



April 2009 Newsletter

Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart

Diane inspecting a Police Recruiting Class before graduation.

Community Safety and Security

One of the key safety and security issues that I am regularly briefed on as a member of the Calgary Police Commission is organized crime and gang activity in our City. A gang is a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more individuals, which is involved in criminal activity. Children as young as 12 years old have been recruited into gang activity, but generally children between the ages of 16 and 24 are lured into gang life.

Usually, Calgary gangs do not wear uniforms or colours. They do not have a particular area of the city they call their "turf" - they operate city-wide - in every community. Our police service has been very effective at dismantling and disrupting gang activity so that communities can't be carved up into gang turf and territory. I want you to know that gang activity is a city-wide problem. Every parent needs to know who their children are associating with and talking to whether at school or online.

The lucrative drug trade is the primary source of funding for these groups – selling drugs such as crack cocaine, ecstasy, crystal meth, and marihuana. This is how our kids get involved. In fact, marihuana grow-ops fuel the drug trade, which is why I have devoted the last 5 years to Chair the STOP MGO Coalition. Since the New Year, Calgary has experienced a spike in violent gang activity similar to that seen in other major cities. Most are targeted attacks on individuals who participate in the high-risk lifestyle of organized crime and drugs.

Under Chief Rick Hanson's leadership, The Calgary Police Service (CPS) has made fighting gang activity a top priority both in our city and provincially. Police however cannot do this work in isolation of the community. They rely heavily on citizens coming forward to report what they know so that these crimes can be solved. Chief Hanson has implemented a comprehensive gang strategy that operates out of The Organized Crime Operations Centre (OCOC) – to tackle gang activity through education, prevention, disruption, and investigation. This has been able to occur because of the historic investment into policing by City Council and our provincial government, with 400 officers being added this year. In February, the federal government announced new legislation targeting gang violence ensuring homicides linked to organized crime come with an automatic first-degree murder charge. Other measures will see significant penalties for drive-by shootings and attacks on police officers.

Between July 2005 and January 2009:

- 657 arrests made

- 2,584 charges have been laid
- 226 weapons seized
- \$4.85 million of gang related drug seizures
- \$839,000 in cash and assets have been seized from gang members and associates

Find out more information on gangs for your family by going to www.getalife.ca .

Tasers

The use of tasers, (conducted energy weapons (CEW)), by Canadian law enforcement agencies has received considerable media attention in the recent weeks and months with the incident involving the RCMP at the Vancouver Airport. This is also an issue that the Commission is briefed on every month. We have sound policies and practices in place from a police governance and oversight perspective.

Police are required to arrest or control offenders in the course of their duties, which involves some individuals who won't follow commands or who may be violent. The first policing priority is to obtain voluntary compliance through verbal persuasion; however some offenders may react in a manner that poses a risk to themselves, to officers, or to the public. In addition to batons and pepper spray, tasers provide police with another tool for subduing violent individuals while reducing the officer's likelihood of becoming involved in a violent, physical altercation that could lead to injuries for both the officer and/or the offender.

Tasers are generally safe to use, and they have been proven to reduce the number of injuries and deaths both to police officers and offenders. In the most recent independent study conducted by the Wake Forest School of Medicine, tasers were found to cause none to mild injuries in 99.7% of the cases. Numerous other law enforcement and independent research projects have consistently confirmed that the use of the taser lowers injuries to offenders and officers when compared to many other types of traditional law enforcement restraint methods.

The Calgary Police Service follows the guidelines developed by the Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. These guidelines provide direction regarding the use of tasers, ensuring that police officers use them lawfully and maximize public safety when use of force is required. Each time a police officer uses a taser, it is documented and audited by supervisory personnel.

A policy for the training, deployment and use of tasers has been developed by CPS in consultation with the best practices, experiences and policies of other law enforcement agencies across North America and the United Kingdom. The CPS works with the information provided by the Canadian Police Research Centre and independent organizations in North America and the United Kingdom to ensure the most up to date and accurate information is employed in their policies.

Blue Carts Rolling Out to Ward 13 Homes

Blue carts are rolling out to homes in Ward 13 in preparation for the start of the City's residential recycling service. Cart delivery started in the southwest on March 9 and will continue until mid-April.

Detailed instructions on how to use the program and what can be recycled will be attached to the lid of each cart. More information can also be found at the City's interactive website www.calgary.ca/bluecart.

Plastics, newspaper, mixed paper, magazines, glass and food cans will be accepted and no sorting will be required.

Collection service will start by quadrant and will be the same day as your current garbage collection day. **Collection for Ward 13 will begin the week of April 21.**

As always, you can contact my office regarding this or any other civic matter at 268-1624, by email at dcolley@calgary.ca. Alternatively, you can contact '311.'