Providers expressed the need to provide supports to parents/caregivers along with focusing on youth-specific activities.

THEME 1

Challenges with civic engagement and youth leadership



Activities:

- Facilitate conversations on how to engage youth and keep them safe, identify, with youth how to provide a safe, inviting space, focus on how trust can be built between providers and youth
- Encourage youth leadership and innovation in identified community activities; examine the feasibility of reintroducing the Youth Mayor's Task Force

- Create opportunities for youth voices to be heard and reflected in policy-making
- Enhance opportunities for volunteerism
- Create a parent network with an emphasis on sharing tools, supporting service navigation, building a network, building their capacity, and building their knowledge and awareness of youth crime, gang involvement, drug use, and human-trafficking

Priority Outcomes:

- Youth play a role in informing decisions that affect them
- Youth are engaged in their communities
- Youth leverage their lived experiences and assets to address social issues
- Parents are informed and feel confident in responding to and supporting youth at risk of or in crime

THEME 2

Building An Understanding Of Youth Gang And Gun Related Crime And Human Trafficking With/For Service Providers And The Broader Community

There was an overwhelming number of providers that spoke to youth engaging in drug activity at younger ages (13/14 years of age) with some indicating that children as young as elementary school engaged in vaping. The drugs mentioned were pot, cocaine, and fentanyl with many suggesting the need of a taskforce to discuss and resolve underlying issues. Furthermore, providers spoke to youth on drugs as a way to self-medicate from personal issues and mental health such as depression. Poly drug use was seen as more common along with youth having a sophisticated knowledge of drugs.

There seems to be inconsistencies with providers' knowledge of gangs and human trafficking across the City and County with some not seeing youth gang/human trafficking involvement, some seeing the development of gangs and more weapons with others speaking about youth actively involved with gangs and trafficking within the city and within the GTA. Furthermore, some providers spoke to youth having more access to weapons such as knives and guns and youth feeling the need to carry them for their own safety and to intimidate others.



First and foremost, providers spoke to the root cause of youth crime and gang involvement and expressed: 'when kids are not held and don't have community, there is a loyalty and protection that gangs provide. Feelings of being taken care of when no one will/did. They are accepted for who they are.'

Providers are speaking to an increase in human trafficking for youth, specifically girls, ages 12-13. They indicate that girls are being groomed on video games/chats with victims being moved out quickly from Stratford or Perth to bigger cities like Toronto.

Providers state: 'when there is vulnerability, young women can be

easily swayed. There is a low sense of belonging and feeling loved. Some kids want to escape small town life – they want to escape into the big city.'

Educational activities for youth, providers, and residents on crime, gangs, and human trafficking was seen as a key prevention approach.

THEME 2

Building an understanding of youth gang and gun related crime and human trafficking with/for service providers and the broader community

Activities:

- Develop/scale up and execute two distinct but complementary public education campaigns using social media platforms, in-person town halls/community meetings, marketing strategies etc. Both campaigns must demonstrate the linkages to substance use and addictions (drugs, poly-drugs, alcohol etc.)
 - *raise awareness around gangs/guns and related crimes* with youth serving organizations, school boards, police, and youth. This campaign should include a description of what the issue is, data that depicts the severity of the issue, and resources available in the community to support. Ensure that public education campaigns with youth start as early as grade 4.
 - *raise awareness around human trafficking* with school boards, police, youth serving organizations,
- and youth. This campaign should include a description of what the issue is, data that depicts the severity of the issue, and resources available in the community to support. Ensure that public education campaigns with children start as early as grade 4 with relevant and appropriate language and topics (i.e., self-esteem, body image, personal safety etc.).
- Increase the human trafficking workshops as provided by police and Victim Services
- Create an awareness raising campaign with and for parents that speaks to identifying risk behaviours, mental health resources; and create spaces for parents/caregivers to share their experiences and challenges.
- Develop definitions in the youth crime and gang space with the goal of measuring the prevalence of youth gang and gun crime, drug use, and human trafficking. Metrics, evaluation frameworks, and data sharing protocols should be co-created with police, school boards, and youth serving organizations.



