

# 2023 Annual Policing Priorities Survey Results

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RCMP and Enforcement Services

DATE: February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023



In January/February 2023, Strathcona County conducted an online survey regarding Annual Policing Priorities for the RCMP and for Enforcement Services. The purpose of this survey is to ensure the public has a say in policing priorities in Strathcona County.

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## Survey Results

In January and February 2023, the public was invited to complete a survey about annual policing priorities. The survey was made available online through two platforms, The Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP), and an open online survey via Alchemer (open to residents and non-residents who were not members of SCOOP.) We received 634 responses through SCOOP and 559 responses through Alchemer. The survey was promoted County social media channels, digital signs at County facilities, advertisements in the Sherwood Park News and Strathcona.ca website. The survey ran between January 16th and February 5th, 2023.

## Respondent Profile

We heard from 1,193 respondents. A brief breakdown of their demographic profile can be seen below. Please note that with rounding percentages may not exactly total 100%. As questions are non-mandatory, the base of respondents varies by question.

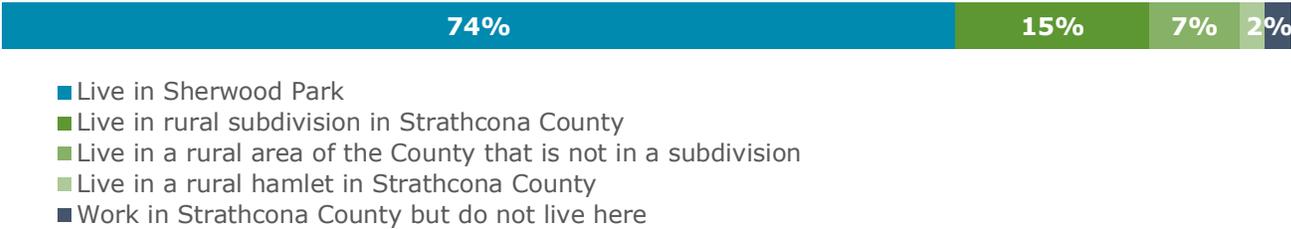
### Age



### Gender

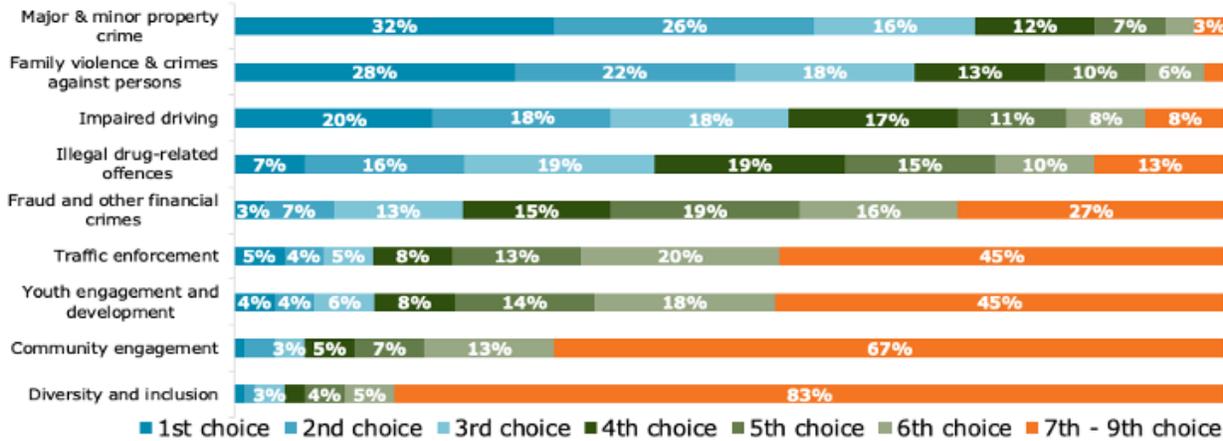


Location



# RCMP Priorities

We asked respondents to rank RCMP services from highest to lowest.



