

Date: June 2, 2025

To: Council.

Name and title: Mayor Simon Yu, Chair, Standing Committee on Public Safety

Subject: Police Support Services Programming - Citizens on Patrol and Block Watch

Attachment(s): Report titled, "Promotion of Block Watch and Citizens on Patrol Programs" dated April 7, 2025.

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated June 2, 2025 from the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety, titled, "Police Support Services Programming - Citizens on Patrol and Block Watch".

Purpose:

At the April meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety the committee made a motion to refer the staff report dated April 7, 2025, from the Director of Administrative Services titled "Promotion of Block Watch and Citizens on Patrol Programs" to a future regular Council meeting for consideration on the opportunities to promote the programs.

Opportunities for Promotion: Citizens on Patrol

Website:

Opportunity: The City may consider hosting on the City website a dedicated Community Policing webpage that highlights the unit's prevention programs and services, including the Citizens on Patrol Program. This is work Police Support Services and Communications would organize internally and would be added to their respective workplans. The immediate investment would likely be limited to time.

Update following committee conversation: Police Support Services (PSS) has requested that Communications dedicate a tab on the website to Citizens on Patrol which would host updated pictures and link back to the RCMP page. PSS have also requested that the City's social media sites highlight the work and updates of the Citizens on Patrol program. As originally forecasted, this can be handled administratively within existing resources.

Awareness Campaign:

Document Number: 767373

Document Number:

Opportunity: The Communications team could assist with promoting the service that Citizens on Patrol provide (e.g. video promoting foot patrol at events, speed watch at school zones, etc.). The immediate investment would likely be limited to time, although funds could be dedicated to enhancing this effort (advertising, etc.).

Update following committee conversation: PSS plans to work with Communications to record a video compilation of 30 second clips of the Citizen on Patrol to create a 2–5-minute video for use in recruitment and communication about the program.

Booths and Events:

Opportunity: The City currently promotes the COP program through print promotional materials and event attendance, such as booths at Canada Day and National Indigenous Peoples Day. In the future further emphasis could be put on this type of engagement. There may be financial implications (staffing, registration, higher consumption of materials, investment in display items, etc.).

Update: The Citizens on Patrol (dependent on Volunteer availability) are prepared to be at Canada Day events, summer fest, other DBIA events and the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation to promote the program. It is anticipated costs associated will be captured in existing budgets.

Investment in Materials:

Opportunity: The City could have banners or posters produced that indicate “this event is being patrolled by the Prince George Volunteers on Patrol” or similar as an advertising/awareness tool. Brochures and other print could be revamped to support promotion of the program. It is likely that the design work for these materials could be completed by the Communications team pending timelines for production. The cost of printing the materials would vary depending on the quantity produced.

Update following committee conversation: PSS no longer aims to pursue this opportunity as the Citizen on Patrol volunteers wear Red Jackets which are believed to promote the program clearly and effectively.

Information Sharing:

Opportunity: Staff can place renewed emphasis on engaging with groups like the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement Association to determine if they are interested in sharing information about the Prince George Citizens on Patrol Program with their memberships.

Update: This is a routine liaison activity and will be actioned by staff as there is no direct cost. The Citizens on Patrol volunteers are willing to provide organizations with a presentation on their services given that the organization is hosting a public (non-private, non-exclusive, non-ticketed) event.

Recruitment:

Opportunity: Staff routinely attend the University of Northern British Columbia job fair; staff could prepare to attend additional local job fairs and work with the RCMP on a job fair campaign to promote the program and related opportunities.

Update following committee conversation: PSS currently has twenty volunteers with the goal is to achieve thirty. The Citizen on Patrol volunteers will work with our internal RCMP recruiting representative and endeavour to have program representation at more recruiting events.

Synergy with Block Watch:

Opportunity: It is assessed that there is further opportunity for the COP program to share information with Block Watches on neighborhood specific suspicious activity observed by the COP patrols. Staff will explore this topic with leaders from the two groups.

Update: The Citizen on Patrol volunteers are currently using internal statistics to determine/ inform the locations of their patrols. The Citizen on Patrol program welcomes further insights/ collaboration with community residents of where suspicious activity may be located.

Opportunities for Promotion: Block Watch

Website:

Opportunity: The City could consider hosting a Community Policing webpage, as mentioned above, that highlights the unit's prevention programs and services, including information on Block Watch, neighbourhood Safety Audits and CPTED assessments. The Block Watch page could host tools and information on how to start and maintain a Block Watch.

Update following committee conversation: Similar to the above PSS has requested whether the City will host a Community Policing page or tab that is dedicated to these programs. Communications have indicated that this is possible and will work on setting up the requested materials.

Brochures: Brochures could be revamped to support information sharing and the establishment of new watches. It is likely that the design work for these materials could be completed by the communications team pending timelines for production. The cost of printing the materials would vary depending on the quantity produced.

Update following committee conversation: PSS is adjusting this suggestion as we have learned new materials are available through the parent organization and as such PSS has requested updated Block Watch brochures from the provincial Block Watch Society.

Printouts for Homeowners: Staff could explore the possibility of including information alongside existing mailouts. It is likely that the design work for these materials could be completed by the Communications team pending timelines for production. The cost of printing the materials would vary depending on the quantity produced. This is an initiative that will be considered as capacity to handle additional printouts is enhanced.

The Super Citizen electronic newsletter is an alternate option which reduces printing costs and consumption of supplies. The email list has over 500 current subscribers.

Block Party: Historically Block Parties have been arranged where an RCMP/ Community Policing representative, a conservation officer, a fire department representative, bylaws and other applicable agencies have met and shared information. The meetings were designed to disseminate information and awareness over a few hours, and to address any questions or concerns of neighbourhood residents.

Update following committee conversation: Staff from across Administrative Services (Police Support Services, Fire and Bylaw) have connected to discuss collaboration on a series of area specific Block Watch meetings whereby RCMP, Bylaws, the Fire Department and other applicable agencies can meet, share information and contacts while the established Block Watches hold their annual Block Parties. It may be possible to leverage these events to generate new images and materials to promote the program.

Internally, PSS is dividing the active Block Watch neighbourhoods, so they are consistent with police zones. This will allow the program to have larger block parties in each zone. We can have multiple agency representative to present a 'what you may need to know – Q&A'.

It is anticipated that some form of Block Watch Party can be supported through existing resources, however, this initiative would be enhanced by additional resources. If Council was interested in supporting this activity through Council Contingency that would be one option (\$7500 would be suggested).

CCTV Initiative: PSS could encourage residents to sign up for the City's CCTV initiative in the event an incident happens on their block. This is a topic that requires further exploration before advancing.

Lead Volunteer: There is interest from staff in exploring a lead volunteer position that could provide monthly updates, safety suggestions and possibly support quality control functions for the various Block Watches. This position could help draw attention to, and interpret, open-source information such as the analytics available on the PG RCMP Criminal Analyst Statistics site.

Update following committee conversation: Program coordinators are exploring how to implement this idea. No additional resources are assessed as being required at this time.

Strategic Priorities:

Enhancing the COP and Block Watch programs can be viewed in relation to the strategic pillar of Social Health and Wellbeing.

Summary and conclusion:

This report provides an update on conversations that have recently occurred at the Standing Committee on Public Safety regarding COP and Block Watch.

Respectfully submitted:

Mayor Simon Yu, Chair.

Prepared by Eric Depenau, Director, Administrative Services

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2025/06/09