THEME 2

Building an understanding of youth gang and gun related crime and human trafficking with/for service providers and the broader community

Priority Outcomes:

- Broad based public education campaigns on guns/gang have been co-created and delivered/implemented
- Broad based public education campaigns on human trafficking have been co-created and delivered/implemented
- Parent/caregiver groups are established, resources created, and capacity and confidence of parents/caregivers being built
- A systems-wide evaluation framework co-created with partners that accurately measures the prevalence of youth crime, gang involvement, and human trafficking and the development of metrics that all partners can use to capture and illustrate the issue

THEME 3

Gaps In Service Provision For Youth

Providers spoke about the need for more barrier-free, subsidized (or free) recreational and non-recreational programming across the City of Stratford and Town of Perth, with a focus on youth ages 14 and up and a specific focus on girls. Furthermore, providers spoke to needing more diverse coaches/program leads that could attract, understand, and resonate with the more diverse youth. With the higher newcomer populations immigrating to Stratford and Perth, there is a gap in providing programs that bridge the cultural gaps and create a sense of commonality and familiarity between youth of diverse races. Providers mention that spaces need to feel safe, welcoming, and inclusive as people of different races, socio-economic statuses, and sexual orientations are feeling 'othered.' Additionally, having programming that is trauma-informed supports those

youth that are experiencing inter-generational trauma in terms of poverty, family breakup, domestic violence, social media etc. Currently, there are youth spaces that have a stigma of being spaces for youth practicing specific religions and that are perceived as 'struggling.'

Providers also spoke about the lack of addictions and mental health supports for youth as they are seeing more calls highlighting a lack of conflict management, inability to manage relationships, acting inappropriately when things are not going the way they want, a lack of self-regulation, etc. There were also several providers that spoke to more anxiety, isolation, and depression in youth. Specifically, they mentioned that social media and gaming are playing a role in anxiety disorders with providers seeing younger and younger children facing anxiety. Considering mental health supports are few and far between in Stratford, waitlists for community services are also growing.

THEME 3

Gaps in service provision for youth



Activities:

- Identify all current youth spaces and discuss youth and parent perceptions of these spaces with the goal of developing strategies that reduce the stigma that may be attached to them
- Examine, develop, and implement a mentorship program between at risk elementary students and high school students.
- Examine the opportunity of developing a youth hub that can provide safe spaces, programs that can foster a sense of belonging, and opportunities to build and see healthy adult role-models and relationships.

Activities to include:

- Co-create (with providers and youth) and develop a plan to provide a variety of non-recreational after-school programs for youth utilizing, in the interim, existing community spaces/buildings.
- Develop strategies and programming to support youth after school hours; adapt services and supports for both rural and urban communities.
- Co-create more safe spaces for youth to build relationships, to share their experiences with mental health, and to learn and have access to resources around self-regulation.

Priority Outcomes:

- Youth have access to safe spaces that provide quality opportunities for socialization, recreation, and non-recreation activities
- Youth know about and can easily navigate resources in their communities
- Youth form and maintain healthy, close relationships to support mental and physical health and wellness



THEME 4

Identification Of Service Provider Needs And Working Towards More Collaboration

There seems to not only be a lack of services for youth but also an unawareness, by providers, of the services available. Providers indicate:

- There is a lack of settlement services
- There is no programming for at risk youth
- There is no longer a youth centre
- For some sports, such as basketball, youth have to travel to other cities to play
- There is a need for more supports for youth after school hours
- There needs to be more awareness of and familiarity with services provided by other organizations
- There is a rural/urban difference with smaller communities not having a lot of supports for youth
- There are youth in residential programs that are not in school; ensure that services are marketed to not just youth in school
- There is a need for schools, the City of Stratford, and other local non-for-profits to develop partnerships so they can develop collective strategies



THEME 4

Identification of service provider needs and working towards more collaboration

Providers also spoke about schools extensively and indicated that they are hearing about violence in schools escalating and have expressed:

