

TABER POLICE SERVICE

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

2020



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1. INTRODUCTION

There are internal and external pressures that affect policing within the Town of Taber that are multiple and varied. To assist in understanding the pressures the community of Taber faces in the delivery of policing, this environmental scan was conducted in the fall of 2020. Guidance in creating this scan was gleaned from the 2015 and 2016 environmental scans completed by Chief Graham Abela.

The results of this scan will assist, in part, in the creation of a business plan that will guide the direction of the Taber Police Service for years to come.

What is an environmental scan? Environmental scans provide data and information required by decision makers to inform strategic planning – identifying questions, understanding, targeting, goal setting, forecasting and planning. The information collected and analyzed should help organizations identify and bridge gaps between an organization's current state and its desired future.

Several key words within the Taber Police service mission statement are to inform, involve and protect the citizens of Taber. We understand that stakeholder input is paramount in understanding what the community requires of its police and, in turn, what the police can do for the community. Community policing requires this community conversation to occur and it is the foundation of our organizational philosophy.

The contents of this document consists of:

1. A community profile
2. The Taber Police Service mission statement and organizational chart
3. A crime trend analyses
4. Community Survey results
5. Focus group results
6. A standards review
7. Other issues

The cumulative effect of this information will be summarized at the conclusion of this report and then forwarded to the Taber Municipal Police Commission.

2. COMMUNITY PROFILE

In order to understand our community, we must first analyze several factors that influence it. These factors include, but are not limited to, demographic trends, economy, housing, labour force, education and culture.

The most recent information that can be gleaned from our community is a result of the federal 2016 Census. The Town of Taber is conducting a 2020 census, however those results will not be known until early 2021. The Town of Taber has not completed any environmental scan of their own, therefore information for this scan had to be gleaned from elsewhere. The Statistics Canada website provides results from 2011 and 2016 and some of the results were utilized for this scan. Alberta Health Services completed a Taber: Community Health assessment in May of 2019 and some of their results were utilized in this scan as well.

PEOPLE

As of 2016, the population of Taber was 8548. The total number of private dwelling was 3420. The 2011 to 2016 population change was 4.3% or 0.86%/year.¹ This growth rate is almost identical (0.01% increase) to that identified in the 2016 environmental scan.

According to Alberta Health services, the population of the M.D. of Taber in 2016 was 7098, showing an increase of 3.6% since 2011. In comparison, the increase in population for the province of Alberta during the same time period was 11.6%.² Although the Town of Taber's growth rate is 0.7% greater than the M.D., it is significantly lower (8%) than the Province's growth rate.

In 2016, the median age of the Town of Taber population was 35.8 years compared with 27.6 years of age in the M.D. The median age, in 2017, for the province of Alberta was 36.7 years.³

Population Age Groupings Town of Taber and M.D.

Population Age Groupings	Town of Taber	M.D. of Taber
Age Group: 0-14 years of age	22.2%	31.5%
Age Group: 15-64 years of age	62.9%	59.8%
65 years and older	15.1%	8.6%
85 years and older	2.6%	0.6%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

¹ See www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/Taber

² See Alberta Health Services, Taber: Community Health Assessment, May 2019

³ See Alberta Health Services, Taber: Community Health Assessment, May 2019

The average size of census families in Alberta was 2.6 persons per household, compared with an average size of 3.1 in the Town of Taber and 3.8 in the M.D. This data indicates that Taber and the M.D. families are larger in size than provincially.⁴

Family Size in Town of Taber and M.D.

Family Size	Town of Taber	M.D. of Taber
Average size of census families: people per household	3.1	3.8
Census families in private households with 5 or more persons	15%	34%
Total number of lone parent families (lower than provincially)	14%	4%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

The majority of families within the Town of Taber are either married or common law couples. The average size of census families is 3.1. The Taber proportion of female lone-parent families was lower than the provincial proportion (10.7% compared to 11.1%). The proportion of Taber male lone-parent families was also lower than the provincial proportion (3.1% compared to 3.4%). The average family income was \$86, 944 compared to \$109, 997 for the rest of Alberta.⁵

EDUCATION

Taber's education levels are almost equally divided amongst its residents. 31.7% of Taber residents, age 15 years and over do not hold a high school diploma or equivalency. 33.9% have achieved a high school diploma or equivalency, while 34.4 have achieved some type of post secondary certificate, diploma or degree.⁶

Education levels may suggest the literacy of a population and can be used as an indicator that relates to employment. AHS states that both education and employment affect the health status of individuals and communities. In the Town of Taber, the proportion of those with no high school certificate was 32%, the M.D. was 47% and the rest of Alberta was 17%.⁷

⁴ See Alberta Health Services, Taber: Community Health Assessment, May 2019

⁵ See www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/Taber

⁶ See www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/Taber

⁷ See Alberta Health Services, Taber: Community Health Assessment, May 2019

Education	Town of Taber	M.D. of Taber
No high school certificate	32%	47%
High school certificate	34%	25%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree	34%	28%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

LANGUAGE

In Taber, aside from English, the three most common mother tongues were German (14.3%), Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino) (2.8%) and Dutch (1.1%). In Alberta, aside from the official languages, the three most common mother tongues were Tagalog (2.5%), German (2.0%) and Punjabi (Panjabi) (1.7%).⁸

Mother Tongue	Town of Taber	Alberta
German	14.3%	2.0%
Tagalog	2.8%	2.5%
Dutch	1.1%	0.4%
Punjabi	0.1%	1.7%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

HERITAGE

Approximately 81% of Taber residents were born in Canada. A total of 8.8% identify as visible minorities with Filipino the highest at 3.6% and Japanese the next at 2.2%. 91.2% of Taber residents identify as not a visible minority. Residents identified with many ethnic origins, with German, Canadian and English the highest.

LABOUR FORCE

An important part of a community's livelihood is having opportunities for its citizens to be employed. In 2016, Taber had an unemployment rate of 7.6% compared to Alberta at 9.0%. In Taber, 8.6% of men were unemployed compared to 6.3 of women. Due to COVID-19, these numbers may have drastically changed in 2020 and should be reflected in the Taber 2020 Census.

In Taber, the top occupations based on total labour force categories are:

- 1) Sales and service occupations – 22.5%
- 2) Trades, transport and equipment operators – 21.1%
- 3) Business, finance and administration occupations – 12.9%
- 4) Manufacturing and utilities occupations – 11.3%

⁸ See www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/Taber

In comparison, the top occupations based on Taber's male population are:

- 1) Trades, transport and equipment operators – 35.2%
- 2) Manufacturing and utilities occupations – 13.9%
- 3) Management occupations – 10.8%
- 4) Natural resources, agriculture and related occupations – 10.6%

The top occupations for Taber's female population are:

- 1) Sales and service occupations – 30.6%
- 2) Business, finance and administration occupations – 22.3%
- 3) Education, law and social, community and government services – 12.9%
- 4) Health occupations – 8.6%

The 2016 Census indicated that Taber had a diverse industry base with the most significant industry categories listed as:

- 1) Manufacturing
- 2) Retail trade
- 3) Accommodation and food services
- 4) Health care and social assistance
- 5) Construction
- 6) Mining, quarrying and oil & gas extraction
- 7) Other services (except public administration)
- 8) Educational services
- 9) Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
- 10) Transportation and warehousing

Over 78% of residents had a workplace within Taber; almost 5% worked at home.⁹ 2020 may reveal a vast increase in the number of residents working from home due to COVID19.

⁹ See www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/Taber

3. MISSION STATEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

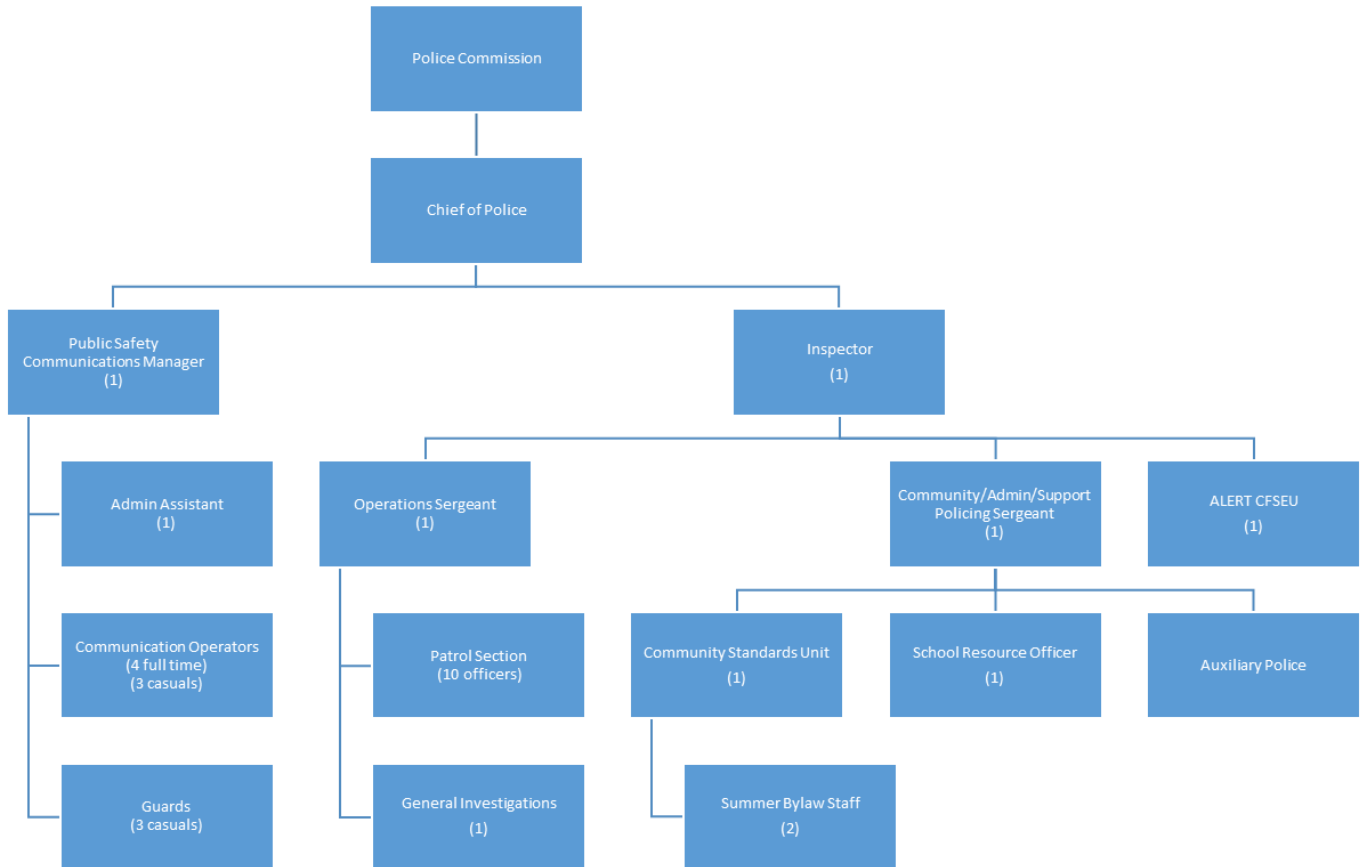


**WE ARE THE TABER POLICE SERVICE
ESTABLISHED IN 1904.
WE STRIVE TO INFORM, INVOLVE AND
PROTECT THE COMMUNITY OF TABER.**

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE TABER POLICE SERVICE, BELIEVE THAT:

- **police work is performed through relationships;**
- **there needs to be a partnership between the police and the community;**
- **we exist to serve and are, therefore, accountable to the community;**
- **the citizens of Taber are the ultimate consumers of police services and should be provided the opportunity for input into our priorities; we must determine community concerns and be proactive in the community to address those concerns;**
- **every effort must be made to inform the community of what we are doing and the results of our efforts.**

Taber Police Service Organizational Chart 2020





Crime Analysis

Taber Police Service

2019

By: Senior Constable Dave Gyepesi, Executive Officer,

and

Arlene Wong, Administrative Assistant

INTRODUCTION

As a means of providing the context for this crime analyses, a brief overview of the Town of Taber and the Taber Police is provided below. As Taber is growing slowly, the context and makeup of the community does not frequently change and, as a result, provides an excellent base from which to conduct crime analysis.

The Taber Police Service has served the Town of Taber as its police service since 1904. The Town of Taber is situated geographically 52 kilometers east of Lethbridge, Alberta and 100 kilometers north of the Montana Alberta border. Taber acts as a regional hub for the residents within the M.D. of Taber, however, Taber itself has a population of approximately 8400 people according to the 2016 Statistics Canada census.

The Taber Police Service is an organization which is governed by the Taber Municipal Police Commission. The Police Act (2000) states that a police commission shall,

“Oversee the police service and for that purpose shall do the following:

- A) allocate funds that are provided by the council;
- B) establish policies providing for the efficient and effective policing;
- C) issue instructions, as necessary, to the chief of police in respect to the policies referred to in clause (b);
- D) ensure that sufficient persons are employed for the police service for the purpose of carrying out the functions of the police service.” (p.22)

The Taber Police has three core functions, the provision of policing services, Public Safety Dispatch and Support, and Community Support. In the Public Safety Dispatch area, our regional E911 communications center receives calls for service from the citizens of the Town of Taber and the M.D of Taber, they dispatch the Taber Police and local and regional fire services, and they forward ambulance calls to the Alberta Health Services Southern Communication Centre based out of Calgary. They also forward police calls for service to the RCMP when the incident is not within the Town of Taber. Taber Police Service Communications Operators' responsibilities do not end with the dispatch function. Their responsibilities also include administrative support of Taber Police members through the preparation of court disclosure packages, file creation, and release document preparation to name a few.

As part of the policing service's function we provide 24/7 policing to the Town of Taber. Included in that is the Community Standards Unit (CSU), which services the bylaw enforcement needs of the community. The unit is made up of one full-time Police Constable and two full-time summer students.

As of 2019, the authorized strength of the Taber Police Service is 15 police officers. The Province of Alberta funds one of these police officer positions. There are currently 4 Auxiliary Police officers, 4 full-time and 4 part-time (Casual) Communication Operators, 1 Public Security Communication Manager, 1 administrative support position, 5 part-time casual prisoner guards and a large volunteer complement.

In terms of the community support function, the Taber Police Service works with various community agencies and volunteers to support the community as a whole.

Osborne (2001) wrote, “analysis is necessary to understand the scope of a problem and to be certain the problem is actually a problem. Sometimes crime and public disorder issues are public perception or a misinterpretation or under-analysis of statistics and do not exist in reality. Some problems, which are not so noticeable, are actually severe and have a strong negative impact on the community.” (p. 23). This quote speaks to the importance of conducting regular statistical analysis of crime in order to confirm or refute whether issues exist concerning crime in a particular area. The Alberta police standards require that each police service conduct a yearly crime analysis.

2019 marks the thirteenth year that the Taber Police Service is conducting a yearly crime analysis. This exercise will allow us to advise our stakeholders of current crime trends observed within the Town of Taber and it allow us to intelligently deploy our resources. It should also be noted that the Taber Police Service executive closely watches for trends of criminal activity that may be occurring within our community. These trends are examined in our police reports to the Commission. Our small size allows us to be fluid and adaptable to community concerns and, as such, the utilization of crime analyses, from a purely statistical and academic point of view, has less efficacy than crime analyses within a larger police service that have more resources available to be deployed to address any identified issues.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to gather the data used in this analysis an anecdotal review of the crime stats reported to Statistics Canada through the Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS) was conducted. In each case, the reports of crime were tallied and have been displayed both numerically and by chart. We utilized a 5-year window and gathered the data through manual searches of the databases. The date range for the data commenced January 1 of the given year and was terminated December 31 of that same year. The total reports of crime were tabulated and were compared against the previous years' numbers. As with all data, there is much speculation as to whether or not reports of crime are a determinant of actual crime within a given community. Although not infallible, we believe that given the time period specified and the scrutiny that is involved with inputting the data into our records management systems that, although we can't ensure accuracy, we believe the results are an actual reflection of the occurrences of reported crime within our community and, as such, can be used as a means of making educated guesses to help improve upon policing practices within our community.