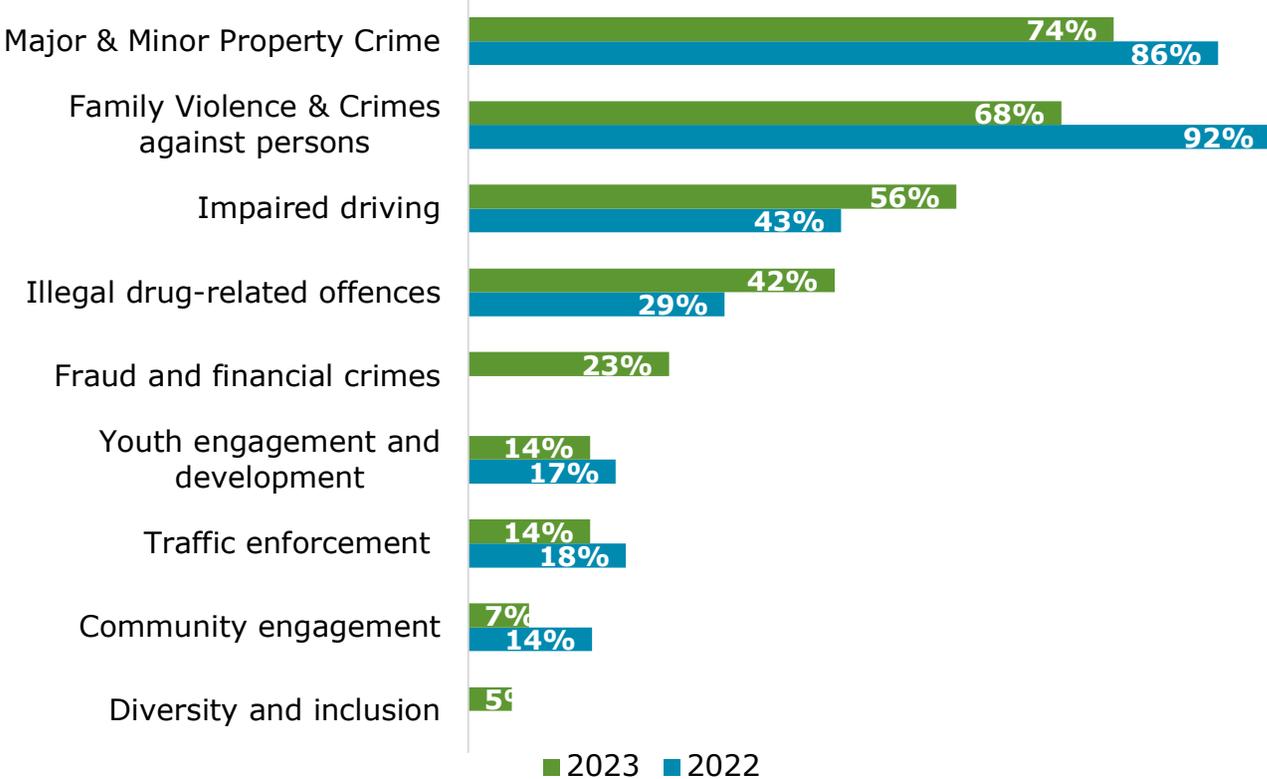
As evidenced by the chart above, major & minor property crime and family violence & crimes against persons are the top priorities indicated by respondents. These two categories were previously four separate categories in the previous survey, which explains the variation in results compared to 2022 indicated below. Impaired driving was also considered a major priority, with 56% of respondents selecting that as either 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice.

Illegal drug-related offences were less popular as a priority but was considered a significantly higher priority than the remaining five lower priorities. Notably, they were a popular 4<sup>th</sup> choice amongst respondents, chosen by nearly a fifth of respondents. Fraud and other financial crimes, a new category for the 2023 version of the survey, was chosen as a high priority by nearly a quarter of respondents.

