

My Friday Night Out in an RCMP Cruiser: Final conclusions & thoughts for follow up actions

by Councillor Kim Richter

I've had a few weeks now to reflect on my experiences that night. These are my conclusions and thoughts about follow up actions needed.

1. Given the variety and lack of predictability they face each day, our police do an amazing job for the community. However, I do not think that they should have to babysit substance abusers. The valuable time of the RCMP would be much better spent on other activities like grow-ops and organized crime. Instead, the businesses which create the need for Friday-night babysitting (like the local bars, clubs, restaurants, etc) should be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Their boundaries and their responsibilities in this community should not end at the sidewalk outside their establishments. Perhaps they should start paying an additional "bar or intoxication" tax which would be directly applied to providing jail, policing and other protective services. Better yet, they should have to provide and pay for a community "drunk tank".
2. We need to develop a plan for the future full scale infiltration of organized crime into this community. So far, Langley has been a relative "island" between competing groups in neighbouring communities. Relatively speaking, "we're virgin territory (even though we've had an incident or 2) and so are ripe for the plucking" as I was told. We need to get ready for this especially given the rapid growth rate in Willoughby. We need to make it very clear that we do not welcome them or their activities in Langley. We are NOT open for their business.
3. We urgently need a homeless shelter in Langley and all levels of government should shell out for this including Langley Township.
4. We need to start monitoring the "new entrepreneurs" in Langley who take advantage of the homeless and make financial gain off of them. The metal recyclers are one part of the problem but we now have another problem which is the individuals who drive their trucks to designated "collection points" in Langley to pick up whatever metal the homeless have managed to steal that day. We need to shut these middlemen down now.
5. As a community, we need to push for stiffer sentences on property crimes. In the justice system, property crimes are treated lightly but in our community, these crimes play a large part in how safe Langley is. We need to restore respect for private property rights and we need the justice system (which we also pay for) to back us up on this.

6. We need better signage throughout the Township so that all of our protective services (police, fire and ambulance) can find addresses easily in the middle of the night. All properties should have standard reflective lot signs on the boulevards outside. The Township and the province should pay for these.
7. We should send Township engineers out on the road with RCMP officers at least once a year so that the engineers can see how their approved road designs actually work. We should ask for an annual report from the front lines of the RCMP on all problematic roads/intersections and we should require Township staff to address RCMP identified problems within a year to the RCMP's satisfaction.
8. We should investigate the business case for providing an impound lot/facility. This could be a significant revenue generator for the Township. We should also follow Chilliwack's example by enabling police officers to take offending items (such as skate boards, bikes, etc.) from people when the RCMP write municipal tickets for them. We should also require the payment of a fee for the subsequent release of these items once they have been impounded.
9. As the RCMP currently have to produce 3 copies of everything (one copy for the RCMP files, one for the Crown counsel, one for the defense counsel) and this additional paperwork is adding significantly to our policing costs, we should start charging defense counsel for the copies they receive.
10. Finally, I think that all elected politicians in Langley should spend at least one night in their term with the RCMP as I did. We need to experience and understand the community from their perspective.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Superintendent Armstrong, Inspector Virk, Sergeant Preston, and Corporal Rodricks. None of this would have been possible without them and their interest in educating politicians about what the RCMP in our community face on a daily basis.

I especially thank **Corporal Larry Burden and all the members of 'B-Watch'** who gave me their time, their insights, and a learning experience I will never forget. I admire and commend their dedication to keeping our communities safe. Thank you.