RESULTS

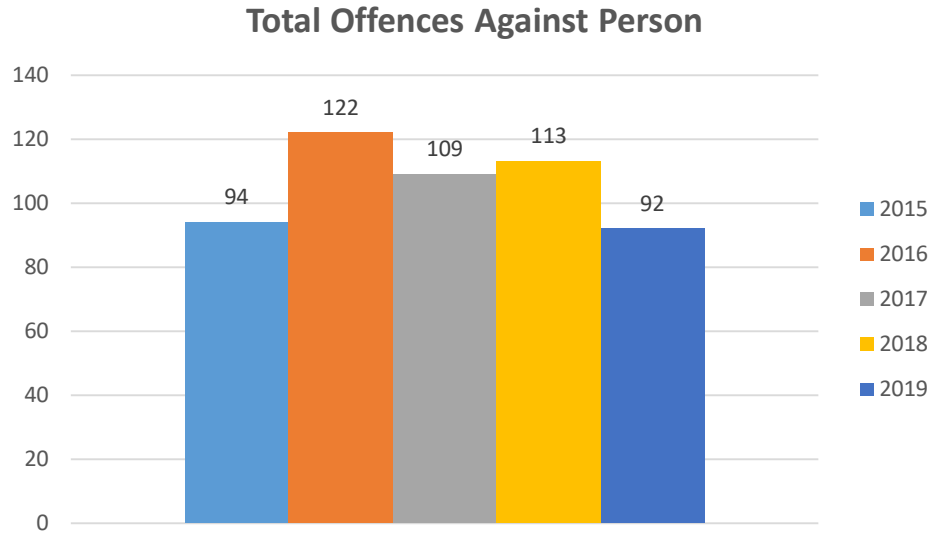
The reports of crime can be broken down into five categories; offences against the person, property offences, other criminal code offences, drug offences and provincial Acts. All information gathered from this report can be found in the data obtained from the following table:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>% Of Difference 2018 to 2019</u>
OFFENCES AGAINST PERSONS						
HOMICIDE						
Attempted Murder	0	1	0	0	0	0%
Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL HOMICIDE	0	1	0	0	0	0%
ROBBERY	2	0	0	3	1	-67%
ASSAULTS						
Sexual Assault	9	19	13	10	12	20%
Assault (Level 1)	73	77	71	70	58	-17%
Assault Weap/Bodyhrm	4	13	9	20	16	-20%
Aggravated Assault	2	3	5	3	1	-67%
Assault on Police	3	5	7	8	0	-100%
TOTAL ASSAULTS	91	117	105	107	87	-19%
KIDNAPPING / HOSTAGE / ABDUCTIONS	1	4	4	3	4	33%
TOTAL OFFENCES AGAINST PERSONS	94	122	109	113	92	-19%
PROPERTY OFFENCES						
BREAK AND ENTER	22	46	49	32	49	53%
THEFTS OF MOTOR VEHICLES	22	22	23	24	26	8%
THEFTS OVER \$5000	3	5	8	9	10	11%
THEFTS UNDER \$5000	141	178	222	185	242	31%
POSSESSION OF STOLEN PROPERTY	14	20	33	22	31	41%
FRAUDS	56	49	49	37	72	95%
TOTAL PROPERTY OFFENCES	258	320	384	309	430	39%

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>% Of Difference 2018 to 2019</u>
OTHER CRIMINAL CODE						
PROPERTY DAMAGE	161	145	129	133	156	17%
DISTURB THE PEACE	109	96	123	167	149	-11%
CRIMINAL HARASSMENT	17	16	10	25	11	-56%
UTTERING THREATS	58	73	69	65	44	-32%
BREACH OF PROBATION/BAIL VIOLATION	131	132	138	165	202	22%
IMPAIRED OPERATION	47	59	48	51	54	6%
TOTAL OTHER CRIMINAL CODE OFFENCES	523	521	517	606	616	2%
DRUG OFFENCES						
COCAINE POSSESSION	6	6	1	10	5	-50%
COCAINE TRAFFICKING	14	16	3	5	5	0%
METHAMPHETAMINE POSSESSION	0	0	1	11	17	55%
METHAMPHETAMINE TRAFFICKING	0	0	0	1	7	600%
OPIOD POSSESSION	0	0	0	1	1	0%
OPIOD TRAFFICKING	0	0	0	0	5	500%
OTHER	4	11	5	8	6	-25%
TOTAL DRUG OFFENCES (Including Marihuana)	75	75	25	65	n/a	n/a
TOTAL DRUG OFFENCES (Excluding Marihuana)	n/a	n/a	n/a	36	46	28%
PROVINCIAL ACTS						
CANNABIS POSSESSION UNDER 30g	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	30	n/a
CHILD WELFARE	10	10	14	15	14	-7%
LIQUOR ACT	152	138	122	134	128	-4%
MENTAL HEALTH ACT	64	82	73	111	92	-17%
OTHER PROVINCIAL STATS	2214	1855	2155	2007	1916	-5%
COLLISIONS	134	126	143	148	135	-9%
MUNICIPAL BYLAWS	449	367	532	501	495	-1%
TOTAL PROVINCIAL ACTS (Excluding Marihuana)	3023	2578	3039	2916	n/a	n/a
TOTAL PROVINCIAL ACTS (Including Marihuana)	n/a	n/a	n/a	2940	2810	-4%

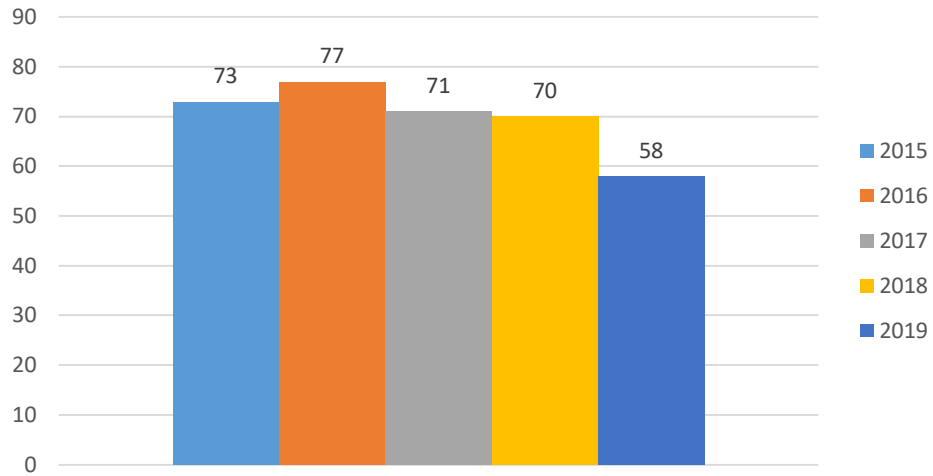
OFFENCES AGAINST PERSON

The Offences against Persons category of crime relates to all reported incidents of crime that directly involve a person as a victim of the crime. Some examples are, but not limited to, assaults on police, assaults, sexual assault, abductions, etc.

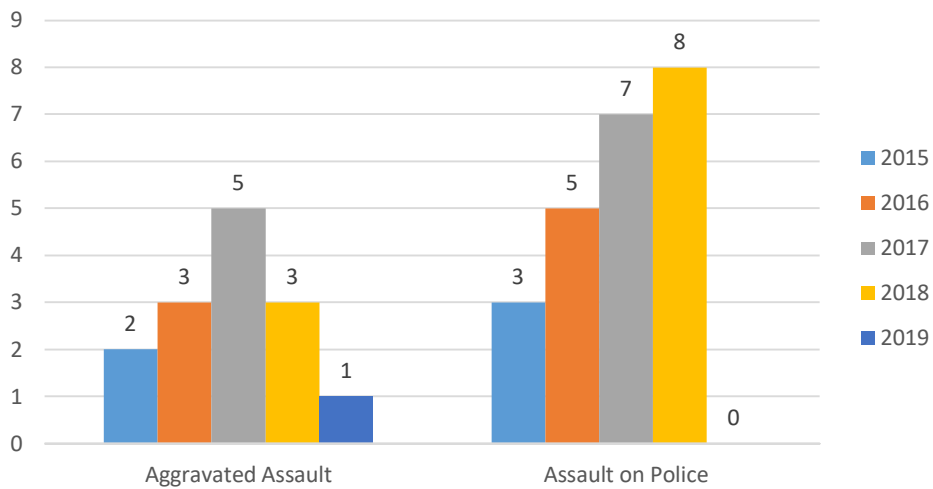


Overall, the 2019 crime analysis determined there was a 19% decrease in the total combined Offences Against Persons crime rate, which went from 113 reports in 2018 to 92 in 2019. This means that if you lived in Taber in 2019, there was a 1.1 % chance of you being the victim of an offence against person. Percentage-wise there is a miniscule change from what was reported in 2018, with the number decreasing by .02%. These numbers are based off of the 2016 census where it was reported that the Town of Taber had a population of 8428. It is likely that the population numbers have increased since that time. This indicates that the percentage would be actually lower and would be even more reflective of the safety of Taber as a community.

Common Assault



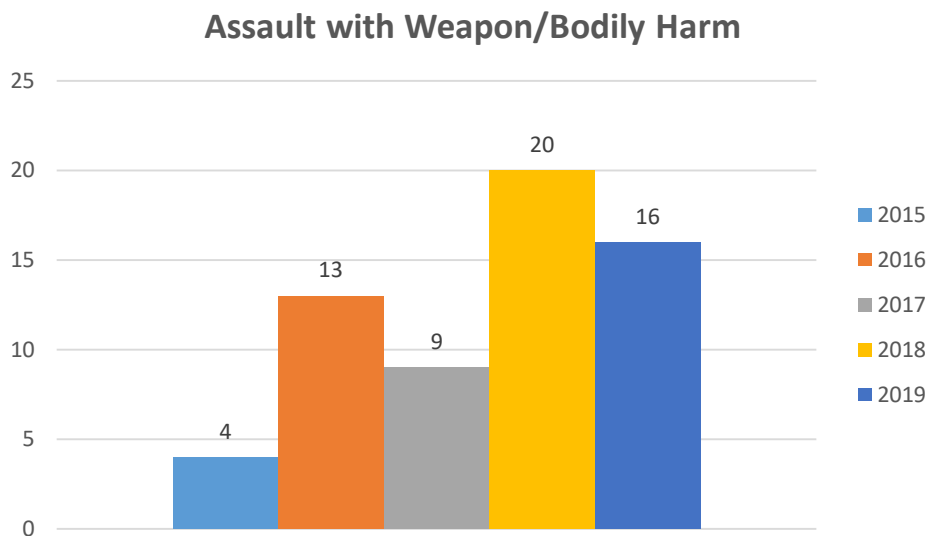
Offences Against Person



The number of reported offences that are included in the Offences against Person category decreased in 5 of the 9 offence types. The 2 offences with increases were sexual assault and kidnap/hostage/abduction. The remaining 2 of 9 offence types that saw no change were in the homicide category, with 0 attempted murders or murders reported. In

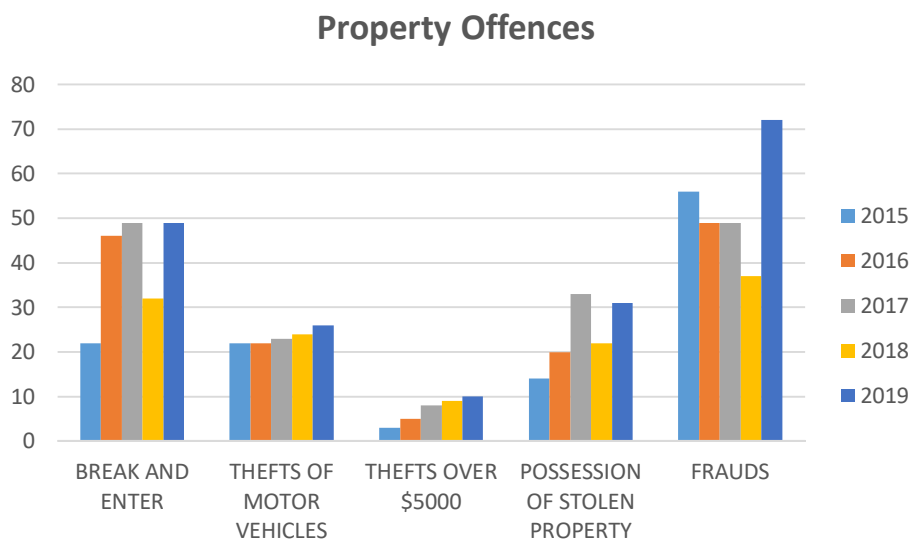
the areas aggravated assault and assault on police we saw significant decreases. The category of note is the Assault against Police area where 0 reports of assaults against police occurred in 2019. This is completely against the previous 5 - year trend where Canada Statistics show an increase every year over a five year period from 2014-2108. The 2019 statistics will not be available until later in 2020, but it would be interesting to see if that yearly rise has continued provincially or nationally.

In 2019 the number of reports that the Taber Police Service received regarding sexual offences increased by 20%. In 2016 the Taber Police Service recorded its highest sexual offence reported levels, since the inception of yearly crime analysis. In 2019 the Taber Police Service reported 12 sexual offences. In those 12 reports, 1 resulted in formal charges being laid, 4 were determined to be unfounded, 2 reported insufficient evidence to proceed, 2 incidences where the victim declined to proceed, 2 where departmental discretion was used based on circumstances regarding the incident, and 1 occurrence where no charges were laid because the subject of complaint was under 12 years old.



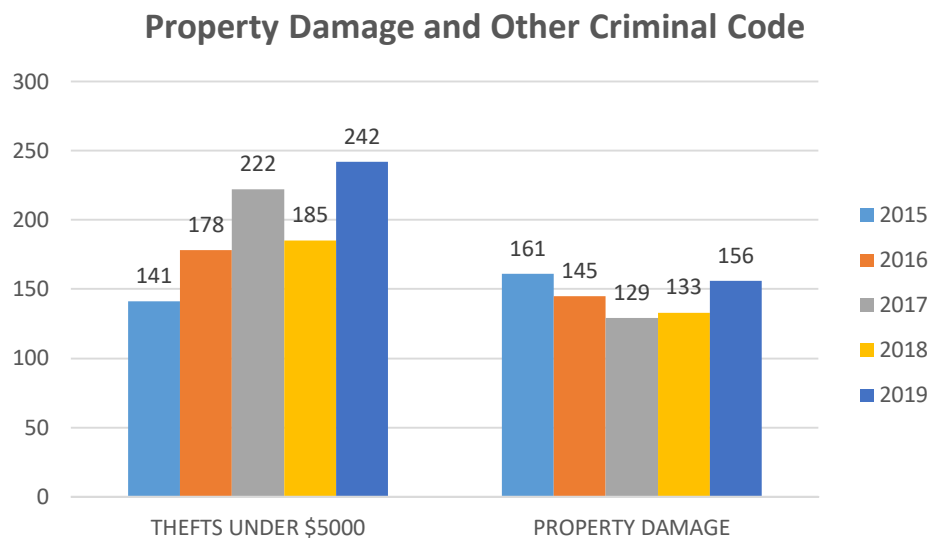
PROPERTY OFFENCES

Property Offences are crime types where an item belonging to someone else is the subject of an offence. Examples of property offences include theft, possession of stolen property, break and enter, frauds, etc.



There was an overall 39% increase in Property Offences in 2019, which followed a 20% decrease in 2018. There were 384 property related offences reported in 2017, 309 reports in 2018, and 430 reports in 2019. Since 2014, Stats Canada reported national yearly increases in property crime related offences. Referring to the national crime statistics for 2018, property crime in general was at a 2.24% increase in Canada. (Moreau, 2019) It was forecasted in the 2018 crime analysis that the decrease observed in 2018 was likely an anomaly and that a potential rise in this crime type throughout the 2019 year was hypothesized. This has occurred. An example is demonstrated in the

reports of theft of motor vehicles that increased 8%, and in the theft over \$5000 category which reported an 11% increase. Further to this, by taking a snapshot of the Possession of Property less than \$5000 category, many of the investigations have recovered property that has not been returned to the owner. This leads to a speculation that there are still many unreported theft complaints possibly from our jurisdiction.