Traffic enforcement and youth engagement had very similar scores, with approximately 14% of respondents indicating that they were high priorities. However, just under half believed they were low priorities for the RCMP.

Community engagement and diversity & inclusion were not seen as priorities. Only 7% and 5% respectively believed these were high priorities. Diversity and inclusion were chosen as a low priority by the vast majority of respondents.

**Percentage of respondents that chose each priority as either 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice priorities as compared to 2022 survey.** Please note new priorities for 2023 – Diversity and Inclusion & Fraud and Financial crimes. Major and minor crimes have been combined since 2022, as have crimes against persons and family violence. The 2022 percentages for these previously separated categories have been combined for comparison, but as the results of ranking questions are impacted by the number of overall choices, caution should be used when comparing results.



## TOP 3 RCMP PRIORITIES

**74%** OF RESPONDENTS  
**MAJOR & MINOR PROPERTY CRIMES AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY**

**68%** OF RESPONDENTS  
**RANKED FAMILY VIOLENCE & CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY**

**56%** OF RESPONDENTS  
**RANKED IMPAIRED DRIVING AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY**

## TOP 3 RCMP PRIORITIES BY AGE

Only a small variation in ordering of the top two priorities was observed between younger respondents who rated family violence and crimes against persons as the top priority, versus respondents older than 35 that chose property crimes as the top priority.

### **18-34 year olds**

1. Family violence and crimes against persons
2. Major & minor property crimes
3. Impaired driving

### **35+ year olds**

1. Major and minor property crimes
2. Family violence and crimes against persons
3. Impaired driving

## OPEN COMMENTS – RCMP

We also gave respondents an opportunity to comment on RCMP priorities and services in their own words. We heard comments from 345 respondents. The following is a brief summation of the major themes expressed.

**Satisfaction with the RCMP** comments: the largest number of comments noted a high level of satisfaction and support for the RCMP. Some comments noted positive personal experiences with the RCMP while others expressed overall approval for the job done by the RCMP in Strathcona County.

*I appreciate their service to the community.*

*I feel our RCMP does a tough job very well.*

*I most often find that any interaction with the RCMP has been very professional and understanding.*

*I was really grateful when my father passed away and the RCMP responded to the family home and also provided grief counselors... to talk with us and help us out.*

*Thank you for your service and for keeping Sherwood Park a safe community.*

**Provincial Police Force** comments: A small number of respondents used this opportunity to express their opinion on the potential for a provincial police force, an idea under consideration by the provincial government. This concern is likely a point in time issue related to news cycles present during the time the survey was fielded. Of these comments we received split opinions, with some commenters indicating a preference for keeping the RCMP as the police force for Strathcona County and others expressing a desire to switch to a provincial police force.

*A local police force would be better suited to deal with local crime issues both urban & rural.*

*I have lived in the community for over 26 years the R.C.M.P do a fantastic job, I do NOT want provincial policing*

*Fully support RCMP vs. a proposed provincial police force.*

**Traffic Enforcement** comments: The second most popular topic amongst respondents was traffic enforcement in Strathcona County. The majority of comments were focused upon unsafe driving habits of drivers in Strathcona County

– including distracted driving, impaired driving, aggressive driving, speeding, tinted windows and not fully complying with traffic signs/signals. These respondents want to see more aggressive enforcement of traffic offences and a greater emphasis on proactive policing. Other respondents were more concerned with over enforcement of traffic offences, and many of these comments were critical of speed traps and traffic cameras used for enforcement. These respondents were concerned about the time spent on routine traffic enforcement and questioned whether some enforcement and fines issued were truly in the interest of promoting road safety.

