



North Bay Police Service
Community Survey 2000
Final Report

Acknowledgements

The North Bay Police Service would like to thank the following people and organizations that assisted us in conducting this survey:

Dr. Greg Brown

The North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce

The New North Bay Mall

Northgate Square

Canadore College/Nipissing University

Mr. Meat Foodland

The students of the Police Foundations Program, Canadore College

The members of the community who took the time to complete and return the surveys – your participation in providing policing services to the community is greatly appreciated.

Introduction

As part of the Business Planning Process, the North Bay Police Service solicited feedback from the community in three key areas:

- Your thoughts on Crime – perception of the public in relation to the Crime Rate in the community
- Your priorities – what the community felt should be priorities in service delivery for the North Bay Police Service
- Your assessment of our service – the opinion of the community on how well we are currently delivering services in a variety of areas.

Methodology

A fourteen-question survey was prepared and distributed throughout the community in various ways. The surveys were printed in six different colors in order that the data may be identified as coming from various cross-sections of the community and could be analyzed separately. Although an overall analysis is done initially, future analysis could be conducted in order to obtain the opinions and views of the various cross-sections.

The color-coding is broken down as follows:

- Goldenrod – distributed through the Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Yellow – distributed by School Liaison Officers to area students
- Blue – mail out to randomly selected persons found in the OMPPAC database, covering the six patrol zones proportionally
- Green – distributed to local agencies to reach various groups (Cassell Arms, Golden Age Centre, Place Richelieu, District Social Services Offices, Indian Friendship Centre, Royal Canadian Legion)
- Grey – persons attending North Bay Police Headquarters or requesting copies, including City Council and North Himsworth Council)
- White – Community outreach in various areas of the area as follows:
 - Nipissing University/Canadore College 20Nov – 1000-1500
 - North Bay Mall 21Nov – 1000-1500
 - Northgate Square 22Nov – 1000-1500
 - Downtown area 23Nov – 1000-1500
 - Callander-Mr. Meat Foodland 24Nov – 1000-1500

Distribution of the four thousand surveys was as follows:

- 1000 goldenrod
- 500 yellow
- 500 blue
- 500 green
- 500 gray
- 1000 white

An estimated 40 to 50 per cent return was anticipated. The resulting 1600 to 2000 responses would represent 2.8 to 3.6 per cent of the population being polled, which is in keeping with the Sparkes survey of 1991 where 2% of the 18,000 households in North Bay were surveyed.

Data Entry

Data entry was assigned to a member of the clerical staff using a computer program designed by Mr. Patrick Luoma. Six separate databases were established, corresponding with each of the six colors in order to analyze each segment separately as well as obtaining overall figures.

Surveys Returned

Of the 4000 surveys distributed, the following were returned:

- 38 goldenrod
- 406 yellow
- 238 blue
- 26 green
- 75 gray
- 557 white

Total 1340 – 33.5%

Your Thoughts on Crime

The first section of the survey was aimed at establishing the communities impression on the crime rate, their feeling on their level of safety, and to what type of offence they felt vulnerable. To that end, three questions were asked surrounding this issue. By far, the respondents expressed a high level of safety in the home, mall areas, and their neighborhoods. Areas of concern were the waterfront where 16.34% stated they did not feel safe and the downtown area where 56.31% answered that they did not feel safe in this area.

The crimes to which people felt most vulnerable were:

	%
1. Break and Enter	42.50
2. Assault	38.67
3. Vandalism	33.73
4. Mugging	31.50
5. Robbery	22.89
6. Theft	20.09
7. Traffic violation	17.15
8. Do not feel vulnerable	16.15

Respondents were then asked to assess the trend in the crime for both their neighborhood and in the City overall. Most respondents indicated no change or an increase for both their neighborhood and the City. Only 8.89% indicated a decrease in their neighborhood and 6.83% in the City.

	Neighborhood	City
• Increase	17.07%	37.47%
• Decrease	8.89%	6.83%
• No change	40.25%	15.28%
• Uncertain	33.79%	21.43%

Your Priorities

The next area of the survey contained questions geared to solicit the community's priorities on crime. Fifteen areas were provided with a rating system from *very important* to *of little importance*. The responses were tabulated and scores in the *very important* and *important* categories calculated. This is how the 15 areas were rated from highest to lowest.

1. Responding to emergencies
2. Visibility in your neighborhood
3. Violent Crime - Domestic Violence, Assaults
4. Drinking and Driving
5. Criminal Investigations
6. Assistance to Victims *
7. Youth Crime *
8. Property Crimes *
9. Illicit Drugs
10. Intense Patrols in the Downtown core
11. Traffic Enforcement and Road Safety
12. Providing Crime Prevention Information
13. Internet and Technological Crime
14. Reporting on Crime
15. Responding to Quality of Life Issues (barking dogs, noise complaints, problems with neighbors)

A series of thirteen programs were listed and respondents were asked to rate them as to their value to the community on a scale from *very valuable* to *of little value*. The totals for the responses of *very valuable* and *valuable* were obtained, and the programs rated as follows from highest to lowest:

1. Victim Services
2. Crime Prevention
3. R.I.D.E.
4. Crime Stoppers
5. Drug Investigations
6. Block Parent
7. D.A.R.E.
8. School Liaison
9. Directed Traffic Enforcement
10. Foot Patrols
11. Downtown Office
12. Traffic Education Initiative
13. Bicycle Patrols

*Tied in 6th place

Your Assessment of Our Services

The third section of the survey was designed to obtain a rating on the quality of service delivered and the satisfaction of the community. To that end a number of questions were asked with regard to interaction with the North Bay Police Service, the resulting impression of that interaction, and the service delivery in general.