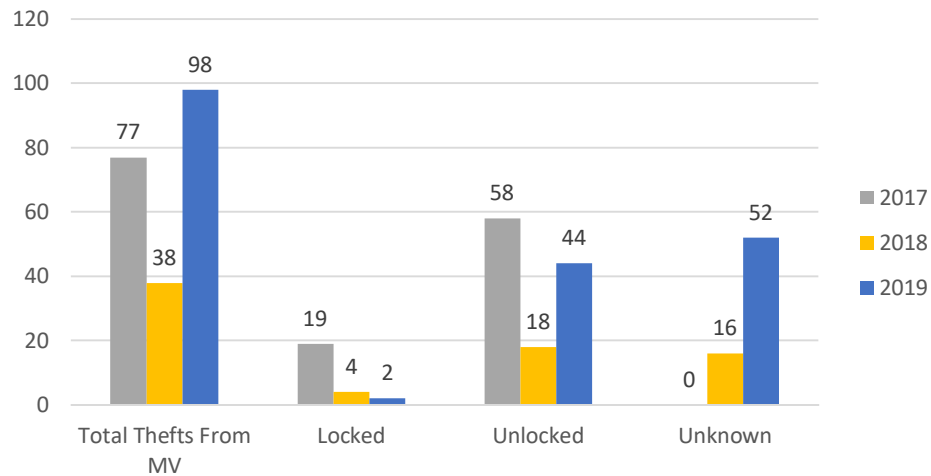


The Taber Police Service observed increases in all 6 Property Offence categories. The largest increase in the Property Offence category occurred in the category of Fraud. This is an increase of 95%, from 37 occurrences in 2018 to 72 occurrences in 2019. Moreau (2019) states, “Nationally, the rate of police-reported fraud (including identity theft and identity fraud) increased for the seventh year in a row, up 12% from 2017 and 46% higher than a decade earlier.” (pg.1)

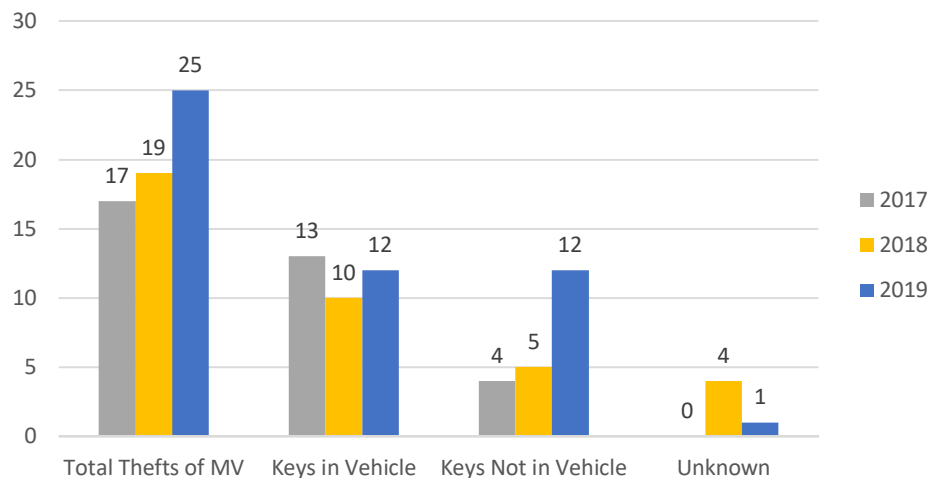
The next highest increase was reported in break and enters, which rose from 32 reports in 2018 to 49 (53%) in 2019. Within the 49 reported break and enters, 14 were to businesses, 14 were to residences, 17 occurred to other structures such as unattached

garages, construction sites or sheds, and 4 were regarding individuals being unlawfully in a dwelling house. Statistics Canada crime statistics for 2018 indicate an Alberta average increase of 1.71% in break and enter offences. A national decline was noted in break and enter offences -1.28%, (Moreau, 2019). This is opposite of what occurred in our community. The increase seen in our community is likely linked to the high numbers associated in certain drug offences and the individuals involved in that culture.

Thefts From Motor Vehicle



Confirmed Thefts of Motor Vehicle

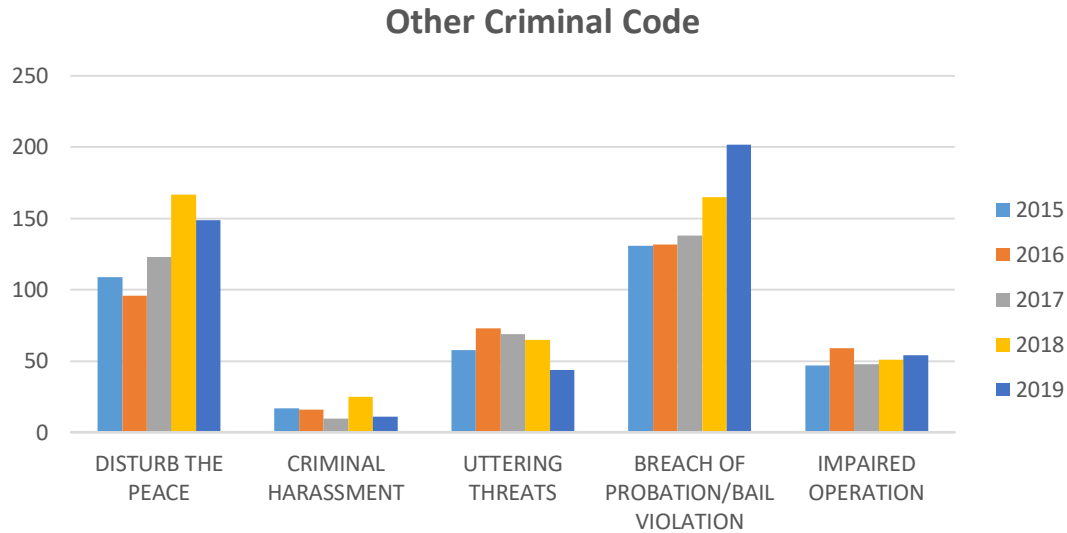


A review of all reported Property Offences involving vehicles was undertaken and several suggested preventative measures could decrease the reported number of future thefts from occurring in our community. This review confirmed that 27 of the 36 reported theft of vehicles involved the confirmation of an actual theft of vehicle occurring. In the other 9 occurrences, it was determined that although the incident was initially reported as a theft, an investigation revealed otherwise. Of these 27 confirmed vehicle thefts, 6 involved thefts where the keys were left in the vehicle prior to the theft occurring. In 6 other occurrences, the keys were obtained by someone known to the victim prior to the vehicle being stolen.

Thefts from motor vehicles accounted for 40% (98 out of 243) of all reports of thefts under \$5,000. Of the 98 reports of thefts from motor vehicles, 79 occurrences involved items being stolen from the interior of unattended vehicles. Of 79, 44 of the vehicles were determined to have been unlocked. In 33 other instances, it was unsure if the vehicle was locked and/or items were stolen from the exterior of the vehicle, so the data from these occurrences was not entered into a category. These statistics confirm that removing keys from vehicles and ensuring that doors are locked when vehicles are left unattended would likely decrease the number of reportable thefts within these categories.

OTHER CRIMINAL CODE

Although not all encompassing, the offence description of other criminal code refers to offences that do not fall into the categories of offences against person, drug or property offences. Examples of these types of offences are disturbing the peace, criminal harassment, uttering threats, breach of probation, impaired driving, etc.



2019 saw a slight increase percentage-wise in this crime category (+2%) resulting in 606 reports in 2018 to 616 reports in 2019. 3 out of the 6 categories saw increases with the most notable being criminal harassment which saw a 56% decrease.

The remaining 3 offence types within the Other Criminal Code category all saw between 6% and 22% increases in reports. The largest increase of the 3 remaining types was observed with reports of breach of probation/bail violation offence, with an increase from 165 reports in 2018 to 202 reports in 2019 (22%). This could be attributed to the societal issues surrounding the increase in meth use and the subsequent likelihood, due to lifestyle, to fail to abide by court imposed conditions. Dauvergne (2009) wrote, “The offences most often associated with drug-related incidents tend to be relatively minor in nature. Administration of justice offences (such as failure to comply with an order or breach of probation) occurred in about one-third of all drug-related incidents as did property offences, usually possession of stolen goods.” (pg.1)

It is forecasted that the amount of charges laid in this category will likely decrease in 2020 due to the introduction of Bill C-75 in June of 2019, which directs alternative mechanisms for administration of justice offences to be utilized.

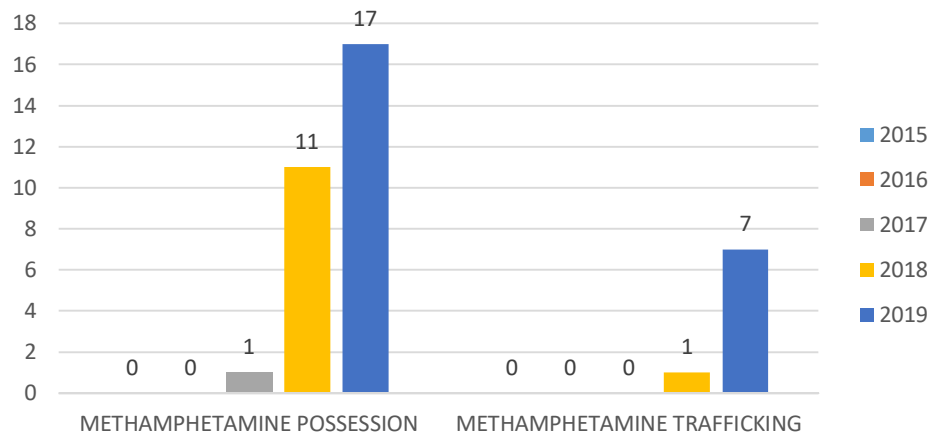
Out of the 202 occurrences in this category, the two most common were breaches of release conditions (54) and failing to attend court (45). Property damage saw the next highest increase at 17%, which translates to an increase from 133 reports in 2018 to 156 in 2019

Impaired driving statistics presented a slight increase with 54 occurrences reported in 2019 compared to 51 in 2018. Out of the 54, 50 were actual with 4 being unfounded. A total of 39 charges, 22 roadside alcohol related suspensions and 2 drug related roadside suspensions were issued. Since its inception in June of 2019 to the end of 2019, the Taber Police Service conducted 1032 Mandatory Alcohol Screening (MASS) tests. As a direct result of the MASS program, 12 drivers were charged with impaired driving related offences.

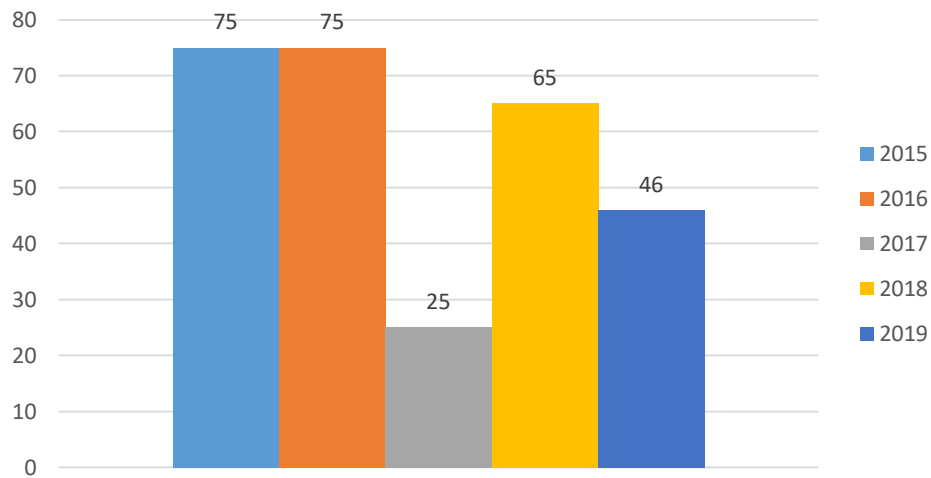
DRUG OFFENCES

Drug offences are those crimes reported that involve contraventions of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Examples of crimes that are included within this category are possession and trafficking of all illegal drugs and production of illegal drugs. Cannabis related offence types have been removed from this section and placed in the Provincial Act crime type due to the changes in federal law.

Drug Offences Methamphetamine-Related Offences



Total Drugs



In 2018 total drug offences reported to, or investigated by, the Taber Police Service saw an overall increase of 160% as compared to 2017. With this inflated percentage increase from last year in mind, 2019 saw a decrease by 29% in overall drug offences. As a note, the cannabis offences that were placed into the Provincial Act category accounted for 28% of that decrease. Out of the 7 offence types, only 3 saw increases. These were within the categories of Methamphetamine trafficking,

methamphetamine possession, and opioid possession. Possession of methamphetamine reports totaled 17 in 2019. This particular offence type was added in 2017 following the Taber Police Service noting an increase in reports of methamphetamine possession that had never previously been observed within the Town of Taber. In 2018 the concerning statistic in this category was that there was a 1000% increase, with 11 occurrences reported that involve Methamphetamines. This number has continued to rise. As forecasted in 2017, the trend in southern Alberta has come to the town of Taber. Factors such as the implementation of the supervised consumption site in Lethbridge, and the shift to meth use in that facility, in February of 2018, and the trend of travelling criminality has been felt in our community. As shown by recent intelligence, many of the transient drug users that are now living or frequenting our community, or have ties to our community, have connections to Lethbridge and Calgary. The transient nature of the individuals involved in the use of illegal drugs causes concern from a policing perspective. Moreau (2018) stated, “Methamphetamine-related offences accounted for 16% of all police-reported drug-related crime. A number of police services have indicated that crystal meth is a growing issue in their communities and has contributed to increases in all types of crime, including property and violent crimes.” (pg.1)

According to the literature, Statistics Canada reports have demonstrated a steady increase in drug occurrences involving heroin, methamphetamines, ecstasy and other CDSA offences since 2014. Meanwhile, the 2017 crime reports show that cannabis and cocaine related offences had declined for five straight years. The 2018 Stats Canada crime report shows a 9.56% increase in 2018 for the possession of Methamphetamines. As a regional comparator for the same statistic, Alberta saw a 16.72% increase in 2018.

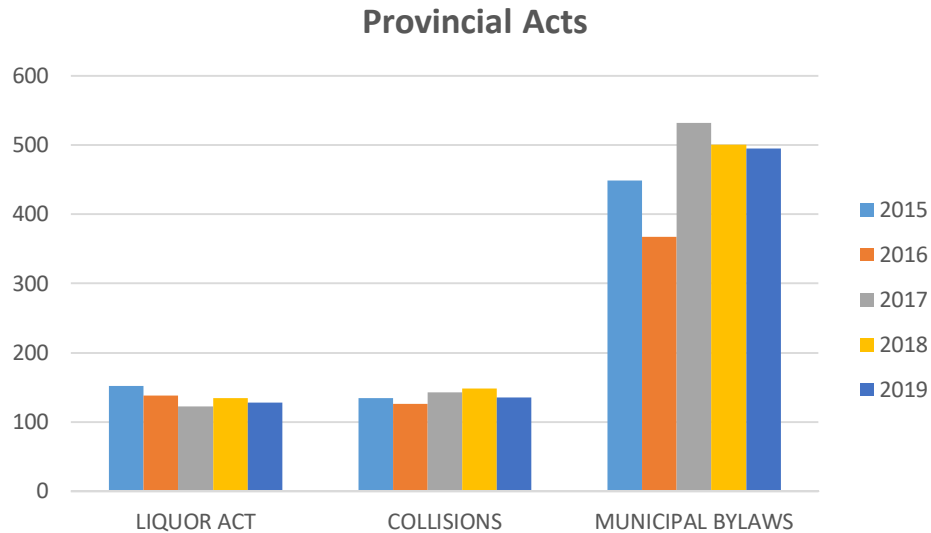
(Moreau, 2018; Allen, 2017). This is in line with the increases shown in these categories within our community.

The largest increase was noted in trafficking Methamphetamines with a 600% increase with 7 reports in 2019. This was up from 1 in 2018. A close second was the category of Opioid trafficking area which showed a 500% increase. Although the numbers of the two crime types combined only total 22 in 2018, those reports can have severe repercussions for the community. The major concern is that between 2015 and 2018 we had 0 reports of Opioid trafficking until 2019.

The last offence type in the Drug Offences category is classified as “other controlled substances”. This offence type includes opiates, prescription medications, ecstasy and other illicit substances such as psilocybin. This category saw 6 reports in 2019, which is down from the 8 reports in the previous year.

PROVINCIAL ACTS

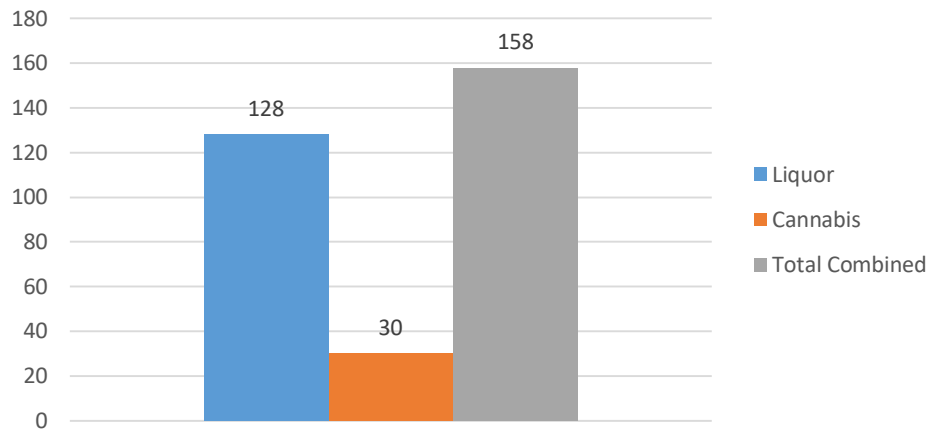
Provincial Acts are the numerous laws enforced by police that are enacted through an Act of the Provincial Legislature of Alberta. Although there are hundreds of these Acts, this report will deal with reports of crime under The Child Youth Enhancement Act, The Gaming and Liquor Act, The Cannabis, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and The Mental Health Act. Other Provincial Statutes, Traffic Collisions and Municipal Bylaws are also measured in this section. Although not criminal complaints, a large proportion of police resources are dedicated to the enforcement and investigation of Provincial Acts. This has seen some changes for the 2019 year as cannabis was added to the Gaming and Liquor Act.