*I find that I am unable to drive from one point in Sherwood Park to another point in Sherwood Park without seeing aggressive driving, drivers on phones and not stopping when turning right on a red light or stop sign.*

*Since I live in a rural area I notice dangerously excessive speeding on my range road yet I never ever see any speed traps out here. My daily walks can be quite scary at times.*

*We feel we have a safe community however crimes against individuals and property crime are still of significant concern. Very comfortable with the level of traffic safety, if anything has room to be relaxed I would say it is traffic enforcement.*

*Too much photo radar and police stopping vehicles. Let's get our enforcement teams out to make a difference in our community instead of feeding the "cash cow".*

**Concerns about insufficient police presence** comments: A number of comments related to what they considered to be insufficient police presence out in the community. These comments noted feeling safest when their community is visibly patrolled by RCMP members and proactively promoting community safety. They also noted that increased patrols would help address higher rates of vandalism and social disorder around problem areas in the community.

*We would like to see officers driving through the community. Once a week it provides public awareness there presence is felt in the community.*

*I have found their response to crime related issues to be very fast.*

*I'd like to see more patrols including cars, bikes. Presence at transit to reduce drug use in public washrooms and vehicle theft.*

**Rural Crime** comments: Rural respondents were also keen to note a preference for increased police patrols and visibility in the community, with some noting that they

rarely see RCMP officers in the more rural and remote parts of Strathcona County. These respondents were also concerned with response times to calls for service and an inability of the RCMP to address a feeling of increasing property crime in rural areas.

*Break and enter and theft from rural properties is a huge concern, by far the No. 1 issue for me. More police presence on rural roads wouldn't hurt.*

*I have a concern about the length of time it takes to respond to a property crime or a personal threat in rural northeast Strathcona County.*

**Resourcing** comments: Related to the above topics of community patrols and responsiveness to rural crime were comments about the resources allocated to policing in Strathcona County. Some comments mentioned that they would support additional resources in policing to improve services and improve police visibility in the community. Others noted that existing resources should be redeployed to improve service levels and get more RCMP members in the community. We heard from some respondents that they were frustrated police officers were unable to adequately address issues such as identity theft and fraud. Other respondents noted that RCMP members appeared to only have the resources to collect reports of crime and not enough resources to proactively promote community safety and thoroughly investigate crimes.

*We need enforcement services to be able to have enough staff to respond quickly to highly sensitive situations ie. break and enters, violence against individuals.*

*Overall, the RCMP and bylaw are both doing the best they can with the resources they have. Additional manpower will be a great asset to providing services.*

*RCMP rarely do proactive work in Sherwood Park. They seem to only be reactive. Cruisers only seem to leave the office when a call comes in.*

*Generally satisfied, I think the Integrated Traffic Enforcement model has worked out reasonably well.*

*I believe the Sherwood Park detachment provides excellent services given the variety of services that have to be provided.*

**Drugs** comments: A smaller number of respondents left comment related to illicit drug use. Many of these comments drew a link between drug crime and other types of crime in the community. These respondents believe that greater enforcement towards drugs may have a positive impact on other types of crime. We also heard from some respondents that new approaches to drugs, including decriminalization and rehabilitation should be a priority.

*Addictive behavior causes crime. This is due to feeding the addiction, thus I believe this must be addressed.*

**Property Crime and Violence** comments: Specific issues related to property crime and security of people were raised by several respondents. The most common issue was a feeling that property crime, including theft and vandalism was increasing across Strathcona County. Some of these respondents felt that enforcement and investigation of these crimes was insufficient. These respondents indicated a desire for faster RCMP response times and more resources to either investigate crimes, or proactive deter criminals. Responding to violence was also considered a major issue for respondents, many of which noted that this was core policing activity that they expect to be handled as a high priority by the RCMP.

*Our neighborhood had developed so much senseless crime, our community needs to be better protected from thefts and vandalism.*

*I believe a police forces first mandate is to keep people and their property safe from harm.*

**Attitude and Trust Issues with RCMP** comments: Some respondents noted frustration with the RCMP and the attitude they express when working with members of the public. Many of the comments heard noted personal interactions with a rude or distant RCMP member. We heard a desire for police officers to be less stern and friendlier, particularly in with children in the community.

