

PROLIFIC OFFENDER PILOT PROJECT OVERVIEW

About 50 per cent of reported crimes in British Columbia is committed by about 10 per cent of offenders. Although these are primarily property crimes, the impact of prolific offenders on communities and public safety, as well as public confidence in the justice system, is substantial. Their criminal behaviour reaches well beyond the justice system to cause disproportionately high costs to the health care system, housing and social services, as well as to individuals, businesses and communities through property and financial losses.

For this reason, the prolific offender pilot project is being set up in six communities to test an integrated approach to reducing crime by more intensively managing the small number of offenders who commit a large proportion of crime.

Much of these offenders' behaviour can be linked to substance abuse and addictions, mental disorders, lack of job skills and other issues. Evidence shows that focusing law enforcement on prolific offenders while referring them to the services they need to prevent them from committing more crime, has broad benefits for communities by reducing crime rates and chronic criminal behaviour.

The prolific offender pilot project brings together resources from enforcement agencies (police, corrections and Crown) and health and social services. The project aims to use more intensive supervision of and timely intervention with a small group of prolific offenders to reduce crime, whether that is through treatment or incarceration.

In British Columbia, a number of related initiatives are already underway, led by the RCMP, corrections, Crown counsel, municipal police, health authorities and social service agencies. The pilot project will build on existing initiatives and will include a strong evaluation component to allow us to learn what works, and what doesn't.

What is a prolific offender?

Prolific offenders are criminally active, have a history of numerous criminal offences and most likely have been in jail at some point in their lives. They are assessed to be at high risk to re-offend. Each community will have a different makeup of offenders, but police experience shows that many of these offenders are involved in property crime.

How does the pilot project work?

The local project teams will meet regularly to coordinate each agency's involvement with the offender and to plan for both enforcement and social services to the prolific offenders through the following key activities:

- close police supervision;
- services to support behaviour change;
- timely and robust response to relapse or re-offending.

Who is on the local pilot project teams?

The local teams will involve and include the following agencies:

- Police (RCMP and municipal police)
- BC Corrections
- Correctional Service of Canada
- Provincial Crown Counsel
- Public Prosecution Service of Canada
- Ministry of Children and Family Development (Youth Justice)
- Health Authorities (mental health and addictions)
- Adult Forensic Psychiatric Services
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- BC Housing
- Victim Services and local Aboriginal service providers may also be involved

What are the anticipated outcomes of the integrated approach?

An integrated system of prolific offender management is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- reduced crime rates in pilot communities;
- reduced rate of re-offending by selected offenders;
- improved compliance with sentencing conditions and treatment;
- improved co-ordination and cost effectiveness of services;
- improved outcomes for offenders (access to and maintenance of health, housing, and other social services).

Where will the approach be tested?

The approach is being tested in six communities:

- Kamloops
- Nanaimo
- Prince George
- Surrey
- Victoria (Capital Regional District)
- Williams Lake

These sites were chosen to reflect a variety of geographic locations, size of communities, and to build on existing initiatives.

The prolific offender pilot project is led by the Criminal Justice Reform Secretariat, which was formed to lead the development and implementation of provincial crime reduction and prevention strategies (by the three justice ministries: Public Safety and Solicitor General, Attorney General, and Children and Family Development).

Early Solutions, Faster Justice – Justice Reform in B.C.