- Schools need to be used as hubs after school – these spaces are accessible and familiar to youth
- The hope that the youth justice workers in schools' program could be reinstated – this is seen as a preventative approach to youth crime
- The perception is that educators are feeling unsafe in their work environment as they are experiencing more aggressive behaviours and negative verbal interactions. Providers indicated that educators are burning out and are relying on suspensions and expulsion instead of using prevention and proactive approaches that examine root causes
- There is a perception that there are more hate-based crimes at Catholic schools
- Youth in high school are afraid to go the bathroom in fear of being bullied and/or others are using the bathrooms as a place to do drugs and vaping

THEME 4

Identification of service provider needs and working towards more collaboration

Activities:

- Create regular opportunities for organizations to share what they do, who they provide services to – this enhanced awareness will support referrals but also build relationships amongst providers
- The City of Stratford to continue to build and nurture relationships with community centres, school boards (social workers, mental health leads, student advocates) with the intention of staff identifying and sharing collective trends emerging for children/youth displaying factors that are considered 'at risk' such as anti-social behaviours and low attendance in school. Use these trends to inform and develop prevention approaches.
- Continue to build on service coordination to enhance and scale up collaborative efforts amongst organizations to ensure wraparound supports are connected and comprehensive so that youth will only have to tell their story once.

- Develop training and build capacity around implementing a trauma-informed lens across programs.

Priority Outcomes:

- An increase in awareness and familiarity with youth-serving organizations leading to more referrals and less youth falling through the cracks
- More collaboration amongst youth-serving organizations that can co-develop youth prevention/intervention programs
- A deeper and more comprehensive understanding of 'at risk' behaviours – this enhanced understanding can culminate in the creation of prevention activities that speak to the at-risk behaviours
- Organizations provide services and supports that are trauma-informed and keep the youth/family at the centre of their program planning and implementation

THEME 5

Diversity, Equity, And Social Inclusion -

Respect And Foster The Diversity Of Youth In Stratford, (i.e., Newcomers, Racialized, Special Needs/Differing Abilities, Indigenous, etc.)

With the increase in newcomers, providers spoke to being concerned for newcomers, undocumented citizens, and Indigenous communities as they are typically more vulnerable and yet are not being seen accessing community supports and services. Providers spoke to youth crime increasing towards visible minorities as Caucasian youth may not know how to interact with the diversity that is entering communities. There is consensus among providers that racism exists and is on the rise in Stratford and Perth along with homophobia and discrimination towards people with lower socio-economic backgrounds.

THEME 5

Diversity, equity, and social inclusion

Activities:

- Develop an intentional and separate diversity, equity and social inclusion awareness building/public education campaign, targeting the entire community, that builds relationships and understanding of the diversity (race, gender, sexual orientation, ability etc.) in the communities.
- Raise awareness and understanding of new demographics entering into the communities; diverse service providers must be engaged in the campaign(s)
- Review existing programs and services to ensure they are barrier-free, inclusive and culturally responsive.

Priority Outcomes:

- Diverse and racialized youth experience social inclusion, a sense of belonging and value diversity
- Youth feel safe at home, school, online and in their communities
- Youth respect and are respected by school administrators, community organizations and the justice system



THEME 6

Youth Homelessness

Many spoke to youth homelessness being a by-product of family breakdown and interpersonal violence amongst family members with very little services in Stratford and/or Perth to support. Many spoke to the trauma and abuse in youth' history and recognized that shelters can trigger the trauma as they are communal settings which leads to youth feeling more vulnerable. There seems to be more young women experiencing homelessness with more prevalence of trans girls in the shelter system. Access to shelters was shared as a concern for providers along with the lack of attainable, safe housing for young people. Youth homelessness is also being attributed to a lack of youth employment and employers in Stratford.

Youth homelessness or couch surfing was seen as a key intersection point with youth crime, youth gang involvement, and human trafficking.