*I would like to see RCMP and affiliates work on being cordial and non-confrontational. A routine traffic stop should not be a traumatic event.*

*Be friendlier. Had occasion to say good morning or evening and found that. Even though they replied. Not particularly friendly.*

**Community Engagement** comments: Some respondents expressed a desire to see the RCMP out in the community engaging with the public. These commenters noted that this would help build trust in the RCMP and be a more proactive approach to crime. Concerns about a lack of diversity and inclusion within the RCMP were also mentioned by these respondents. However, we also heard from other respondents that focusing on diversity and inclusion was not a priority, and that the RCMP should remain focused on core policing activities.

*More presentations to community groups and involvement and communication through newspaper or library/other sessions.*

*The focus should be on community policing so as to reinforce that police are here to help. This would go a long way to returning the police force to a service organization.*

*I think in this era, the police can be more proactive and play a larger role in trying to educate and promote a kinder society. I think community engagement, youth engagement and promoting diversity and inclusion will help as I believe the police are largely respected and in a position to influence our society*

**Youth Engagement and Education:** A smaller number of respondents noted that youth education and engagement would be a more proactive means of addressing crime in the community.

*Community and youth engagement is the best way to lower all of the other criminal activities.*

*If we put increased resources into prevention such as community/youth engagement, then we need to spend less in the future on reactive measures.*

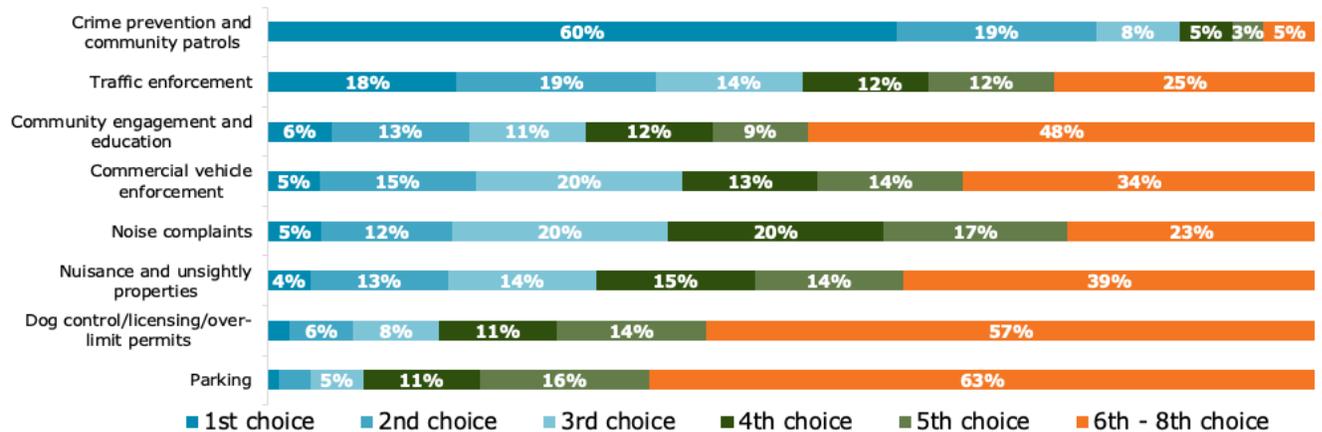
**Unclear role for the RCMP** comments: Lastly, we heard concerns about how RCMP and bylaw officers operate in the County. Some respondents expressed confusion of who was responsible for different policing services in the County. We also heard ideas for improving efficiency or service by moving some services to community peace officers. Others expressed a stronger desire to keep most policing services under the RCMP.

