
MAYOR AND COUNCIL RESPOND TO 2016 CRIME SEVERITY INDEX

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THOMPSON, MB – Statistics Canada has released the results of its 2016 Crime Severity index, returning Thompson to its place within the top-three communities. The Index currently places Thompson second in overall crime below North Battleford with an index score of 284.3 and first in the violent crime index, with an index score of 414.95. Thompson also ranks third in the index for non-violent crime with a score of 236.17, below North Battleford and Prince Albert.

While this year's CSI results mark an end to a decrease over the last two years, the overall frequency of crime remains below 2013 levels.

Thompson RCMP Inspector Kevin Lewis notes that Thompson has seen a significant increase in traffic from outlying communities, and that the vast majority of violations and disturbances involved individuals visiting the city in the short term.

Inspector Lewis also notes that the high turnover in community safety officers has seen a significant variance in the discretion of CSO's issuing violations for non-violent offences such as intoxication.

"The increase we've seen in 2016 is part of a broader cycle that ebbs and flows depending on a number of factors, from political and economic circumstances to seasonal weather," said Lewis. "We can't always be sure what causes these shifts, however it's clear that there is a relationship between Thompson and the broader region."

The standing of smaller communities included in the CSI can be significantly impacted by smaller factors than average, such as the individual habits of law enforcement and community safety officers, as well as a handful of significant criminal instances.

Moreover, Mayor Dennis Fenske notes that the CSI uses census numbers in comparing a city's population to the crime it hosts, a number which several Mayor and Councils have disputed as a poor reflection of the population that Thompson effectively serves. Comparing the number of violations to a smaller population, said Fenske, unfairly raises a community's rank in the index.

"The City of Thompson has not turned a blind eye to the social and criminal challenges faced by our community," said Mayor Dennis Fenske. "However, we do not believe that the stated increase is an accurate reflection of the day-to-day safety of Thompson as a whole."

Nonetheless, City Councillor and Public Safety Committee Chair Blake Ellis stresses that we cannot accept the increase as business as usual: “Public Safety continues to be a top priority for the City of Thompson,” said Ellis. “While we’ve seen some success in our downtown strategy through programs like Project Northern Doorway and the Community Safety Officer program, these are ultimately long-term strategies that require continuing investment to see consistent results.”

“This is why we saw fit to continue the Community Safety Officer program beyond the pilot stage,” he added.

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