The 2019 numbers indicated that there was a decrease from 2018 of 4% in all categories of the number of reports to the Taber Police Service concerning Provincial Acts. Percentage decreases within this category range between -1% and -17%. The largest decrease was reported in Mental Health occurrence down by 17%. Although the numbers are down this year, this will be an ongoing area of concern and it has taken a community approach to react properly to these types of incidences. The decrease could be directly linked to the positive working relationship that has been developed in our community with the Hub and Spoke model. This approach seems to be the most effective to best assist our mental health clients.

Although liquor act offences were down 4% in 2019, the newly formed Cannabis, Liquor and Gaming Act occurrences account for 158 occurrences if the cannabis line was included. As a comparator, a graph has been developed that combines these two lines.

2019 Liquor and Cannabis

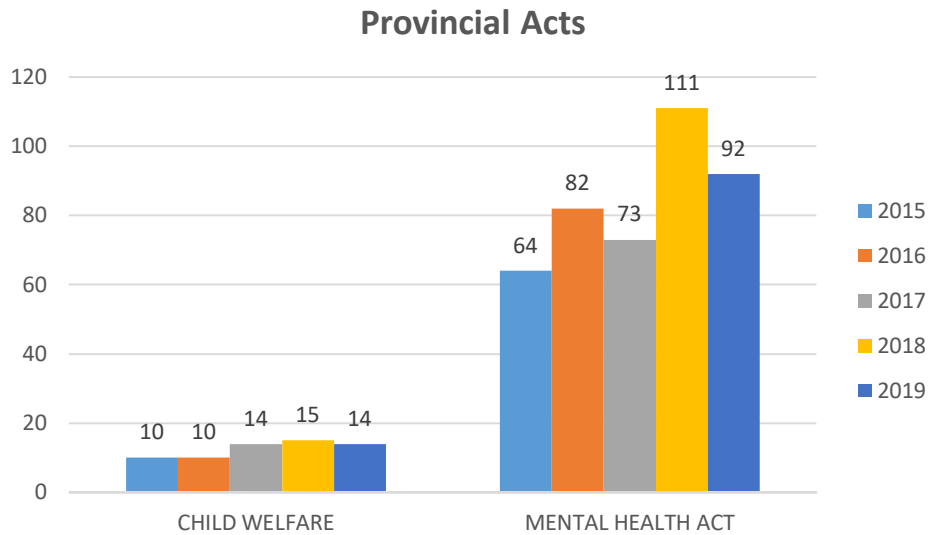


The numbers for the municipal bylaw occurrences dropped slightly in 2019 to 495 occurrences as compared to 501 in 2018. This has remained fairly constant as it only constituted a decrease of 1%.

Another area that was fairly constant was child welfare reported occurrences decreased 1%, or by one report. After evaluating each child welfare report it was determined that there were 11 occurrences where a concerned citizen made reports to the police. 2 reports were initiated by Child and Family Service (CFS) workers and 3 others came in from concerned family members or the school the child attended. Each report made to the Taber Police Service of a child welfare nature is shared with the Taber CFS office to ensure each organization involved can fulfill their mandates and responsibilities. South Country Child and Family Services continues to be an important stakeholder/partner of the Taber Police Service in ensuring the safety of the children within our community.

The other offence type within the Provincial Acts category with a decrease in 2019 was other provincial stats (-5%). The offence type within this category titled Other Provincial Stats is made up of 13 offences listed under the Traffic Safety Act. Some of

these offences are moving traffic violations, fail to stop or remain at an accident scene, and motor vehicle insurance coverage violations, to name a few. Of the 1916 reports of offences included in the Other Provincial Stats section, 1648 resulted in charges being laid; a decrease of 128 charges from 2018. Collisions saw a decrease between 2018 and 2019 as they fell from 148 reports to 135 (9%). After increases in the past two years, this year marks a decline which is positive for traffic safety purposes.



CONCLUSION

In an ever-changing climate the Taber Police Service can use crime analysis statistics to assist in an educated response to various criminal concerns within our community. A snapshot of the issues of concern are reviewed so we can direct a focused response.

The offences against persons category revealed a substantial decrease in reports. This can lead to an inference that Taber is a safe community.

In the property offences crime types, there was a significant increase, as was forecasted in the 2018 Crime Analysis. Even with this increase occurring, the actual numbers in the Town of Taber may even be higher than reported. Morneau (2019) wrote, “The decision by an individual to report a criminal incident to police has a considerable impact on the number of crimes ultimately recorded by police. The latest cycle of the General Social Survey on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization), which provides information on the crime reporting behavior of Canadians aged 15 and older for selected offences, indicated that about one-third (31%) of crimes are reported to police.” (pg.5)

The nexus between recent trends of transient activity, Methamphetamine increases and property crime is clear. As an example, an analysis of 10 individuals, that the Taber Police Service had regular encounters with, was conducted. The snapshot revealed they were involved with, identified or suspected of being involved in 18 % of the total property crimes in 2019. This does not include the large number of unsolved occurrences where the individuals may have been involved but not listed on the occurrence. These 10 individuals were chosen because they are transient in nature, are involved in the drug culture, and have ties to larger municipalities.

Until late 2017, meth usage in Taber had been relatively non-existent. This increasing meth use in Taber can be explained as this same trend has been observed across the province, as Meth has become the drug of choice among illicit drug users within communities. Casey (2019) wrote, “Dr. Matthew Young advised that, while there has been an increase in the availability, use and harms associated with meth use across Canada in the last 10 years, he explained that the impacts of Meth are currently being felt most acutely in the Western Provinces.” (pg.14). A continued focus on drug education community partnerships, particularly the work of the school resource officer, and building resiliency in youth, will be an important tool to assist in this issue.

Mental Health Act occurrences have decreased, but regardless, the continued ability of the Taber Police Service to foster and grow our community partnerships is imperative to ensure effective response to this societal issue. The current Hub and Spoke model within our community regarding mental health is an example of an effective response.

The Police Executive Research Forum (2014), advised, “At the most fundamental level, police have expanded their mission, taking on the goal of preventing crime and reducing crime rates, rather than merely responding after crimes are committed. Today’s best police departments are always looking for ways to be proactive rather than reactive.” (p.42). This consistently has been a way of doing business for the Taber Police Service and it is crucial that it continues to ensure effective community response. Carter (2009), writes, “new dimensions of ILP (Intelligence Led Policing) depend on strong community relationships. Crime will continue to be a critical responsibility for the police as will the need for community support. .” (p.319). As drug use escalates, the need for social supports will continue. This involves continued partnerships with addictions, mental

health and victim services workers and advocates. From a policing perspective, it is important to continue enforcement and investigations regarding these individuals. The continuation of intelligence gathering, source cultivation and aggressive police work will be a vital part of the entire body of work that will be required to help combat this issue.

The Taber Police Service, through strategic planning and proper resource allocation is prepared to respond effectively. This crime analysis can be utilized as research to further promote and ensure the mission statement of the Taber Police Service is fulfilled.

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Taber Police Service

Adult Community Survey

2020 Report



Prepared by:

Senior Constable Andrew Evanson

Date:

November

2020

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APPENDIX “A” – SURVEY

***APPENDIX “B” – LIST OF COMMENTS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Taber Police Service mission is to inform, involve, and protect the citizens of Taber. Community feedback is crucial when organizations, like the police, look towards the future in setting goals and establishing priorities. Every five years the Alberta Solicitor General requires, through policing standards, the police to conduct a survey to obtain the perceptions and attitudes of the community towards and about their police service. This is the 5th adult community survey that has been undertaken by the Taber Police and the survey aligns with the commencement of our multi-year business plan.

The survey results, along with our Youth Survey results, focus groups, staff engagement, and an environmental scan will all provide information that will allow us to better align our resources and programs in a more efficient and effective manner. The metrics around policing are hard to measure. One of the best ways to obtain a report card of how we are doing is simply to ask the community the hard questions. Once the responses are tabulated, we as an organization can create a plan to address the issues raised, or continue doing the hard work required to keep what is working at the expected levels.

This survey was released to the public via an online web link on September 24, 2020 and was closed to the public on November 7, 2020.

2.0 METHOD

The process was broken down into three components or phases.

Phase 1 – Survey design

Phase 2 – Survey Implementation

Phase 3 – Analysis and reporting

A detailed description of each phase is outlined in the remainder of this section.

2.1 Phase 1 - Survey Design and Sampling

There are many different survey designs that can be deployed to obtain data. In our case, an online E-survey instrument was utilized to survey the community of Taber. E-surveys are an effective method for the collection of public opinions and attitudes and may provide opportunity for higher response rates, accessibility to larger group of participants, is lower in cost than traditional methods, and provides for anonymity. (Hewson, 2007). Other methods were considered, including canvassing, and phone surveys. We know that other larger police services have utilized telephone surveys, however, there are substantial costs associated with this method and we are not in the position to pay for such services.

Furthermore, we know that Statistics Canada conducted research in 2014 that indicated **91%** of household had access to a cellular phone, while only **58%** still held a traditional landline. (Greenwood, 2014) This statistic of internet users has almost certainly increased in the last 6 years. As indicated in the 2020 CIRA (Canadian Internet Registration Authority) Factbook, more than three-quarters of Canadians spend 3 -4 hours online per day. As such, it seemed reasonable that an online survey would be convenient and readily accessible to the majority of the community of Taber. Whereas, with fewer and fewer hard line phone subscribers, sampling issues and bias may be introduced through traditional phone methods. The questions and design used to create the survey was gathered from previous TPS surveys, along with surveys created and used by other municipal police services in Alberta, namely The Calgary Police Service. Questions posed from these surveys were augmented to be relevant and applicable to the community of Taber. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix "A". It was decided that the survey would target the adults of the Taber community and surrounding area.

The web-based online survey software used in the deployment of this E-Survey was SurveyMonkey.com. In order to prevent multiple survey responses from the same person a disqualifying question was posed at the beginning of the survey, as well, the survey was designed to be only completed on a particular device or computer once. In order to capture input from Taber residents separate from responses from outside the community, the online survey tool from SurveyMonkey.com allowed for filters to be applied to the results.

A paper hard copy version of the survey was also made available for pick up at the Taber Police Service or Town of Taber office for individuals who wished to provide feedback in that format.

2.2 Phase 2 - Survey Implementation

Once the survey was designed, and beta tested to ensure it was appropriate and accurate, a web link was created which would allow access to the web page where the survey could be completed. This web link was shared to the public through many sources including the TPS Facebook page, TPS Instagram page, the Town of Taber website, general email, and the Taber Times newspaper. Using these methods a total of 322 responses were gathered before the survey was closed on November 7, 2020.

2.3 Phase 3 - Analysis and Reporting

Once the survey was closed to the public the analytical tools within the survey software compiled and analyzed the results automatically. The online service also had the capability to filter the results in order to target specific areas for analysis. Any comments provided by respondents were kept in their pure and unaltered form to capture the accuracy of what is trying to be conveyed. All comments provided were read and analyzed in order to develop themes, if any, that could be examined to suggest improvements that could be made for service delivery.

3.0 LIMITATIONS

Even though it was decided that an online method would be the best solution for this year's survey, we are cognizant of the limitations involved. Most individuals in society today have some form of access to the internet either personally, through an acquaintance, or through public means such as a library. Even though internet access is quite readily available, even in the community of Taber, there was the potential for those who would not have reasonable access to the internet and a device in order to complete the survey.

Historically, in our experience, middle-aged females are more likely to complete a survey than are males. This may cause a skewed overall result from the total respondents collected. We understand this real limitation and will consider ways to alleviate this by way of focus groups to gather more male attitudes and perceptions.

The survey was designed in order that respondents would have the choice to either answer that they were "unsure", as well as, skip an answer to a question if they so desired. Although this would not necessarily affect the results, this did create a potential new category to be considered when it comes to analysis of such results.

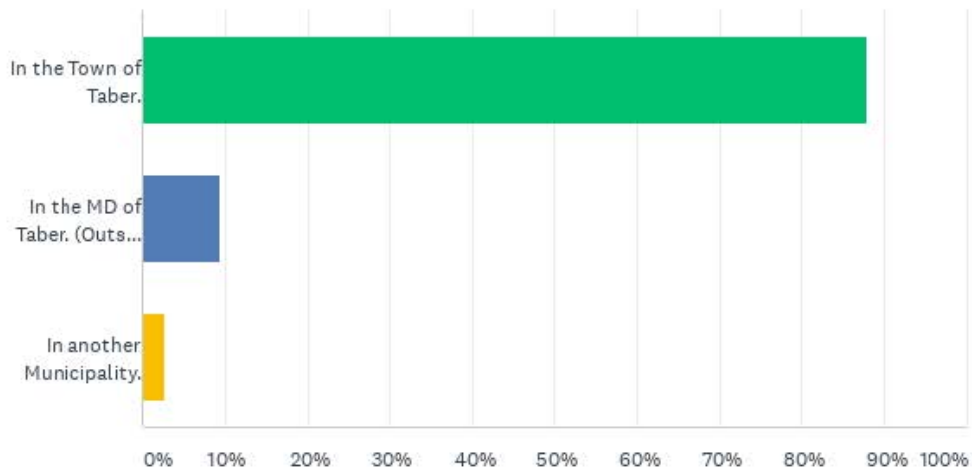
Despite these limitations, the Taber Police Service is confident in these results for several reasons. First, the results of this survey are very similar to the results of previous surveys conducted by the Taber Police Service. Secondly, knowing our given population and according to the Town of Taber Demographic Study (2015) there was approximately 5037 adults in Taber. With the 322 responses, we know this survey provides a 95% confidence level, plus or minus 5%.

4.0 RESULTS

Those who accessed the survey were asked a series of 27 questions ranging from multiple choice, ranking, and short answer responses. If an individual wished, they had a choice to skip a question to continue on through the survey. The following are the results generated from the responses obtained:

Q1: Where do you reside?

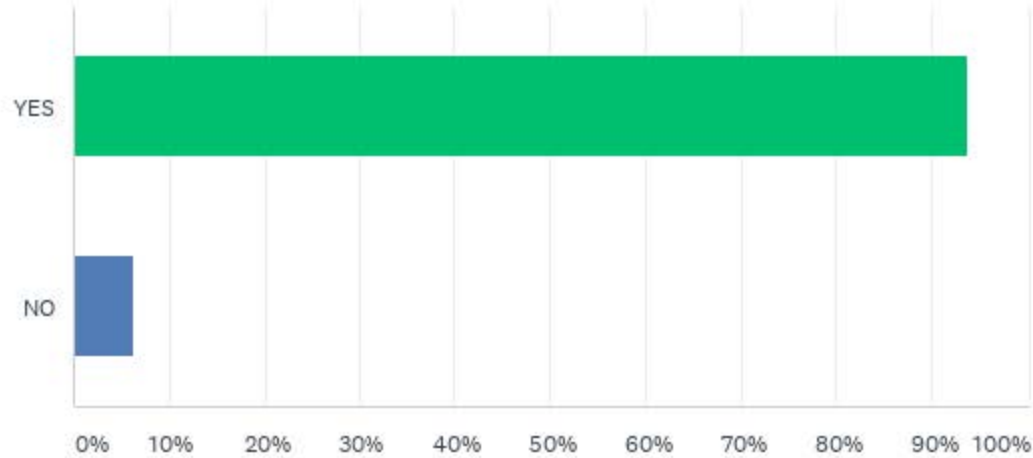
Answered: 322 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In the Town of Taber.	87.89%	283
In the MD of Taber. (Outside of the Town of Taber)	9.32%	30
In another Municipality.	2.80%	9
TOTAL		322

Q2: Is this the first time you have taken the 2020 Taber Police Service Community Survey?