*I am never sure when it's appropriate to call RCMP. It would be good if there was a clearer distinction between bylaw calls vs crime calls that need RCMP officers assistance as opposed to dealing with bylaw offence.*

*I'm not really sure what the difference in jurisdiction is for traffic enforcement between RCMP and Peace Officers. I think proactive prevention and engagement/education helps stop crime from happening in the first place.*

# Enforcement Services Priorities

We asked respondents to rank the services provided by Community Peace Officers highest priority to lowest.



Crime prevention and community patrols were overwhelmingly chosen by respondents as the top priority for Enforcement Services and Community Peace Officers (CPO.) These results indicate that respondents see CPOs as a key part of community safety in Strathcona County.

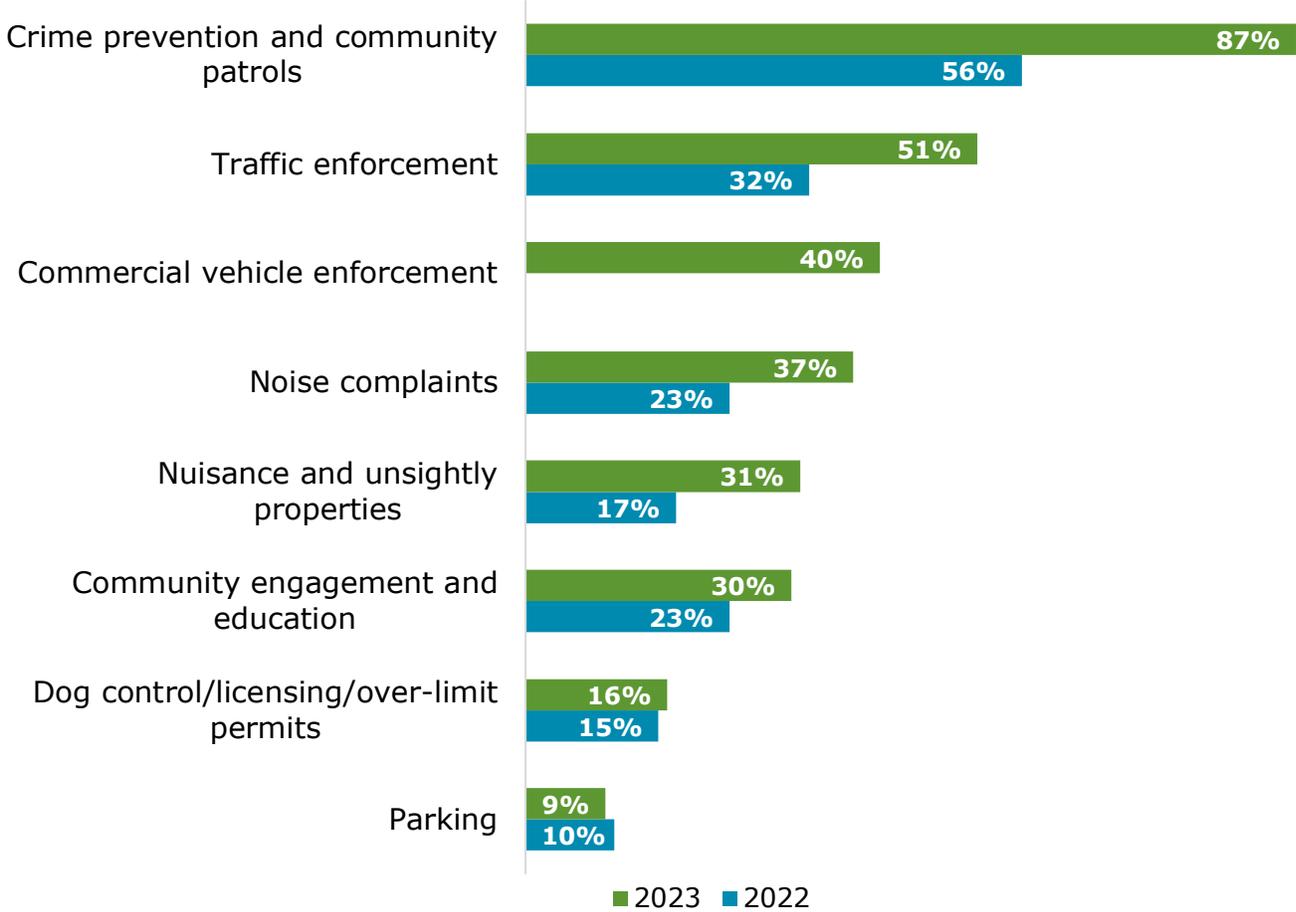
Other priorities had less clear-cut results from respondents. Traffic enforcement was seen as a high priority by just over half of respondents but was also chosen as a low priority by a quarter of respondents – indicating some difference in opinion on the role of CPOs in traffic enforcement. This divided opinion is also present in the open-ended responses, which will be discussed later in this report.

