

Focusing on safer communities

We all want to live in safe communities – communities in which we feel our neighbourhoods are peaceful, where we are protected from disruption and crime, and where we are protected from injury. This installment of *And Furthermore* provides updates on the Manitoba Meth Strategy and the Canadian Safe Communities Foundation, just a couple of the initiatives that are making our communities safer right across Canada.

CRYSTAL METH UPDATE

Our Winter 2006 issue featured the story “Crystal Meth: What’s Manitoba Doing?” At the time, Manitoba had just introduced the Manitoba Meth Strategy, an approach aimed at restricting the supply and reducing the demand for the drug. We subsequently summarized the Manitoba Meth Strategy in the Spring 2006 issue of the Municipal Leader.

UPDATE:

There have been two major announcements since our last update. On May 4, 2006, the province announced it would invest \$15,000 to train over 600 front-line staff from police organizations and federal, provincial and municipal agencies across Manitoba on methamphetamine use and production.

“Mixing the chemicals used to produce crystal meth can lead to explosions, fires, chemical burns and toxic fumes; and first responders shutting down a meth lab are often at risk,” said Justice Minister **Gord Mackintosh**. “We want to prepare front-line workers to detect lab locations, teach them about the hazards and give responders the information they need to protect safety when dealing with this deadly drug.”

Manitoba is the first province to make this training available to such a broad range of first responders. First responders can take the interactive course from any Internet-connected computer. The course includes information on the characteristics of the drug including symptoms and effects of use, and basic requirements and methods of production. Also, it provides information on how to detect crystal meth labs and the associated hazards.

The second announcement occurred **June 27**, when the Province announced that a unified crystal meth takedown protocol was now in place. The Unified Takedown Protocol is a coordinated, inter-agency approach identifying how municipal, provincial, federal and other agencies can assist police. While police agencies investigate and identify evidence in a case, other organizations have expertise in areas such as fire suppression, neutralizing hazardous materials, emergency medical treatment, social services, building structure analysis, and hydro and natural gas service. Police decide when to call in other agencies that are part of the protocol, namely the Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba Family Services and Housing, Health Canada and Manitoba Hydro.

The province also partnered with the City of Winnipeg, providing \$8,500 toward the purchase of specialized clothing and equipment necessary to provide personal protection for police officers investigating chemically contaminated drug labs.

For more information on the Manitoba Meth Strategy visit: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/meth.html>.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

In our Winter 2005 issue we featured the story “Is your community the next Safe Community?” along with a profile of Manitoba’s only (to date) designated Safe Community, the City of Brandon.

UPDATE:

Recently, the AMM received a letter from the City of Kamloops, BC, telling us of their experience with the Safe Community model.

Using this model, the City of Kamloops brought together a variety of community partners to study the issue of injury in the community. By looking at local injury data, they were able to focus their attention on areas of need within the community, as well as build on existing programs and strengths. For instance, the Needle Safety Initiative that was already underway was enhanced with the purchase of a children’s mascot.

As well, bringing involved partners together for discussion led to simple solutions to problems. For example, one of the railways was concerned about people exiting the local arena and climbing through trains stopped at the crossing. They tried to arrange for trains not to stop on the crossing when events were likely to be getting out, but they weren’t always aware of the event details. The City arranged for the schedule of events to be sent to the railway on a regular basis.

Another local issue was preventing falls involving seniors. By bringing in new partners, two new programs were developed – a Home Safety Check Program, in partnership with the Seniors Outreach Society, and Walk the Block with Seniors, a program to identify outdoor tripping hazards in partnership with Girl Guides and Boy Scouts.

Officials say the benefits of being designated a Safe Community are many. The model is an internationally recognized best practice model for community injury prevention, and as such, lends credibility to local Safe Community efforts. The Canadian Safe Communities Foundation supports designated communities with many resources as well.

For more information about the City of Kamloops involvement with Safe Communities, please contact:

Cathy Shether, Chairperson
Kamloops Injury Prevention Network
c/o 519 Columbia St.
Kamloops, BC V2C 2T8

Is your community ready to become a designated Safe Community?
Contact:

Wendy French
Manitoba Regional Coordinator
Ph: 204-787-1907
Email: wfrench@exchange.hsc.mb.ca