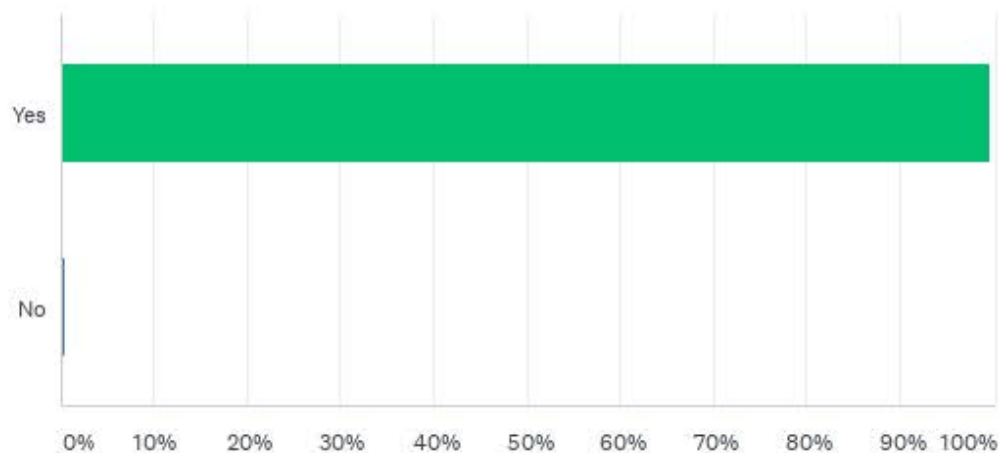
Answered: 322 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
YES	93.79%	302
NO	6.21%	20
TOTAL		322

Q3: Are you 18 years old or older?

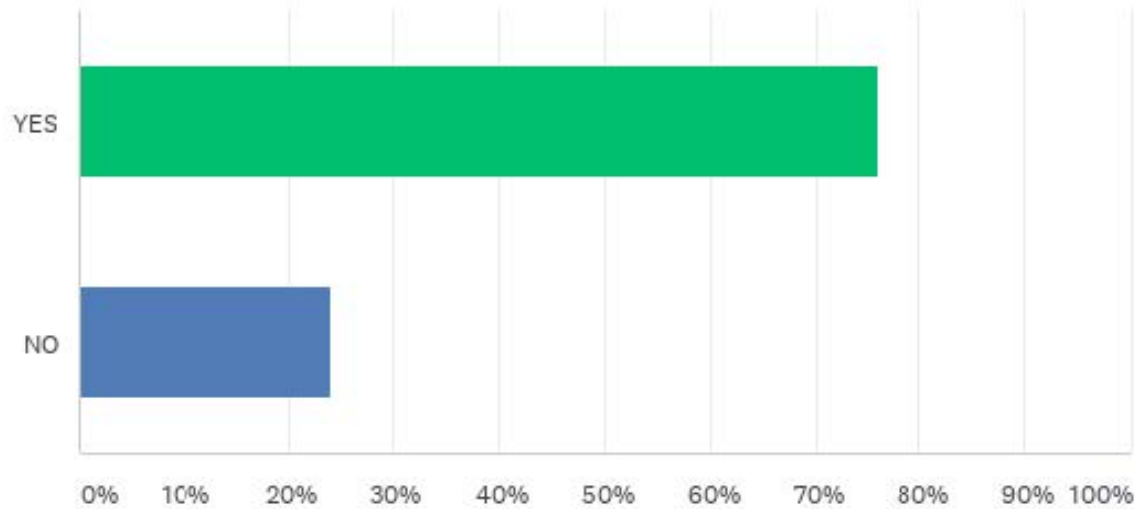
Answered: 301 Skipped: 21



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	99.67%	300
No	0.33%	1
TOTAL		301

Q4: Have you had direct contact with a Taber Police officer within the past year?

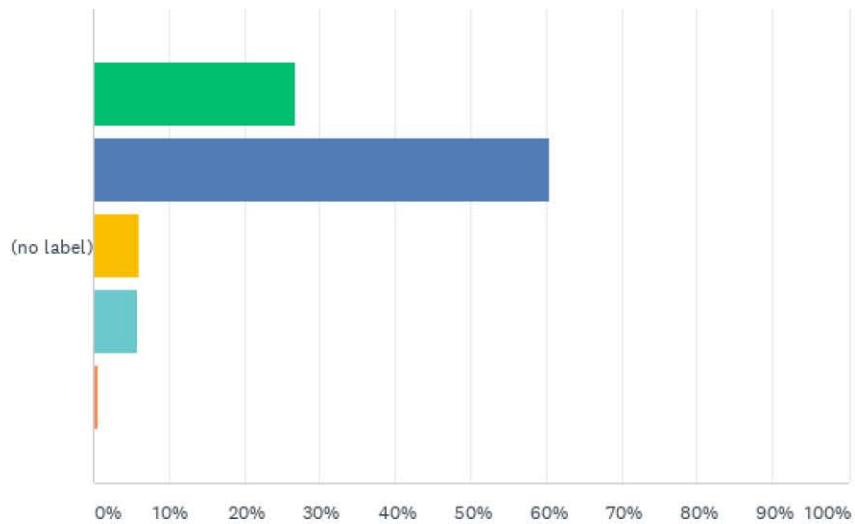
Answered: 298 Skipped: 24



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
YES	75.84%	226
NO	24.16%	72
TOTAL		298

Q5: Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statement, "Taber is a safe place to live"?

Answered: 276 Skipped: 46

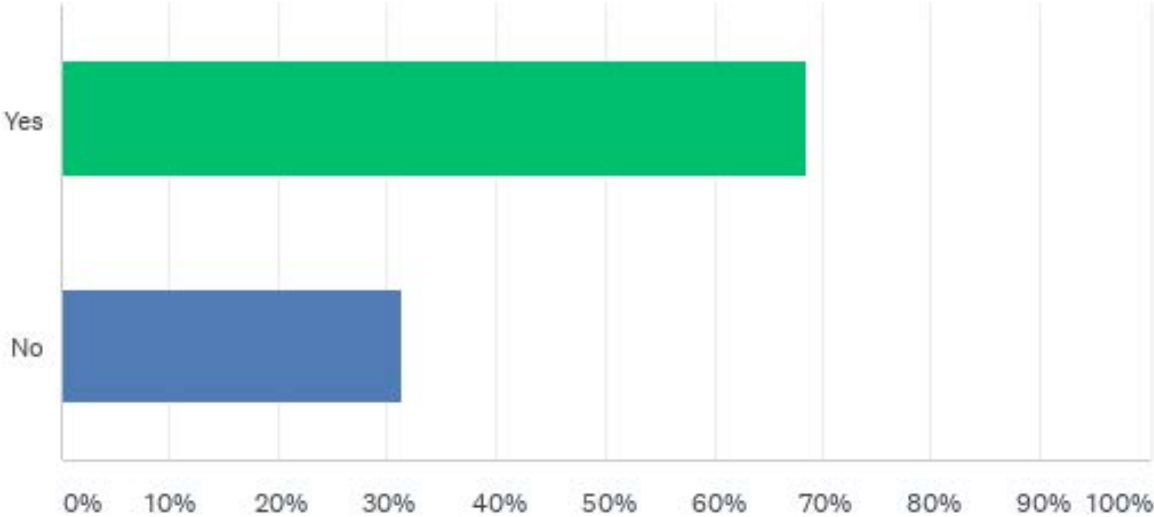


Strongly agree Agree Unsure Disagree Strongly disagree

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	26.81% 74	60.51% 167	6.16% 17	5.80% 16	0.72% 2	276	1.93

Q6: Do you feel safe to walk around Taber at night?

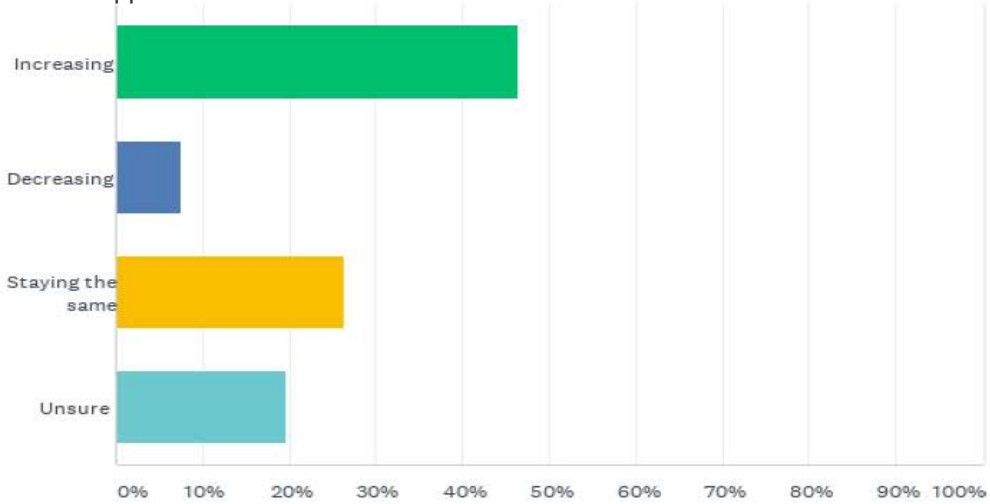
Answered: 278 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	68.71%	191
No	31.29%	87
TOTAL		278

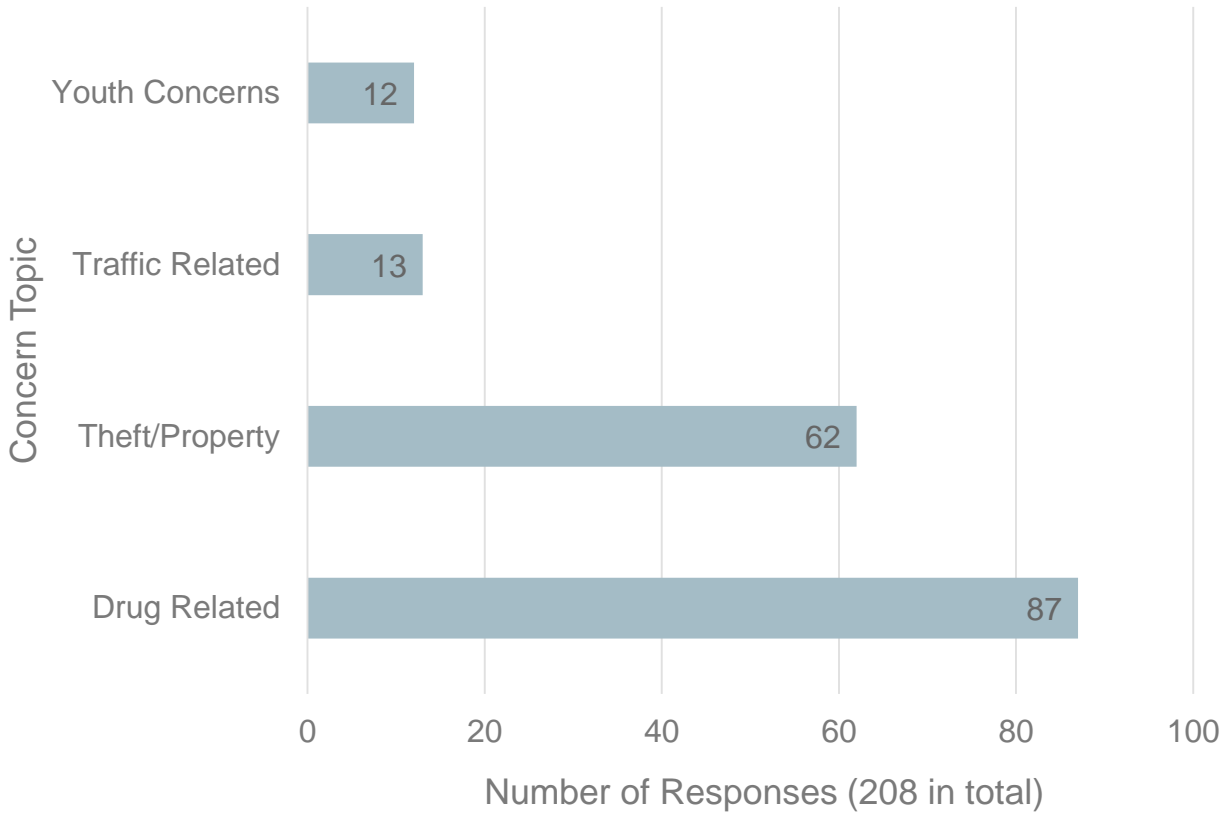
Q7: Thinking about the last 12 months, in your opinion, are crime rates in Taber increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?

Answered: 280 Skipped: 42



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	46.43%	130
Decreasing	7.50%	21
Staying the same	26.43%	74
Unsure	19.64%	55
TOTAL		280

Q8 Considering the Town of Taber as a whole, what would you say is the greatest public safety concern for you, if any?



Q9: Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 your level of concern with regards to the following crime issues. ("1" being the least concern and "10" being the most concern) (If needed, you may apply the same number to multiple crime issues)

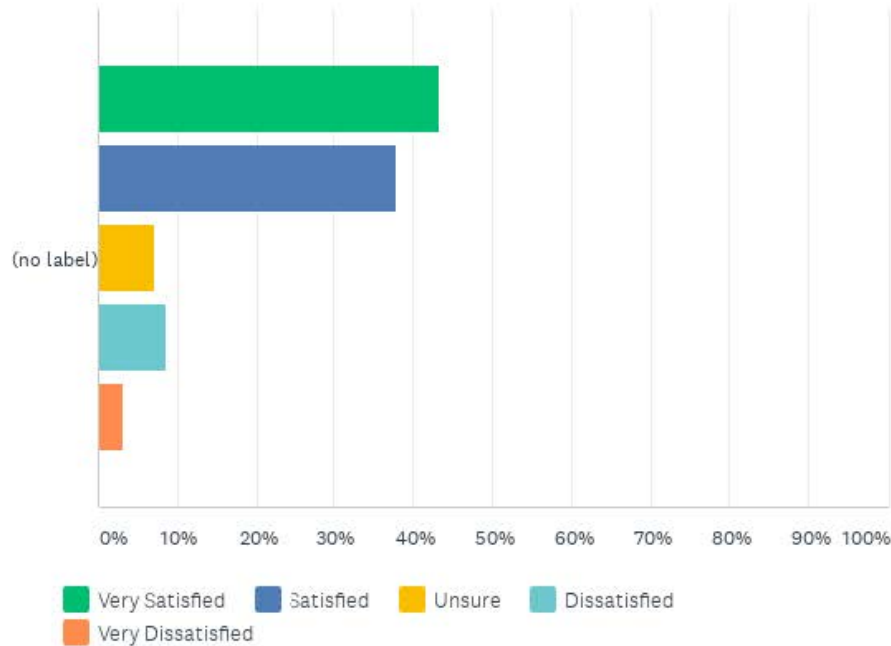
Answered: 266

Skipped: 56

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Assault	14.34% 38	16.98% 45	17.36% 46	6.79% 18	14.72% 39	5.66% 15	7.55% 20	6.42% 17	4.15% 11	6.04% 16	265	4.37
Child Abuse	11.79% 31	13.31% 35	8.75% 23	6.46% 17	15.21% 40	7.22% 19	6.08% 16	9.51% 25	3.80% 10	17.87% 47	263	5.41
Computer/Internet Crime	13.58% 36	7.55% 20	6.79% 18	9.43% 25	19.25% 51	11.70% 31	9.81% 26	7.55% 20	4.91% 13	9.43% 25	265	5.21
Damage to Property	1.50% 4	0.75% 2	5.64% 15	4.51% 12	12.78% 34	12.41% 33	17.29% 46	16.17% 43	10.53% 28	18.42% 49	266	7.06
Domestic Abuse	8.27% 22	4.14% 11	6.39% 17	7.89% 21	16.17% 43	10.53% 28	15.41% 41	10.53% 28	8.65% 23	12.03% 32	266	6.02
Drug/Controlled Substances	4.51% 12	1.88% 5	3.01% 8	3.38% 9	4.14% 11	6.02% 16	8.65% 23	18.42% 49	15.04% 40	34.96% 93	266	7.80
Senior Fraud	7.52% 20	7.52% 20	9.02% 24	9.77% 26	12.78% 34	11.28% 30	12.03% 32	10.15% 27	5.26% 14	14.66% 39	266	5.80
General Fraud	6.39% 17	9.40% 25	12.03% 32	7.89% 21	21.43% 57	9.77% 26	11.28% 30	10.53% 28	3.01% 8	8.27% 22	266	5.32
Break and Enter	2.27% 6	3.41% 9	6.44% 17	6.06% 16	13.64% 36	9.85% 26	9.85% 26	18.94% 50	9.09% 24	20.45% 54	264	6.87
Gang Activity	21.43% 57	18.05% 48	10.90% 29	9.40% 25	10.90% 29	6.02% 16	4.51% 12	4.89% 13	2.26% 6	11.65% 31	266	4.26
Loitering	16.54% 44	12.41% 33	13.16% 35	7.89% 21	12.41% 33	7.89% 21	6.77% 18	7.52% 20	4.14% 11	11.28% 30	266	4.79
Disturbing the Peace	13.53% 36	10.53% 28	14.66% 39	11.65% 31	12.03% 32	8.27% 22	7.89% 21	6.39% 17	3.76% 10	11.28% 30	266	4.88
Sexual Assault	12.50% 33	10.23% 27	13.26% 35	7.20% 19	11.74% 31	6.44% 17	9.47% 25	6.44% 17	3.79% 10	18.94% 50	264	5.40
Theft	0.76% 2	2.65% 7	3.03% 8	3.41% 9	7.95% 21	9.85% 26	13.26% 35	15.91% 42	11.74% 31	31.44% 83	264	7.68
Organized Crime	19.92% 53	13.53% 36	13.53% 36	10.15% 27	10.53% 28	8.27% 22	4.89% 13	6.02% 16	2.26% 6	10.90% 29	266	4.42
Traffic Violations	15.09% 40	9.43% 25	14.34% 38	10.94% 29	9.81% 26	6.79% 18	9.81% 26	8.30% 22	5.66% 15	9.81% 26	265	4.95
Youth Crime	7.14% 19	9.77% 26	9.40% 25	7.89% 21	14.29% 38	7.89% 21	13.16% 35	13.16% 35	4.51% 12	12.78% 34	266	5.71
Graffiti	30.68% 81	15.91% 42	14.77% 39	8.33% 22	10.61% 28	6.82% 18	4.17% 11	3.79% 10	1.14% 3	3.79% 10	264	3.42

Q10: Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided by the Taber Police?