Commercial vehicle enforcement and noise complaint had similar results, with approximately 40% indicating they were high priorities for CPOs. However, commercial vehicle enforcement had nearly as many respondents indicating it was a low priority while noise complaints were a popular 4<sup>th</sup> choice.

Community engagement and education was chosen as the number one choice by 6% of respondents, earning that priority the 3<sup>rd</sup> most first choice responses. However, it was also chosen as a low priority by almost half of respondents.

Dog control/licensing/over-limit permits and parking were considered low priorities, with most respondents choosing these priorities as their 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> choice.

**Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice priorities.** Compared to 2022 survey. Please note new priorities for 2023 – commercial vehicle enforcement.



## TOP 3 ENFORCEMENT SERVICES PRIORITIES

**87%** OF RESPONDENTS RANKED **CRIME PREVENTION & COMMUNITY PATROLS** AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY

**51%** OF RESPONDENTS RANKED **TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT** AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY

**40%** OF RESPONDENTS RANKED **COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ENFORCEMENT** AS THEIR FIRST, SECOND OR THIRD PRIORITY

## TOP 3 ENFORCEMENT SERVICES PRIORITIES BY AGE

### 18-34 year olds

1. Crime prevention and community patrols
2. Community engagement and education
3. Traffic enforcement

### 34-44 year olds

1. Crime prevention and community patrols
2. Noise complaints
3. Commercial vehicle enforcement

### 44+ year olds

1. Crime prevention and community patrols
2. Noise complaints
3. Traffic enforcement

## OPEN COMMENTS – ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

We asked respondents to provide any comments regarding services provided by Community Peace Officers (CPOs) in Strathcona County. We received comments from 209 respondents.

**Satisfaction with CPOs** comments: Many of the comments we received expressed a general satisfaction with CPOs in Strathcona County. These respondents also noted positive personal experiences with CPOs and a general sense of solidarity with the CPOs in the community.

*As a parent I can say I love seeing the Peace Officer at my child's school during pick up and drop off. Kids love seeing them too.*

*The 2 involvements that I have had with a Peace Officer in the past 15 years have been handled in a very professional and timely manner. Thank you to the Peace Officers for all they do to help make Sherwood Park a great place to live.*

*Our peace officers deserve more recognition! We always see them out going above and beyond with a smile on their faces. Thank you for being in our neighbourhoods and events*

*They walk a fine line between full enforcement and community awareness of bylaws etc.*

*I really appreciate programs such as DARE that help inform and engage our youth. I know the interactions my two kids with Constable Donaldson really resonated with them.*

**Traffic enforcement** comments: The most popular topic for regarding enforcement services was traffic enforcement, which was split roughly evenly between comments advocating for more traffic enforcement and less traffic enforcement from CPOs.

**More traffic enforcement** comments: Respondents that commented about wanting to see more traffic enforcement were largely commenting on specific driving habits or behaviors they had observed around the County. This included a greater desire for speed traps, more enforcement for distracted driving, stunting and aggressive driving.