THEME 6

Youth homelessness

Activities:

- Review access to shelters for youth in Stratford and Perth County; work with shelters to examine how the time that youth spend in shelters can be minimized
- Identify and define what affordable and safe housing looks like for youth; examine how many of these housing units are across communities
- Develop an understanding of the intersecting points between youth crime and homelessness
- Work with the Stratford & District Chambers of Commerce and local youth-serving employment agencies to develop a youth specific employment strategy

Priority Outcomes:

- Barriers to accessing shelters are identified and solutions to removing them are implemented; youth stay at shelters is shortened through community supports
- Processes created that accurately identify the number of homeless youth and up to date counts on the number of appropriate housing units available for youth
- The co-creation of a youth employment strategy



Creating a Critical Path - City of Stratford Youth Strategy / Actionable Next Steps

The City of Stratford is committed to working together with youth, community organizations, school boards, police, and other identified allies to support Stratford's youth to be hopeful, healthy, safe, engaged, included, and educated contributing members of their communities. To this end, the following key activities have been identified as key contributors towards a comprehensive Youth Strategy.

A | Creating spaces, initiatives, and collective approaches to youth engagement. Continue examining the lack of engagement and develop opportunities for youth to participate in planning and programming. Cultivate youth influencers that can resonate with youth and meet them where they are at. These influencers can help champion the youth strategy and seek youth engagement throughout its development and implementation. Review promising practices on youth recruitment and engagement with a focus on how to meet youth where they are at (physically, emotionally, socially etc.).

B | Engage parent serving organizations in the development of the youth strategy. Parents are seen as an essential collaborator that can help to engage youth and also inform youth of priority issues in our communities. Build capacities of parents so they feel aware, knowledgeable, and comfortable with addressing youth crime, gang involvement, and human trafficking. Equip parents/caregivers with prevention approaches and in discussions on root causes of youth crime.

C | Co-create, with providers and youth, a youth hub. Ensure the hub is accessible and inclusive to all youth from differing diversities, geographies, and abilities. Explore transportation needs to and from rural communities as part of the engagement strategy.

D | There are gaps in youth services with few that centre their work on prevention and/or intervention with youth crime and/or youth at risk of crime. Develop relationships, strategies, programs with organizations for youth at risk. These programs need to meet youth where they congregate and align their programming with the different cultures, religions, and diversities found in the communities.

E | Build relationships with providers including school boards, police, youth-serving organizations (mainstream and grassroots organizations) and identify where there may be gaps in services such as ethno-specific and non-recreational services. Develop strategies to fill these gaps while creating

opportunities for providers to learn what each other do and the services and supports each provide.

F | Develop a Building Safer Communities Targeted Task Force that works in collaboration with relevant community partners (school board(s) to be co-chairs) to coordinate and deliver the following objectives:

- Conduct research into gun and gang themes, types of guns and gang violence occurring in the area, trends, statistics, gaps in services, emerging issues
- A scan of current youth programs available across Stratford, Perth, and St. Marys with the goal of identifying gaps, use, and relevance with youth needs. Marketing of the existing programs needs to be a priority
- Develop and co-create prevention activities on a continuum that recognizes and identifies the social determinants of health that are factors contributing to crime (such as homelessness, mental health, poverty, discrimination, etc.).

G | Develop a 'Youth Prevention/Intervention Table' with all school boards to present/share issues and develop collective solutions with community partners; this work to be linked with the current Situational Table but be centered through a youth prevention focus lens.

H | Develop an understanding of the newcomers immigrating to Stratford and Perth - their cultures, religions, and customs. Adapt programming that responds to their needs.

I | Examine and understand the realities of youth homelessness with relevant community partners - develop an understanding of the root causes and who is most at risk. Examine what strategies and initiatives other communities across Canada and broader have implemented and discuss the viability of those strategies for Stratford.

J | Develop a data development agenda - an approach to metric development and data acquisition that can accurately speak to youth crime. Providers and the community at large should be aware of the issues and if and

how the City and County are making progress on metrics of youth crime, gang involvement, and human trafficking.