Answered: 256 Skipped: 66



	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	UNSURE	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	43.36%	37.89%	7.03%	8.59%	3.13%	256	1.90
	111	97	18	22	8		

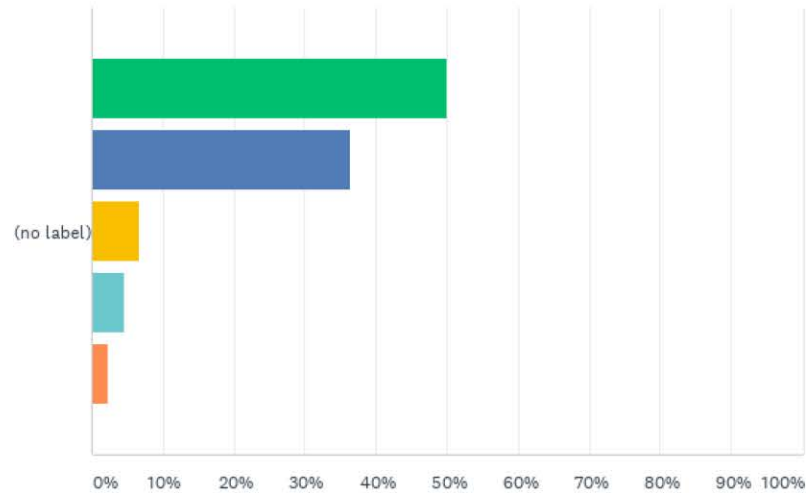
Q11: Based on your experience or just your general impressions, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Taber Police Service and its officers:

Answered: 257 Skipped: 65

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Responds quickly when needed.	38.13% 98	43.19% 111	12.06% 31	5.06% 13	1.56% 4	257	1.89
Is dedicated to reducing levels of crime.	38.52% 99	41.63% 107	11.28% 29	4.28% 11	4.28% 11	257	1.94
Supports the community.	54.09% 139	36.19% 93	5.84% 15	2.72% 7	1.17% 3	257	1.61
Is friendly and approachable.	49.81% 128	31.91% 82	8.95% 23	7.39% 19	1.95% 5	257	1.80
Has the capacity to fully enforce the law.	38.52% 99	41.63% 107	10.89% 28	5.84% 15	3.11% 8	257	1.93
Demonstrates the appropriate level of care and concern.	36.96% 95	40.86% 105	8.95% 23	9.34% 24	3.89% 10	257	2.02
Is adequately staffed.	28.52% 73	33.20% 85	25.78% 66	8.98% 23	3.52% 9	256	2.26
Uses crime prevention measures and programs effectively.	26.95% 69	37.11% 95	28.52% 73	4.30% 11	3.13% 8	256	2.20
Meets my expectations as a police service.	37.35% 96	39.30% 101	10.89% 28	8.95% 23	3.50% 9	257	2.02

Q12: How confident are you that the Taber Police Service can deliver the services needed to make sure Taber is a safe place to live?

Answered: 256 Skipped: 66



■ Very confident
 ■ Somewhat confident
 ■ Unsure
 ■ Not very confident
 ■ Not at all confident

	VERY CONFIDENT	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	UNSURE	NOT VERY CONFIDENT	NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	50.00% 128	36.33% 93	6.64% 17	4.69% 12	2.34% 6	256	1.73

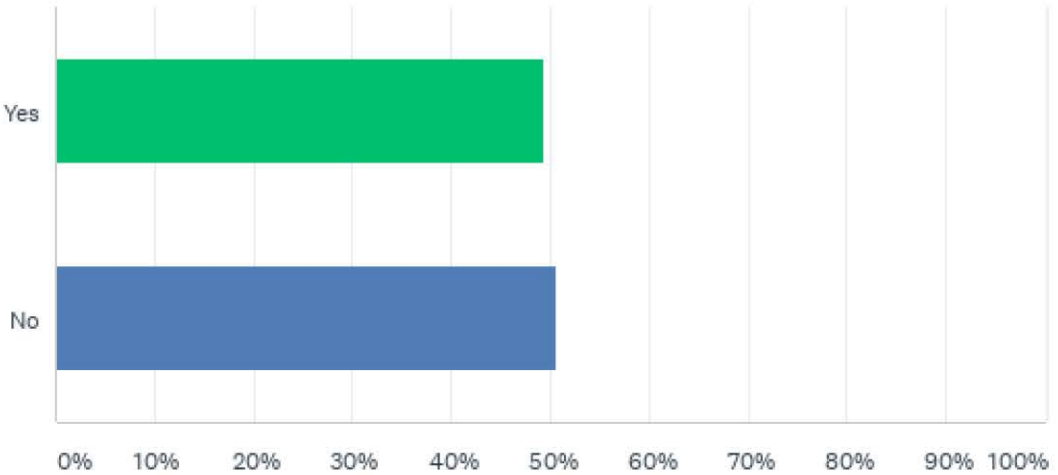
Q13: Based on your experience or general impressions, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Taber Police Service as a whole:

Answered: 247 Skipped: 75

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Provides an adequate level of service to the public.	39.27% 97	50.20% 124	5.67% 14	2.83% 7	2.02% 5	247	1.78
Uses its authority and force appropriately.	34.96% 86	43.09% 106	12.60% 31	4.47% 11	4.88% 12	246	2.01
Maintains appropriate visibility in the community.	44.94% 111	42.51% 105	4.86% 12	5.67% 14	2.02% 5	247	1.77
Adequately communicates crime issues and trends to the community.	32.39% 80	42.51% 105	12.96% 32	8.10% 20	4.05% 10	247	2.09
Officers are ethical.	39.27% 97	38.46% 95	14.17% 35	5.26% 13	2.83% 7	247	1.94
Officers are respectful.	43.72% 108	39.68% 98	10.93% 27	3.64% 9	2.02% 5	247	1.81
Officers clearly understand my safety needs and concerns.	35.22% 87	41.70% 103	17.00% 42	3.64% 9	2.43% 6	247	1.96
Officers are competent in their duties.	36.03% 89	46.96% 116	12.55% 31	2.02% 5	2.43% 6	247	1.88
Officers are professional.	40.08% 99	41.70% 103	11.34% 28	4.45% 11	2.43% 6	247	1.87
Officers are involved and participate in the community.	44.53% 110	42.51% 105	8.50% 21	3.64% 9	0.81% 2	247	1.74

Q16: Are you aware of any community initiatives/programs that the Taber Police Service and/or its members are involved in?

Answered: 239 Skipped: 83



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	49.37%	118
No	50.63%	121
TOTAL		239

Q18: Based on your experience, or general impressions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: Community Standards services and its police officer(s):

Answered: 238 Skipped: 84

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Responds to complaints in a timely manner.	26.27% 62	38.56% 91	29.66% 70	3.81% 9	1.69% 4	236	2.16
Is professional in their appearance and demeanor.	36.97% 88	47.06% 112	12.18% 29	2.10% 5	1.68% 4	238	1.84
Follows up with complainants regarding their concerns.	26.58% 63	35.44% 84	29.11% 69	5.49% 13	3.38% 8	237	2.24
Is friendly and approachable.	35.59% 84	39.83% 94	18.22% 43	4.66% 11	1.69% 4	236	1.97

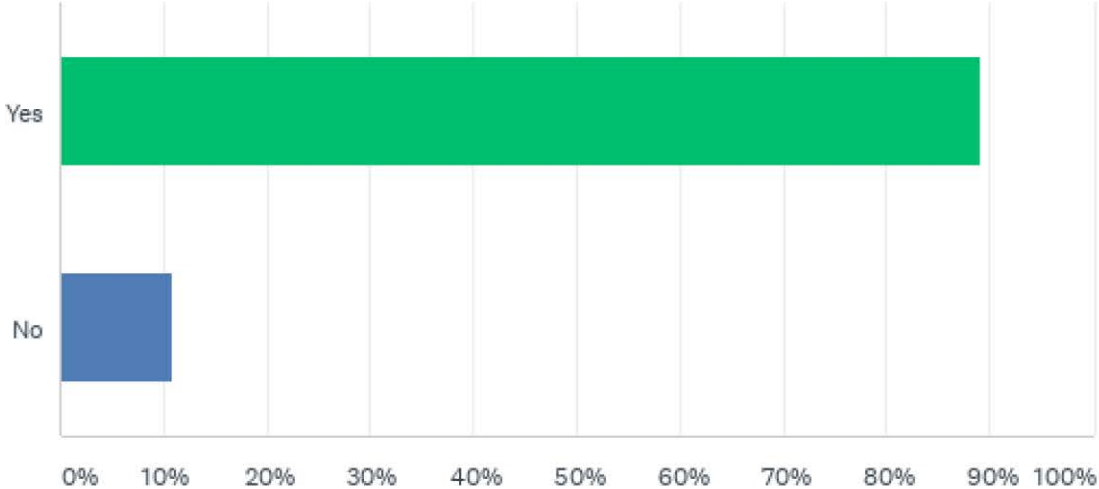
Q19: If you have called 9-1-1 from the Taber area and/or the Taber Police Service general administration line in the past twelve (12) months, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Answered: 216 Skipped: 106

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
The dispatcher was professional in handling my complaint.	31.94% 69	20.37% 44	2.78% 6	1.85% 4	0.46% 1	42.59% 92	216	1.58
My call was answered promptly.	32.09% 69	22.79% 49	1.86% 4	1.40% 3	0.00% 0	41.86% 90	215	1.53
The dispatcher was able to answer my questions.	29.77% 64	22.79% 49	2.33% 5	1.40% 3	0.00% 0	43.72% 94	215	1.56
The dispatcher was able to refer me to the proper resource for help.	29.30% 63	23.72% 51	2.79% 6	0.47% 1	0.00% 0	43.72% 94	215	1.55
The dispatcher was courteous/friendly with me on the phone.	31.16% 67	22.79% 49	1.86% 4	2.33% 5	0.00% 0	41.86% 90	215	1.58
The dispatcher was calm in addressing my concerns/complaint.	31.63% 68	21.86% 47	2.79% 6	0.47% 1	0.00% 0	43.26% 93	215	1.51
I felt the dispatcher listened to my concerns.	28.97% 62	23.36% 50	2.80% 6	1.87% 4	0.00% 0	42.99% 92	214	1.61
I was provided with adequate instructions to help me with my complaint.	28.84% 62	24.65% 53	1.86% 4	0.93% 2	0.00% 0	43.72% 94	215	1.55
I felt the help I needed was sent quickly.	29.91% 64	20.09% 43	3.74% 8	1.87% 4	0.47% 1	43.93% 94	214	1.63

Q20: If you use social media, do you access the Taber Police Service Facebook and/or Instagram pages?

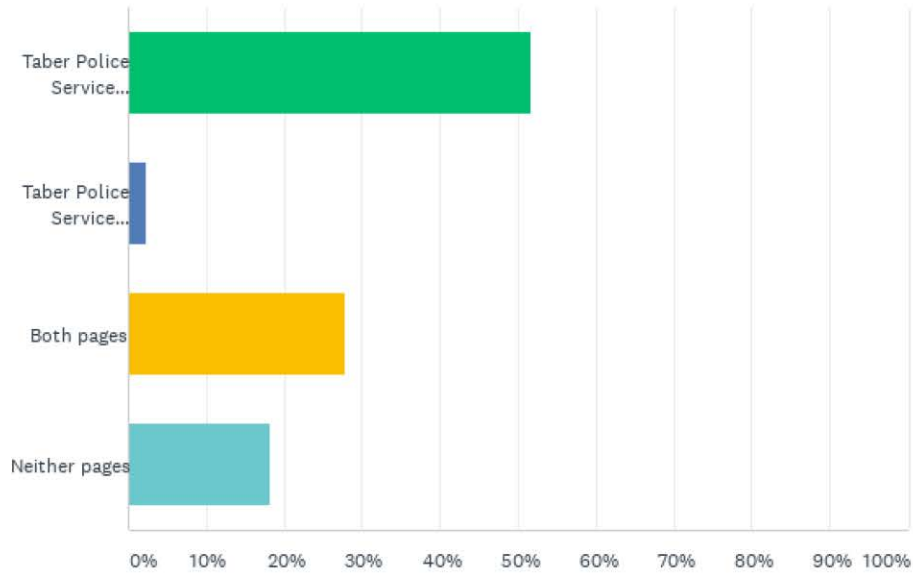
Answered: 228 Skipped: 94



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	89.04%	203
No	10.96%	25
TOTAL		228

Q21: Do you subscribe/follow any of these social media pages?

Answered: 226 Skipped: 96



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Taber Police Service Facebook page	51.77%	117
Taber Police Service Instagram page	2.21%	5
Both pages	27.88%	63
Neither pages	18.14%	41
TOTAL		226

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Q22: How frequently do you access or communicate with the Taber Police Service on social media?

Answered: 226 Skipped: 96

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	7.52%	17
Several times a week	15.04%	34
Once a week or several times a month	29.65%	67
About once a month	14.16%	32
Once every 2 - 3 months	3.98%	9
Once every 4 - 6 months	2.21%	5
Less then every 6 months	3.54%	8
Never	23.89%	54
TOTAL		226

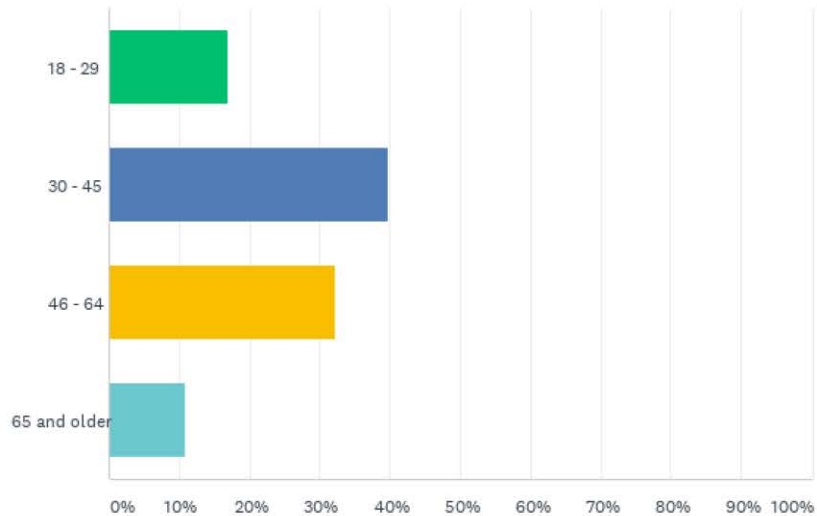
Q23: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding information shared on Taber Police Service social media pages:

Answered: 227 Skipped: 95

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE / DON'T ACCESS SOCIAL MEDIA	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
The information is accurate	10.57% 24	2.20% 5	11.45% 26	50.66% 115	25.11% 57	227	3.43
The information is helpful	11.11% 25	2.22% 5	9.78% 22	56.89% 128	20.00% 45	225	3.43
The information is informative	10.22% 23	3.11% 7	10.22% 23	52.00% 117	24.44% 55	225	3.47

Q24: What age category do you personally fall into?