In order to properly assess this issue from a customer satisfaction basis, it was necessary to ensure that we reached the segment of the population that had been involved with the Service. A random sampling of 500 individuals was taken from local records and surveys mailed to these individuals. A response of 47.6% was received. Of that group, 86.66% indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the interaction they had with the Police Officer. Further, 91.47% stated that their opinion of the North Bay Police Service remained positive or changed in a positive manner.

Ten areas of service were listed and the respondents asked to rate the performance of the Service on a five-point scale from *very good* to *very poor*. Those respondents indicating *no opinion* were removed from the calculation. The ten areas:

1. Responding to emergencies
2. Responding to quality of life issues (barking dogs, noise complaints, problems with neighbors)
3. Providing crime prevention information
4. Reporting on crime
5. Traffic enforcement and Road Safety
6. Criminal investigations
7. Visibility in your neighborhood
8. Assistance to Victims
9. Youth Crime
10. Property Crime

The majority of respondents indicated *good* and *very good* in all but three categories:

- Responding to quality of life issues – 45.08%
- Property crime – 42.09%
- Visibility in your neighborhood – 40.67%

In all three cases, the next lower rating of *average* ranged from 31.62% to 41.79% of the respondents.

Quality of the data

Baseline questions aimed at establishing distribution factors such as gender, age as well as geographic and demographic spread were asked. Analysis of these responses has revealed that an excellent representation of the community was obtained. We can be confident that the data obtained is a reasonable representation of the community's thoughts, feelings and opinions.

Changes and trends

In order to track changes and trends in the community, reference was made to the 1991 survey conducted by Dr. Sparkes of Nipissing University in preparing the questions of the 2000 survey. A comparison of the two research projects enables us to see whether there have been any changes in relation to community attitudes and impressions, as well as measuring the effectiveness of any changes made as a result of the recommendations made by Dr. Sparkes. It must be noted that the Sparkes Survey sample group was 308 households, less than one quarter the size of this survey. This influences the results and would lead one to conclude that the current survey would have a higher degree of accuracy. Further, close to a decade has passed since the Sparkes survey, which also must be considered.

To that end, we can compare some elements of the surveys to achieve the following conclusions. In comparing the answers to the questions **Do you feel safe...**, we see the following:

	1991 Yes	2000 Yes	1991 No	2000 No
In your home	98.7%	92.61%	1.3%	5.02%
In mall areas	97.1	82.99	2.9	7.21
At the waterfront	96.8	72.71	3.2	16.34
In your neighborhood	95.8	80.66	4.2	9.98
In the downtown area	67.0	34.08	25.0	56.31

Responses in all categories appear to indicate a change to a feeling of less security, particularly in the downtown and waterfront areas. As previously mentioned, the survey period followed a serious criminal incident in the downtown area that resulted in the death of a local resident. This incident received considerable media attention. This certainly impacted on the overall sense of safety in all areas. Other changes in the range of 5% can be attributed to the data collection methods and an increase awareness of crime issues as a result of better reporting to the community by the police service.

This may also speak to the community's priorities of visibility in the neighborhood. Visible preventative patrols are intended to deter crime, traffic violators and provide a sense of security. The Workload Analysis Study may address the issues of actual patrol time by patrol officers and provide some enlightenment as to the time spent on preventative patrols.

The next area is the **perception of change in the neighborhood and city crime rates over the past year**. The following table presents the data gathered in both surveys.

	Neighborhood 1991	Neighborhood 2000	City 1991	City 2000
Increase	21.4%	17.07%	77.9%	37.47
Decrease	3.8	8.89	1.02	6.83
No Change	67.5	40.25	14.6	15.28
Uncertain	7.1	33.79	6.5	21.43

There is clearly an increase in the number of persons who correctly identified the fact that the reported criminal incident rate has decreased. It is also important to note the higher number of Uncertain answers in this survey, indicating that persons answering may have speculated less in this current survey than in the 1991 study.

The third area of comparison deals with the question of **vulnerability**. In this instance, both surveys rate the areas of vulnerability in the same order with only one difference. In the 1991 survey, 46.5% of respondents stated that they did not feel vulnerable, as compared to 16.15% in the current study. Again, the size of the sample group, recent high profile serious incidents, and better reporting to the public about crime issues may have influenced this change.

Community priorities appear to have changed. The 1991 survey identified property crimes as a greater priority than person's crimes. Conversely, the current survey results place Violent Crime as a greater priority than property crimes. As the survey questions were asked in different ways, it is difficult to state to what extent the attitude has changed. However, there certainly is a reversal in which category of crime is more important today than in 1991.

Lastly, the overall rating, **customer satisfaction** issue is addressed. The 1991 survey asked for a rating of very good to very poor. The 2000 survey asked for a rating from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. In the Sparkes survey of 1991, 87.4% of respondents rated the service as very good or good. In comparison, 86.66% stated they were very satisfied or satisfied in the 2000 study. It is evident that there is still a very high level of satisfaction with the service delivered by the North Bay Police Service.

Conclusion

The information gathered will greatly assist the North Bay Police Service in its Business Planning process. Input from the community is essential in looking to the future and developing strategies to deliver a level of service that is of the highest quality and answers the needs of the community. This process is essential to the Community-Based Policing philosophy that is the cornerstone of service delivery.

Other research projects, like the workload analysis study will be combined with this data in order to move forward and maintain a high level of service to communities of North Bay and North Himsworth. I would again like to thank all those who participated in this process.

G.T. Berrigan
Chief of Police
North Bay Police Service