Conclusion

Youth crime is real in the City of Stratford. In response, the Stratford Police, the City of Stratford Social Services, community organizations, and agencies have made addressing youth crime a priority and in turn, have committed to improving outcomes for youth. The increase in violent crimes over the years is the motivation for the creation of the City of Stratford Youth Strategy. By articulating the plan with anticipated outcomes, the identified priorities will be used to guide decision-making and encourage coordination amongst those involved with supporting youth.

The intentional convening and engaging of all key collaborators (school boards, Police, parents/caregivers, social services, mental health supports, etc.) to take ownership and commit to this work is paramount to the success of the youth strategy. This deliberate focus will build on the good work that is already taking place across the City, however, there is the recognition that there is more work to be done to build stronger and more effective partnerships, in defining and implementing collaborative activities, enhancing service providers capacity, and to increase public education campaigns around guns and gangs / youth at risk of falling into crime, human trafficking, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

It is only by working together that the City of Stratford will be able to successfully support their youth to transition into adulthood through programs and services that are responsive to the needs and strengths of all youth to be hopeful, healthy, safe, engaged, included, educated, and contributing members of their communities. Based on the many conversations we had across all communities, we feel strongly that the recommendations above will begin to address and alleviate youth crime, specifically with guns and gangs, and support healthier communities.

Appendix A

Key informant list

Avon Maitland District School Board
City of Stratford
CMHA Huron-Perth
Huron Perth Centre
Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board
Huron-Perth Public Health
North Perth
North Perth Community Services
Optimism Place
Perth East
Shelterlink
St Marys Community Services
Stratford Community Services
Stratford Police Services
United Way Perth-Huron

**Key Informant Script – Providers
Building Safer Communities Fund
City of Stratford**

Context

The objective of the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) is to support Municipalities and Indigenous governments in their efforts to address gun and gang prevalence in local communities. A funding allocation has been put in place for community-led projects to combat gun and gang violence and address knowledge gaps concerning the impacts of interventions in gun and gang violence.

The Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada is responsible for administering contributions agreements to municipal governments as well as Indigenous communities, which then can redistribute all or a portion of the funding to support gang prevention and intervention initiatives, in accordance with their respective needs.

The Department of Public Safety continues to work in collaboration with municipal governments and Indigenous communities to understand the gun and gang violence-related priority issues and will continue to facilitate a coordinated national data collection strategy.

Goals of BSCF

1. Develop local and community-based strategies and initiatives
2. Build capacity to better understand the nature, scope and impacts of the types of prevention and intervention initiatives implemented
3. Enhance evidence-based and targeted prevention and intervention activities
4. Advance knowledge and evidence of what works, and
5. Develop a data collection strategy and system

The City of Stratford is one of many communities that is a recipient of these funds. To support the goals of BSCF as listed above, we would like to get a better sense of youth crime, specifically guns and gangs, in the City of Stratford and Perth County.

Questions

Context

1. How has youth crime, specifically gangs and guns changed over time? What changes have you seen?
2. What factors do you see as contributing to youth wanting to engage in gang crime (guns, drugs, human trafficking)?
3. What are the risk factors that lead youth into crime? (i.e., family stressors, school stressors, drugs, low school attendance, mental health, ethnicity, poverty)
4. Is youth crime higher in specific geographies across Stratford? (i.e., Stratford, St. Marys, North Perth, West Perth, Perth East, Perth South)

Partners

1. How are schools responding to this increase in youth crime? Are there programs, initiatives, supports schools are providing?
2. How does your organization support youth crime prevention/intervention? Do you provide specific programs?
3. What gaps do you see in service provision?
4. What partnerships are you aware of in this space?

Approach to youth crime

1. If you had to create an approach to managing youth crime in Stratford & Perth what would it include? (i.e., engage families, be adaptable to other cultures, work with younger youth)
2. Would you focus on more prevention programs or intervention programs?
3. Is there sufficient public awareness or/and educational activities for youth around youth crime? (specifically guns and gangs)

Appendix C
Service Provider
Survey – BSCF
Developing Priorities

Through your experiences and observations as a provider, please complete this survey using your organizational lens. All data collected by this survey will be collected securely and anonymity will be maintained. The data is to inform the City of Stratford of potential programming but City employees are not involved in the data collection process and will not view the raw data. At no point is raw data shared with anyone other than the external consulting team at Taneja Consulting Inc.

