

CRIME AND PREVENTION IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

The problem of crime affects the quality of life throughout the world, especially in cities. It is now widely recognized that traditional criminal justice responses, while necessary, are insufficient deterrents to acts that threaten public safety and security.

The "police, courts and corrections" approach to crime comes into play once an offence has been committed. Critics maintain, however, that the identification and punishment of criminals are, on their own, ineffective means of reducing the future risks of victimization and promoting community safety. The conventional crime control model

- 1) *fails to cope with the actual quantity of crime:* An unknown number of crimes are undetected, and many of those discovered are not reported to police. For example, a 1988 national victimization survey in Canada found that only 54% of household victimizations and 33% of personal victimizations are reported to law enforcement agencies.¹
- 2) *fails to identify many criminal offenders and bring them to justice:* The perpetrators of a significant number of reported crimes are never identified.
- 3) *fails to rehabilitate those offenders who are identified by the justice system:* When an offender is apprehended, convicted and incarcerated, the protection of society may be, at best, short term. Offenders who serve custodial sentences and participate in prison programs are not necessarily rehabilitated when they return to society. Even if correctional institutions were successful in reforming 100% of the inmate population, this would have only a marginal impact on public safety; the prison population does not encompass all offenders; some people are more susceptible than others to be caught, charged, convicted and sentenced to a jail term.
- 4) *fails to address the underlying factors associated with crime and criminality.*

In recognition of the inherent inadequacy of the criminal justice system as a response by society to crime and the fear it inspires, and in response to public appeals for preventive action, the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General unanimously agreed on May 6, 1992, to commence a national study of crime prevention in the Fall of 1992.

Over a four month period, from November 1992 to February 1993, the Committee heard and received written submissions from over 100 witnesses. They included crime prevention practitioners, academics, crime victims, government officials, community groups, volunteers and law enforcement agencies.

¹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Juristat, Criminal Victimization in Canada: the Findings of a Survey*, Vol. 10, No. 16, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa, October 1990.