

June 1, 2008

Core a concern in crime survey

By [PABLO FERNANDEZ](#), SUN MEDIA

Fewer Calgarians feel safe in the city's downtown core and LRT system, according to the Calgary Police Service's 2007 Citizen Survey.

Compared to previous findings, the latest survey shows that compared to 2005, when 56% of Calgarians felt safe in the core, 54% felt the same way in 2007.

The same is true when residents were asked about how safe they felt on the LRT, where in 2005 54% said they felt safe, compared to last when 53% felt secure.



The biggest hike was seen in the perception of neighbourhood crimes, where 38% of Calgarians said they believed crime was on the rise last year, up from 31% in 2005.

The fact numbers continue in the wrong direction's a concern, said Ald. Ric McIvor, a member of the Calgary Police Commission.

"People still consider the city a fairly safe place to live in ... but they do remain concerned," he said, but added the issues raised by the survey must be addressed.

"Public perception of safety is always going to be a moving target and we need to keep adjusting our approach because we know criminals will keep adjusting theirs.

"I would like to see more police ... because the best way to address declining safety perception among Calgarians is to increase the number of police officers and to give them the tools they need to stomp out crime."

But there's a paradigm shift taking place in policing in the city, which started with the appointment of a new chief, said commission member Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart.

"The new chief is really open and transparent about what really is going on in terms of crime," she said.

For too long, the prevailing wisdom has been to not talk about crime trends, in order not to alarm anyone, said Colley-Urquhart, explaining that mentality also kept authorities from looking at the problem honestly.

And what concerns her most is the low crime volume being reported, she said.

"Is there less crime right now? I doubt that," she said.

"Are citizens experiencing crime and not reporting it because it's the norm now or are they suffering from crime but not reporting it because they don't believe that anything will come from it?"

“I really hope it’s not the latter.

“In order for police to do their jobs, they need the support and assistance of all of us, the community.”

The one silver lining in the survey is that although the number of Calgarians who say they feel “somewhat unsafe” is up sharply to 40% from 30% in the downtown and 40% from 31% on the LRT system, the number of people who feel, “very unsafe,” is down significantly.

The number of Calgarians who feel very unsafe in the core dropped from 14% to 6%, while LRT numbers fell from 15% to 7%, the survey states.