*Sherwood Drive in the CITP neighborhood is a raceway in the summer evenings.*

*Our Peace Officers need to be dealing with more impaired driving!!!*

**Less Traffic enforcement** comments: Conversely, a similar number of respondents wanted to see less CPOs focused on traffic enforcement. We heard from some respondents that CPOs are too focused on ticketing minor traffic infractions instead of dealing with other major issues. These respondents believed that CPO time would be better spent on other priorities, some also indicated a preference for traffic enforcement to be left to the RCMP.

*Waste too much time on traffic enforcement instead of engaging with the community.*

*I want to feel more protected against crime and nuisance. Less traffic watch.*

**Trust and Attitude Issues with CPOs** comments: Some respondents expressed frustrations with CPOs, often referring to negative personal experiences they had with CPOs or with County bylaws more generally. We also heard concerns about the training and experience of CPOs.

*Would be nice if they weren't as hard-nosed as they are.*

*Officers/dispatchers should be better educated on the various laws and enforcement.*

**Too strict:** Some respondents held a generally pessimistic view of CPOs, believing them to be arbitrary and heavy-handed. Other comments noted that CPOs were too punitive in their approach to enforcement, with a preference for community education and awareness.

*Bylaw Enforcement needs to have more of an empathetic model in place. Previous dealings have been less than acceptable.*

**Bylaw and Community Standards** comments: Many of the comments received related to bylaws and their enforcement related to community standards. One particularly popular topic was animal control, with some noting challenges with noise from dogs and issues with cats roaming the neighbourhood. However, we also heard a number of comments relating to bylaw enforcement of sidewalk clearing, noise, cleanliness standards, parking, vandalism/graffiti and unsightly properties. Some of these comments wanted more proactive and punitive enforcement of bylaws, while some noted that bylaw enforcement in the County was overzealous.

*If by-law officers were more proactive in dealing with unsightly properties then peace officers could spend more time dealing with other issues.*

*Blatant disregard for noise bylaws (noisy vehicles, parties, fireworks late into the night) could use more attention. We appreciate the police presence in our community when we see them!*

*The county needs to put more pressure on pet owners and send out reminders of pet owners responsibilities. Individuals should not have to get into confrontation with poor dog owners.*

**More presence** comments: As with the RCMP, sizable number of comments desired a greater presence from CPOs in the community. These respondents believed that proactive enforcement and more visibility would improve community safety. Rural respondents also desired greater visibility of CPO patrols, with some noting that their rarely see CPOs outside of Sherwood Park.

*Maybe more community patrols would help deter sketchy behavior in neighborhoods; people casing homes and garages.*

*I would like to see more patrols down our Range Rd, as there are many speeders, garbage dumping, beer cans in ditches (drinking & driving)*

*Bylaw officers should be proactive in addressing nuisance properties and illegal parking instead of only reacting to complaints.*

**Community Engagement Concerns** comments: We also heard some comments express a preference for CPOs to conduct more community engagement and communication with members of the public. Some respondents noted that community presence and education would be more effective than an enforcement heavy approach.

*It would be lovely to see more community engagement and education to the public, I would love to get to know the peace officers more.*

*Community engagement and education addresses many of the other concerns.*

*I have found our Community Peace Officers to be very polite overall. My only suggestion would be to be less reliant on enforcement and more on educating public.*

**CPOs focusing on wrong issues, overlap with RCMP** comments: Lastly, some respondents made comments about how CPOs time and energy should be focused on different tasks. Some respondents noted that permitting and administration tasks would be better served by County employees. Others noted that traffic stops

and other forms of traditional police work should be left to the RCMP. Finally, we heard from some comments confessing that they had a poor understanding of what CPOs do in the community.

*I think this group could take on more responsibilities and let the RCMP deal with more serious crime.*

*I'm not clear what peace officers do as opposed to RCMP officers. Many of the issues I experience seem to need peace officers but no one is around when these offences happen*