We appreciate your time and efforts in completing this brief survey. Thank you for sharing your voice in building a Plan that will work towards building safer communities!

1. From the list below, what geography does your organization provide services in? Check ALL that apply
 - Stratford
 - St. Marys
 - North Perth
 - West Perth
 - Perth East
 - Perth South

2. Who is your primary client? Check ALL that apply and indicate age ranges where appropriate.
 - Children (age range: __0-12____)
 - Youth (age range: __13 25____)
 - Adult (age range: 26 – 59)
 - Families
 - Seniors (age range: __60 +____)
 - Other: _____

3. What sector(s) does your organization represent? (Please Check up to TWO only)

- Housing
- Food Security
- Counselling
- Addictions
- Family Support; Crisis Services
- Settlement
- Employment
- Early Years
- Education
- Justice (i.e., Corrections, Probation, etc.)
- General Health
- Mental Health
- Other (Please specify): _____

4. When thinking about youth crime in your community, what are the root causes? Please rank the following options from '1' being 'not a probable root cause' and '11' being 'a major root cause.'

- a. Youth feel a lack of belonging
- b. Family issues (family breakdowns, family stressors, avoiding going home etc.)
- c. Poverty is having more youth turn to crime
- d. There are conflicts between diverse populations moving into the community and Caucasian populations
- e. Social media's heightened presence is luring youth into crime
- f. There isn't very much for youth to do in our community
- g. There is plenty to do in our community for/with youth, but I don't think they know about the opportunities
- h. There are some negative stigmas associated with some of the youth-specific services in our communities
- i. Addictions
- j. Mental Health
- k. Peer Pressure / Herd Mentality

5. Considering your professional role, what do you consider as "warning signs" that a youth is at risk for increased problematic behaviours? [open-ended]
6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'youth crime prevention programs are common in our communities.' [1 being 'not common' to '5' being 'very common.'
- Definition: Tools, services, relationships, opportunities that are offered to a variety of community partners (youth, families, providers, educators etc.) to inform them about various crime and victimization topics. Prevention supports healthy youth-community relationships and build awareness.
7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'youth crime intervention programs are common in our communities.' [1 being 'not common' to '5' being 'very common.'
- Definition: Tools, services, relationships, opportunities that are offered to youth in crime to support a successful transition back to the community. The ultimate goal is to reduce youths' risk of involvement in future crime and violence.
8. Which priorities listed below do you think need to be a part of a 3-year Plan to support a decrease in youth crime in your communities? [please check up to 4-5 options]
- Educating youth/parents/providers on the seriousness of gangs, guns, and human trafficking and other forms of violent crime
 - Building more partnerships across our communities that can support work in youth crime prevention and intervention
 - Augmenting the knowledge and understanding youth/parents/providers have of the new diverse populations moving to our communities
 - Creating safe spaces for youth to engage in conversation, activities, and programming
 - Understanding what supports and services we have for youth across our communities
 - Building the capacity of parents/caregivers to understand and support youth at risk and/or in crime

- g. Understanding the social determinants of health that are factors in youth crime (poverty, homelessness, mental health etc.)
- h. Working with schools, community centres etc. to identify risk factors that would lead to 'at risk' behaviours in youth
- i. Understanding and building youth engagement strategies with the goal of meeting youth where they are at
- j. Developing mentoring programs for youth at risk of falling into crime
- k. Develop strategies and programming to support youth after school hours
- l. Other: _____

9. In which areas would you like to build your capacity so to support a 3-year Youth Crime Prevention/Intervention Plan? [please check all that apply]

- a. Human trafficking
- b. Drugs
- c. Gangs & Weapons
- d. Recognizing at risk behaviours
- e. DEI & understanding culturally appropriate service offerings
- f. Becoming more aware of the supports and services offered across our communities for youth
- g. Understanding how to engage youth in programming and decision-making
- h. Other: _____

10. In the next 3-5 years, do you think youth crime will increase in your community?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know