Answered: 229 Skipped: 93



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
18 - 29	17.03% 39
30 - 45	39.74% 91
46 - 64	32.31% 74
65 and older	10.92% 25
TOTAL	229

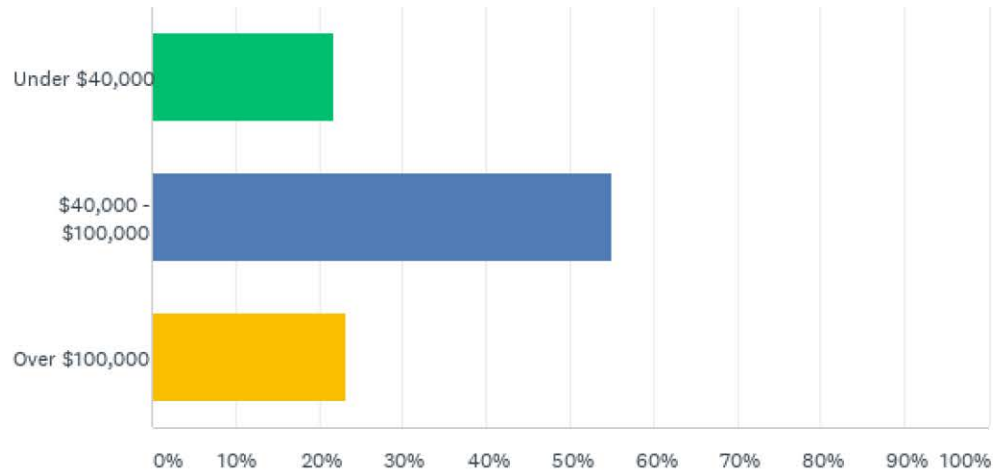
Q25: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Answered: 227 Skipped: 95

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
High School Graduate or Less	23.79%	54
Some Post Secondary	17.18%	39
College/Technical School Graduate	37.89%	86
University Graduate	21.15%	48
TOTAL		227

Q26: What income category do you fall under?

Answered: 216 Skipped: 106



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$40,000	21.76%	47
\$40,000 - \$100,000	55.09%	119
Over \$100,000	23.15%	50
TOTAL		216

Q27: How would you describe your gender?

Answered: 219 Skipped: 103

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male (including transgender men)	29.68%	65
Female (including transgender women)	63.93%	140
Prefer not to say	5.02%	11
Prefer to self describe gender (non-binary, gender-fluid etc.)	1.37%	3
TOTAL		219

5.0 ANALYSIS

Perceptions of the Town of Taber and the Taber Police Service

- **Performance**

A large majority of total respondents, over 81%, agreed that they were satisfied with the service provided by the Taber Police Service with only 11% that disagreed. When comparing past surveys of 2007 (72%), 2011 (less than 82%), and 2016 (80%) the results of this survey indicate that the Taber Police Service is maintaining a consistent level of satisfaction within the community. This satisfaction percentage increased to over 86% from respondents who advised they access or communicate with the Taber Police Service through social media at once a month or more.

Confidence in the Taber Police Service was very high, with over 86% of total respondents feeling confident that the Taber Police Service can deliver whatever services are needed to keep the Town of Taber safe. This is an increase from 85% in 2016. Even though slightly less of the total respondents were satisfied with overall service provided, a higher percentage still felt confident that the Taber Police Service is capable in providing policing services.

83% of respondents indicated that they agree that officers could perform their duties competently. When asking how respectful, ethical, and professional officers were, on average over 80% of total respondents answered positively. These two figures are almost a mirror image from the 2016 results. This level of confidence the public has in the officers themselves is high. This has been maintained and should continue.

- **Safety and Concerns**

Over 87% of respondents felt that Taber was a safe place to live, an increase of 4% from the survey results in 2016. Only 6% disagreed on the matter. Although there were 64% total identified female respondents as opposed to 30% of total identified male respondents, females and males answered consistently regarding how safe they felt, with over 91% and over 90% respectively.

Out of 280 respondents who provided input on perceptions about crime rates, 46% felt that crime was increasing, with 7% saying it is decreasing, and more than 26% indicating that crime rate is staying the same. This is interesting because the crime rates have been steadily decreasing since the late 1970's and continue to trend down. Public perception is not necessarily reality. Even though almost half of respondents feel crime is increasing, over 86% of respondents still have confidence that the Taber Police can maintain safety in the community. However, we know that over 1/3 of the respondents are not completely correct. Crime has shown a slight increase in certain areas, mainly property related offences but has also decreased in some others, for example assaults. (Taber Police Service Annual Crime Analyses, 2019) Some questions we may ask are: are people reporting crime in our community? Do people have a false understanding of the crime rates in our community? What can we do as a police service to ensure people understand the rates of crime in our region?

When respondents were asked about their greatest safety or crime issue, less than 35% indicated drugs/controlled substances. This was by far the highest percentage of the list of issues provided and is consistent with the survey results in 2016. The next three highest concerns were all property related issues being fraud related offences, theft, and break and enters. A correlation could be made between potential drug activity and property related concerns, as one of the known by-products of the drug culture is property related crime.

One of the highest concern, after drugs and property related issues, is youth crime at 12%. It is obvious that residents of the Town of Taber and surrounding area care for the youth of Taber, as many respondents who typed comments were positive towards the School Resource Officer Program.

Concerns related to crimes against people or violent crimes were assessed. Of those categories, sexual assaults was the highest being over 18%. The 2019 Crime Analysis indicates a decline in sexual assaults since 2016. Comparing these two figures may lead to inquiries of whether sexual assaults are being reported readily to police or are the survey result impressions inaccurate.

Based on these results, the residents of Taber are confident in their police, satisfied with their service, and feel safe. The greatest concern types are property related issues, which is in keeping with our 2016 survey results

- **Community Involvement**

Over 87% of respondents said that the Taber Police Service and its members are involved in the community, a decrease from 93% in 2016. In contrast only 49% of respondents were aware of any community programs that the Taber Police Service has involvement or contributes towards. This may be due to a lack of information that is available to the community about programs/initiatives that the Taber Police Service is a part of on a regular basis. An officer in full uniform is easily recognizable, but perhaps when an officer is off duty, out of uniform, and contributing to the community in some way, they may not be recognized. Officers may find it beneficial to inform the general public about who they are especially with respect to their role within the Taber Police Service.

When analyzed, respondents who said they accessed information regarding the Taber Police Service through social media at least once per month or more, the awareness of community involvement increased to over 56%.

Through analysis of the comments provided with the results, the School Resource Officer Program was mentioned almost entirely in a positive way. It is evident that this program is important to the community and should be maintained and, if ever possible, expanded beyond its current scope.

- **Community Standards Services**

The Community Standards Unit received similar results from respondents. A majority of respondents agreed that Community Standard services and its police officer(s) were professional in their appearance (over 84%) and were friendly and approachable (over 75%). Over 64% of respondents agreed that the Community Standards Officer (CSO) responded to complaints quickly. As Taber is a smaller town, with short distances to cover for response, this lower percentage for response time may be as a result of there being only one officer within the department during most of the year who has to deal with numerous complaint/issues within their scope of responsibility. As such, some complaints or

issues may be considered less emergent compared to others. When it came to following up with complaints, 62% agreed that this was accomplished which has increased from 57% in 2016.

- **Communications Operation Center**

When analyzing the results regarding the dispatch services which included 9-1-1, it is apparent that 43% of respondents did not access the communication services within the previous 12 months, as a result, the questions were not applicable to them. Of the respondents who had accessed the dispatching services within the past 12 months, on average, over 92% responded positively towards the questions posed of communication services in the community, an increase from 83% in 2016. Over 91% agreed that dispatchers listened to their concerns. This category was the lowest rating given to communication services in 2016, 78% indicating a vast improvement. The results of the survey demonstrate that the respondents are happy with dispatch, service levels, and competency.

- **Demographics**

Based on overall results, the majority of respondents identified as female, were 30 – 45 years of age, were graduates of college or technical school, and received \$40,000 to \$100,000 in yearly income.

- **Criticisms and Insights**

Critical analysis was made through the built-in word analysis tool from SurveyMonkey.com. This tool allowed for analysis of prevalent words and themes. From the 638 comments/open-ended responses made by respondents 9 mentioned involving criticism of officers being unprofessional and/or biased. Comments involving the police service being overstaffed, expensive, or needing an alternate police service such as the RCMP, were 12. Other comments of criticism involved derogatory or vulgar language that on its face value are difficult to decipher other than a person's disdain for law enforcement in general. These vulgar comments were also small in number overall. We understand that criticism can be important and vital in assessing what the police service goals/initiatives should be moving forward. Even though the numbers are small, we will take them into account.

A large number of comments were made regarding the feeling of safety walking around Taber in the evening hours. From the 81 comments made regarding this specific issue, 26 or 32% advised that the town had poor street lighting making individuals feel unsafe. This is not a policing issue but will be shared with Town Administration.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Taber Police Service 2020 Adult Community Survey was launched on September 24, 2020. The survey was created using an online service called SurveyMonkey.com which allowed citizens of the Taber community and surrounding area the opportunity to complete the survey in a clean and easy Web-based format along with hard paper copies as an alternate option. Only 1 hard copy response was returned for input. The survey remained open to the public until November 7, 2020. After the survey was closed, it was revealed that 322 respondents participated in the survey itself. Using the online service mentioned before, the survey was analyzed and results were tabulated.

The survey results demonstrated that public satisfaction rates regarding performance exceeds 81%. Personnel perceptions of police officer conduct and behaviors range from a low of 75% to over 89% satisfaction. Community involvement ranks high at over 87% of the respondents agreeing that police officers are involved in the community and engaged with citizens. 87% believe that Taber is a safe place and have significant confidence that the Taber Police can maintain public safety (over 86%)

There were several areas where we received suggestions of improvement. We could inform the Community about our efforts as a police service and our police officers, particularly with regards to specific community initiatives and successes. Along with communicating crime issues and trends more readily as only 74% indicated the Taber Police do this well. Efforts have already been made to improve this through an increase in the Taber Police social media presence.

There could be improvements in the relationships with minority groups within the community, specifically towards the younger aged segment of these groups. The perception of the public is that these individuals mentioned are up to no good and must be doing something illegal. Although there have been instances in the past where infractions/violations have occurred amongst these groups, there have also been equally the same amount of instances where nothing illegal was happening. This concern is demonstrative of the potential prejudices that may exist within certain parts of the Taber population. It is important that the Taber Police Service continue to remain visible around these groups, communicate with them, and respond quickly to any complaints involving them. If immediate communication can be made to the complainants, then people may feel their concerns are being addressed. As well, when their concerns are found to be sometimes invalid, prejudices may begin to subside.

Consistent with the results from previous Taber Police Community Surveys, the Taber Police Service received an overall favorable response from members of the Taber community and surrounding area. The results of this survey will aid in the process of creating a new business plan as the Taber Police Service looks to find success from informing, involving and protecting the community of Taber for years to come.

7.0 REFERENCES

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Taber Police Service

Analysis of
Focus Group Discussions
Conducted The Weeks Of
September 21 and 28, 2020

Prepared by:
Chief of Police, Graham Abela

Overview:

The Taber Police Service business planning cycle is governed by the needs of the organization as well as the policing standards of the Province of Alberta. One of the rudimentary principals of business planning is to collect data from the community to identify community needs and expectations as they refer to policing services. The purpose of which is to create a strategic plan to focus on what is important, and be assessed on our ability to achieve the goals that emerge from this community consultation.

Since 1999 the Taber Police Service has conducted 6 business planning cycles which have included: a) crime analyses, b) community surveys, c) public document analyses, and finally, (d) the purpose of this report, focus group results.

Focus groups are an excellent method of soliciting information from a group of people, in a more relaxed atmosphere, whereby a discussion emerges that can introduce issues of concerns that may not be found within individual interviews. Focus groups are a way to gain consensus from community stakeholders and allows for the focused analyses of a research question. For the purpose of this research, the Taber Police Service decided to host four separate focus groups. The Town of Taber Council and the Taber Municipal Police Commission each participated in their own focus group in the week of September 21. In The week of September 28, 2020, two more focus groups were held. The first was a group of approximately 14 people from different professional and service organizations within the community. These are the partners that we work with daily and whom, in many cases, our service deliveries coincide. Invites were sent out to the partners for their participation and the candidates were selected by the organizations themselves. The fourth group was focused on community members and invites were sent out to associations and individuals that represent certain demographics, cultures and groups within our community, including the Filipino Society, the Low German Speaking Mennonite community, First Nations Metis and Inuit, and the LGBTQ2+ community. Our goal was to reach out to groups of diversity to bring in the widest selection of perspectives that we could find. The focus groups were approximately 1.5 hours in length and about 44 people were engaged within the 4 focus groups.

A basic S.W.O.T. analyses was deployed as the method to commence the line of questioning posed to the participants. The participants were asked to assess and discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that the community of Taber will face in relation to policing services. At the end of the focus group, the participants were asked to vote on each of the concepts or issues raised as a means of consensus building and to demonstrate which areas are of most concern or priority to the participants.

The information gleaned from both days will be synthesized in the final analyses in this report. However, to commence this discussion, a breakdown of the results from each session will be described. Where able, the themes identified within the analyses were synthesized so to avoid duplication. The asterisk at the beginning of the line indicates the votes that item received.

STRENGTHS

- ***** Excellent SRO program
- ***** Have own local police service/local dispatch who knows the area
- ***** Totally committed to community/community involvement
 - ***** Members are invested/live in the community/All members approachable/personal
 - ***** Financially sound/fiscal management/diversified funding/properly resourced
 - **** Leadership/best led police force
 - *** Representing cultures/culture representation of staff
 - *** Supportive Council/Commission/Community
 - ** Integrity
 - ** Visibility
 - * Common sense policing
 - * Experience is worth something
 - * Youth focus – SRP, P.A.R.T.Y., camps, SPARK
 - * TPS personnel
 - * Safe community
 - * Governance
 - * Well trained/current on training (issue trends)

Mentioned Once:

- Small Town
- Roles identified
- Admin support from the Town
- Prosperous community
- Low crime rate
- Consistency in policing
- Not the American system
- Mature police force, we retain good people
- 24/7/365
- Familiarity with officers
- Safe policing environment
- See a file from start to finish
- Reputation of police service
- Community knows the members
- Social media – community communication
- Community support in action
- Relationships
- Committee work
- There is a core nucleus
- Social media shows individual involvement
- “Not wallowing in gall of bitterness”
- “Police clients” know police care
- Hospitality
- Positive experiences with dispatch

- PRC Service/references
- Collaborative
- Take pride in their work
- Compassionate/aware
- Wide experience(s) of staff; different backgrounds
- Community police force
- Work well with RCMP and other police/law enforcement agencies
- Try to deal with community members with respect and compassion
- TCAD / TCAPS
- Knowledge of who is in the community
- Community supports local police
- Consistency
- Have a hand-on approach to collaborating with different groups/organizations
- Ratio of officer per capita is under

WEAKNESSES

- **** Budget/Limited budget and resources
- *** Lacking indigenous, LGM Filipino representation/Police service may not reflect the community
- *** Programming for youth (summer especially)
- ** Succession planning
- ** High salaries
- * Community awareness re: collaboration with RCMP
- * Keeping up with technology

Mentioned Once:

- Distrust of police in other community may spread
- Small police force
- Able to retire early
- Familiarity with the public
- More community profiling of other engagements other than just SRP; music, committee work, sports, annual reports, etc.
- Is there a potential for the community to perceive an imbalance between community support and the “traditional” function of law enforcement?
- Perception that there could be officer bias?
- Training for forensic interviewing (children services)
- Support(s) mental health for staff?
- Organizations unsure how to approach them for representation at event at/and meetings (e.g., 4-H, Eagle Spirit Nest)
- Communication – how to?
- No other community forces to partner/train/etc.
- Big city issues (drugs, guns, vehicle theft) – lack resources?
- Complacency
- Resource Officer responsible for large population
- Scheduling with limited personnel (i.e., vacation, training)
- New ideas
- Staying open to what’s going on in the world (rat injustice)
- Can they be doing more to inform community what they are and not doing

OPPORTUNITIES

- ***** Have staff that speaks languages represented in the local cultures, educate on culture
- ***** Enhance mental health education
- ***** Cultural awareness
 - **** MD expansion-regional policing/MD cooperation/partnerships
 - **** Better communication about what police do
 - *** Ability to respond to the community because they are a part of the community; trust
 - **** Collaboration/relationship/info sharing
 - ** Use social media or mass communication in crime prevention/build social media presence
 - * Marketing of the police service
 - * Different recruiting schemes
 - * Balanced work force
 - * Work life balance in policing is a selling point for potential employees

Mentioned Once:

- Community policing assists with community engagement
- Community policing minimizes liability
- Taber could be a leader in the Alberta Police model
- Economies of scale, look for those
- Be more efficient with technology
- School involvement
 - Presentation
 - Relationship building; staff, students, parents
 - Continuing the positive relationship with community (i.e., education, domestic violence)
- Advertising the role of the SRO; creates normalcy
- Social media involvement
- Enhance community building
- Little Cops Camping
- Good community information
- Visibility in general community
- Accessibility
- Positive social media presence
- Social justice movements
- Having an awareness for needs
- Quicker response times
- Greater preventative measures and opportunity for community education
- Collaboration within different community organizations
- Provision and acceptance of feedback
- Support with training until another service can take over
- Assist people with learning disabilities

THREATS

- ***** Substance use – legal vs illegal/increased drug use/crime/opioid crisis
- ***** Funding – Provincial funding cuts/resources -Funding for SRO/training
 - ***** Cultural mistrust
 - *** Police defunding movement; protests
 - *** Vaping (drug use)
 - *** Domestic violence
 - ** Negative media/publicity
 - ** Expectations to wear many hats (i.e., paramedic, counsellor, peace maker, etc.) with less
 - * Tech-can we keep up
 - * Background/past experience/optics of police involvement

Mentioned Once:

- Last town police, any push away from this?
- Always in the public eye
- Pandemic, what does that bring
- Experience costs money
- Liability
- Public video and social media can be a threat
- Officer held to high standards
- Defund the police movements
- The Woke
- Shift work
- Old boys club of policing
- Poverty
- Skate park
- Migration of people needing extra help – most have challenges
- Collaboration – as more responsibility is placed on policing
- Less awareness of needs
- Threat of removing small town police to a provincial model
- Lack of cultural awareness
- Limitations to sharing of information
- Limitation on feedback because of provincially mandated restrictions

Discussion:

It was clear from the focus groups that as a means of collecting data from the community, the research method worked. In each focus group, the conversation was lively, self-directed from the participants and the conversations that took place resulted in a number of topical discussion points.

