

disadvantaged groups and individuals at risk of offending, and to avoid duplicating services. Coordinated responses to crime involve both vertical and horizontal coordination. Vertical coordination integrates responses among the various levels of government. Horizontal coordination involves inter-departmental and inter-agency cooperation at the federal, provincial and municipal levels.

MEASURES TO PREVENT CRIME

The safer communities approach integrates various strategies to reduce fear and prevent crime. These strategies include the reduction of opportunities to commit crime, social development and community-based policing as well as traditional legal measures.

A. *Opportunity-Reduction*

Reducing opportunities for crime involves action by individuals and communities, often in cooperation with local police forces, to protect themselves from becoming victims of property crime. To inhibit a potential offender, targets of crime are made less vulnerable and harder to penetrate. Measures include installing better lighting, locks, and alarms in business and residential premises, ensuring unoccupied residences appear lived-in, providing better street lighting, and maintaining buildings. Opportunity reduction programs involving police and community participation include Block or Neighbourhood Watch and Block Parents. Neighbours monitor and report suspicious activities and provide assistance to children. It is estimated that in a number of communities across the country over one-third of residences have become involved in Neighbourhood Watch.²⁸

These measures attempt to modify the behaviour of victims or alter the physical environment to prevent crime and reduce fear. The focus is on criminal acts of those already involved in offending. As noted earlier in the report, about two-thirds of youth crimes are property offences. The Committee heard from Dr. LeBlanc that many of these offences are relatively minor and are perpetrated by youths who are taking advantage of opportunities to commit crime

...80% of teenagers aged 12 to 17 are in a situation where they commit an offence over the course of one year, according to surveys conducted here and in other countries. Often these offences are minor—shoplifting, vandalism, and other small things—but all the same these are offences that disturb the community and affect people. (75:5)

According to Jack Hamilton, of the Insurance Brokers Association of B.C., programs such as Block Watch are effective in deterring these occasional property offenders and they must be supported by police forces, communities and all levels of government. (83:62) The Committee agrees. At the same time, it is aware of the empirical evidence that the majority of criminal acts are committed by a relatively small number of habitual or persistent offenders, who, when confronted with increased surveillance and security, simply target less secure neighbourhoods.²⁹ Opportunity reduction initiatives can have the unintended effect of displacing or re-locating crime rather than preventing it.

²⁸ Waller (1991), p. 36.

²⁹ Patti Pearcey, *Reducing Crime: How to Build Safer Communities*, B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities, June 1991, p. 8.