As a means of analysis, a thematic review of the points raised during the focus groups was conducted. Weight was given to the points raised that were given priority from the participants, although all points were considered.

It is clear from the participants that having their own local police service in which the police officers are integral parts of the community was important. Knowing that the police officers are invested in the community in which they police, live within community, and know the community and the people they interact with, was seen as a strength of the Taber Police Service. Although strengths were identified that we have some diversity within the Taber Police Service, it was determined that opportunities exist to bolster more diversity within the police service. The community would like the Taber Police Service to better reflect the demographics that exist now in Taber. These include the Filipino and LGM communities. It was considered an opportunity to have persons employed with the police service who can speak the languages reflected within our community, and have more cultural awareness of Taber's diversity. The participants believed that having more diversity and cultural awareness reflective of community will build trust, assist in crime prevention, and help investigations where language and cultural issues are barriers or challenges.

The School Resource Officer program was identified once again as our flagship community-policing program and was identified as a priority within each of the focus group sessions. There was a call to bolster the program believing that one officer is not sufficient to undertake this important role. The partnership between the school divisions and the Town of Taber and the Taber Police Service was seen as an excellent example to be fiscally responsible.

Funding and the costs of policing were identified as possible threats, however, the groups recognized that we have diverse funding streams, that the community, governance and Council support are strong and that they recognize the services that are being gained through the expenditures. It was suggested that the police service better communicate to the public exactly what it is they do. This would assist the community in better understanding where their tax dollars are being spent in policing. Furthermore, that the Police Service should undertake discussions with regional governments to see how we can better regionalize our services, find economies of scale, and partner more efficiently.

Communicating what we do, and using social media and other forms of communication to inform the public of our efforts was considered a priority for the groups. On the other hand, communication takes time and an investment of technology that comes with it is an expense. The challenges associated with these suggestions were also identified.

The movement occurring in North America around defund the police was addressed by the group. Most participants acknowledged the issue, but recognized that within our community those ideologies have little traction. In addition, that it is unlikely that they will if the Taber Police Services continues to provide service delivery as they currently provide.

From a crime perspective, the use and abuse of illegal and legal substances was identified by the group as the primary concern. The participants supported more youth programming around resiliency and mental health as a means of possibly assisting in this regard. The groups also recognized that the police are sometimes being asked to do too much in the community, and that others need to also engage in the support of our youth.

Conclusion:

To sum up this report, the Taber Police Service received support from the participants in the way we police in this community. We were asked to continue to build upon this strength and be exemplars of community policing. We were asked to increase our cultural awareness and bring people into our organization that reflect the demographics and cultures present in our community. We were asked to examine regional initiatives and partnerships to find economy of scale, and continue to focus on substance abuse and the criminality associated with addictions. To do this, we were asked to engage more with youth, enhance our SRO program and support other community organizations who assist in this regard. We were asked to communicate in different ways with community, increasing our social media presence, for example, as a means to inform the community of our efforts.

We would like to thank those who contributed to the success of these focus groups, and we commit to utilizing this data in our ongoing discussions within our internal strategic planning sessions within the Taber Police Service.



Taber Police Service

Analysis of

Taber Police Service

Members and Staff Discussions

Conducted October 20, 2020

Prepared by:

Chief of Police, Graham Abela

Overview:

The Taber Police Service business planning cycle is governed by the needs of the organization as well as the policing standards of the Province of Alberta. One of the rudimentary principals of business planning is to collect data from staff to identify needs and expectations as they refer to policing services. The purpose of which is to help create a strategic plan to focus on what is important, and be assessed on our ability to achieve the goals that emerge from this community consultation.

Since 1999 the Taber Police Service has conducted 6 business planning cycles which have included: (a) crime analyses, (b) community surveys, (c) public document analyses, and finally, (d) the purpose of this report, focus group results.

Focus groups are an excellent method of soliciting information from a group of people, in a more relaxed atmosphere, whereby a discussion emerges that can introduce issues of concerns that may not be found within individual interviews. Focus groups are a way to gain consensus from participants and allows for the focused analyses of a research question. For the purpose of this research, the Taber Police Service staff were invited to participate in a focus group held in the Dreddy Room during the week of October 19, 2020. The focus group lasted approximately 1.5 hours in length and about 20 staff members participated.

A basic S.W.O.T. analyses was deployed as the method to commence the line of questioning posed to the participants. The participants were asked to assess and discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that the community of Taber will face in relation to policing services. At the end of the focus group, the participants were asked to vote on each of the concepts or issues raised as a means of consensus building and to demonstrate which areas are of most concern or priority to the participants.

The information gleaned from this focus group will be synthesized in the final analyses of an environmental scan being completed shortly. However, to commence this discussion, a breakdown of the results from this focus group will be described. Where able, the themes identified within the analyses were synthesized so to avoid duplication. The asterisk at the beginning of the line indicates the votes that item received.

STRENGTHS

- ***** Morale
- ***** In-house dispatch
- ***** Teamwork
- ***** Tech support of IT department (Al/Ramez)
- ***** Technology/equipment
- **** Community partnerships
- *** Budget
- *** Victim Services Unit working relationship and access
- *** Community based
- ** Solve rate
- ** School Resource Officer position
- ** Experienced staff
- ** Living in community
- ** Community support
- ** Small community; TPS knows the players
- * Only town police service
- * Local dispatch unit

Mentioned Once:

- Visibility
- Jack of all trades
- Training
- Experience
- Dispatch capacity
- Sergeant working on policy
- Community Standards Officer position
- Drones
- Pilot (Valgardson)
- Bilingual
- De-escalation training
- TPS people
- Compassion
- Foresight
- Availability – 24/7 – call outs, etc.
- Proactive

WEAKNESSES

- *** Lack of de-briefing
- ** Work alone
- * Less diverse hiring pool – number of applicants

Mentioned Once:

- Size matters
- Capacity
- Lack of specialization
- New tech crimes
- Recruiting
- Building limitations
- Smaller services (limited resources)
- No specialty unit
- Anonymity
- TPS relationship with the Crown
- Potential schedule conflicts
- Coverage
- Manpower
- Language limitations
- File work is time consuming
- Outside resource requirements (time consuming)

OPPORTUNITIES

- ***** Partnerships (ALERT, CPO, Lions Gate)
- ***** Building relationships with diverse community
 - ** Technology
 - ** Adaptability easier for a small service
 - ** Social media
 - * Expansion

Mentioned Once:

- A.P.P.
- Inspector / advancement
- Policing climate
- ALERT
- G.I. position – update?
- Caseload
- Community diversity
- Training opportunities
- Mandatory debriefings

THREATS

- ***** Economy/budget cuts
- ***** Legislated changes
 - *** COVID-19 concerns
 - ** Current social/political climate/public perception (defund the police)
 - * Assisting other agencies takes TPS time

Mentioned Once:

- Policing climate
- A.P.P.
- Only town police service
- Building updates
- Lack of anonymity
- Work alone (all areas)
- Burn out
- Living in a fish bowl

Discussion:

The discussion was energetic and the participants all engaged in the SWOT analysis. The participation is a direct reflection of one of the strengths identified by the participants, morale. It was clear from the discussion that teamwork, partnerships, and working with others in the continuum of police (for example, victim services, and Town of Taber IT) was something that was considered a strength. The local in-house dispatch service was recognized as an asset to our community and region. The community policing philosophy of the Taber Police Service was recognized as something to continue, including the reaffirmation that working and living in our community is an essential piece of being a Taber Police officer. Employees were thankful for the resources and training provided to the police service by the community and believed that the programs we have, such as the school resource officer program, assists with our policing function, including high solvability and clearance rates.

It was also evident from the discussion that police officers and staff at the Taber Police Service are concerned about the mental health of employees and the pressures that the whole world is facing around COVID, and the apparent lack of support for policing in general within mainstream media in North America. Participants asked for more mental health training around critical incident stress debriefing and operational debriefings. Officers also identified working alone and generally the lack of people wanting to enter the career of policing as a weakness.

Opportunities were identified within the focus group around partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and building relationships with diverse communities within Taber and region. Our adaptability as a small organizational and future use of technology were also acknowledged as opportunities for the Taber Police Service.

Overwhelmingly, the common themes that emerged from the discussion on threats was about budgetary and economic challenges facing Alberta and Legislative changes that seem to be ever increasing. Each time a new law or system changes, the impact on the business of policing within our organization is challenged. The current changes around impaired driving, release procedures, judicial interim release, Claire's Law, administrative sanction, e-ticketing are only to name a few.

We also identified successes that the police officers and staff of the Taber Police identified of sources of pride within our service. The following were identified as the most significant:

- 17 Morale/teamwork
- 12 Community Standards Officer position
- 12 School Resource Officer position
- 10 Employees are vested – buy in
- 10 Community partnerships
- 9 Safe community

It is clear from both data collection methods that there are similar themes that emerged and, as such, more validity can be given to the responses within the SWOT analyses.

Conclusion:

Taber Police Service police officers and staff are engaged and invested in this community. They care about the community, their policing philosophy and about each other. Morale is high and there is a desire to keep it that way. They recognize the challenges that policing in general is facing, and the economic and COVID factors that contribute to stress and community wellness. We need to build capacity around mental wellness for staff.

The support for the school resource officer program and the community standards unit were recognized as flagship programs and areas in which the Taber Police Service has demonstrated leadership within policing generally.

Dr. Graham Abela

9. STANDARDS REVIEW

The Province of Alberta, under the authority of the Police Act, outlines a series of policing standards that can be used as a measure of whether or not police services are providing adequate and effective policing. The Taber Police Service welcomed these standards as a means of determining where we stand as a police service, as well as an indicator of performance. The public confidence that can also be gained as a result of a successful audit can be utilized as a type of report card to the community of how we conduct ourselves as a police service.

Normally, a standards audit is conducted every four years, however an audit was not conducted in 2019 as expected. Due to a major overhaul of the provincial standards as well as the audit process itself, the audit was postponed. The next anticipated audit will commence in 2021, for which the Taber Police Service is well prepared. For this report, we must rely on the 2015 audit.

On October 29, 2015, three members of the Solicitor General Audit team attended the Taber Police Service and conducted a review to determine if we were compliant. A report was completed and submitted to the Taber Municipal Police Commission. The report stated that there were no formal findings or recommendations that could be made by the audit team and that the Taber Police Service is providing adequate and effective policing to the citizens of Taber. Informally, there were some recommendations on reporting of results to commission and some suggestions to improve the survey. (Please see the complete report for details.)

The Taber Police Service was given accolades by the audit team in the areas of community policing, proactive patrols and management of evidence and property in police control. It was also noted that the Province recognized that the Taber Police Service embraced the standards review and completed the process, even though we have capacity issues that would have made this difficult for us as an organization and a community.

10. OTHER ISSUES

An environmental scan would not be complete without reviewing the different factors we know, as an agency, that cause the Taber Police Service concern. It can be said that every police organization across Alberta, and even Canada, is struggling with similar issues.

Recruitment and retention of competent members and civilian employees continues to be challenging. In the next two years, our police service will lose at least one member (potentially two) to retirement, with the possibility of others moving on to other services. Recruitment drives tend to produce a shallow pool of qualified applicants and the current trend towards the disdain for the law enforcement profession may make the pool even shallower. On the horizon is the potential for an Alberta Provincial Police with unknown effects that this may have on our service.

Numerous sources have indicated that Southern Alberta should expect an influx of Low-German speaking Mennonites from Mexico in the near future. There is a current water dispute between the United States and Mexico, along the US-Mexico border, compounded with increase demand and rising temperatures in Mexico. The drought stricken farmers, many of whom are Mennonites from the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, are planning the move to Southern Alberta as soon as the current Covid-19 travel restrictions are lifted. Taber's population currently has 14% identifying German as their mother tongue and we can expect that our Mennonite population will grow with this anticipated influx. The Taber Police Service will need to adapt and perhaps grow along with this influx.

As identified in the SWOT analyses, our School Resource Officer program is highly regarded and a leader in our community policing philosophy. What was also identified was that only one member in the program may not be enough to undertake that role. We are also aware that a new high school is under construction for occupancy in 2021, adding yet another school to the lone SRO. Growth in this program must be looked at and the funding should also be revisited. Currently the cost for the SRO position is split between the two school divisions and the Town of Taber. The M.D. of Taber provides no funding, yet approximately 40% of the current students are from the M.D of Taber.

Taber has a high percentage of population without a high school certificate (32%) compared to the rest of Alberta (17%). Many factors may influence this, such as a 4% drop out rate at or prior to the Grade 9 level in order for the students to obtain jobs to bring income into the family. Another contributing factor may be what was once the lucrative oil and gas industry and the lure to obtain high paying employment without the necessity of a high school diploma. The oil and gas industry has been on a downturn for a number of years, coupled with the unemployment because of Covid-19, the Taber Police Service should expect to see an increase in criminality. The SRO program, which is highly recognized in our community, should, in conjunction with the Horizon School Division and the Holy Spirit School Division, focus on increasing the percentage of graduating students.

As was mentioned in the 2019 Crime Analysis, Taber witnessed a significant increase in property offence crime types. This increase was anticipated due to the increase of methamphetamine usage and the associated transient activity. Taber is not unique, as this same meth trend has been observed throughout Alberta. As identified in the Crime Analysis, a continued focus on drug education, community partnerships, the school resource officer program and building resiliency in youth will all be valuable tools to assist in combating this issue.

A recent review of our calls for service indicated that our call volume is highest between 1700-2200hrs, Monday through Friday. As the Taber Police Service recently increased its manpower by one member, the current shift schedule was adjusted to put more “boots on the street” during these peak hours. An additional shift line, between the hours of 1200-2200 was incorporated to ensure adequate manpower to properly address the calls for service.

Technological demands facing policing agencies continues to be difficult to fund and meet. As identified before, costs specifically for electronic monitoring equipment, video and audio monitoring of cell blocks and interview rooms, in-car camera/computer systems, computer software and hardware, not to mention communication technologies that are ever changing, are costs that small communities have difficulty addressing. We are already aware that by December 2021, all police services must have e-ticketing platforms, capable of creating electronic tickets and printing Administrative Licence Suspension documentation. As part of e-ticketing, we will also have access to e-collision (for motor vehicle collisions) which was a Provincial requirement as of September 2020. We are aware that, looking into the future, there is a potential for a Provincial mandate for body worn cameras including digital evidence management. Similar to e-ticketing and Administrative Licence Suspension technology, the cost for body worn cameras may fall on the police service/municipality.

This leads us to the overall costs of policing and the fact that there are still inequities in funding formulas within the Province, as well as the tax payers are required to bear the burden of our ever increasing demands for more resources. This is all occurring when the infrastructure within our communities is in need of repair and the economic implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Taber Police Service has researched increasing revenues to offset our increasing capacity demands and has implemented increased costs on a variety of services. The service has also undertaken increased dispatch responsibilities for MD CPO programs which will be expanded in early 2021.