



City Council News **June 27, 2018**

Crime and punishment

My vehicle has been broken into three times since I moved to Quesnel in 1985. I've also had two vehicles stolen.

The first time my vehicle was broken into was a smash and grab in Vancouver, right in front of a hotel's valet desk. The second theft occurred at a Marina in Victoria when the thieves punched out the keyhole and stole a ton of electronics I had lazily left in my truck the evening before. The third occurred in Kelowna just prior to Christmas last year in a video-monitored parking lot within moments of my arrival in the City; my truck was one of many vehicles targeted by a smash and grab crew that went through Kelowna's downtown core that morning.

In the late 1980s my Jeep was stolen off the lift at a local service station and was found burned and smashed down an embankment off the Nazko Highway. In the early 1990s, my Ford Focus wagon was stolen from my driveway and recovered a few blocks away with no damage and only a few items stolen. The theft of the Focus was part of a rash of vehicle robberies that occurred over a few weeks in the Southills area at that time.

My point is that property crime occurs everywhere and has been going on for a very long time – it is not a phenomenon unique to Quesnel nor to this particular moment.

This is not to say we should simply accept the property crime currently going on in the City, nor to suggest we are not experiencing an increased incidence in this predominantly drug-related criminal activity. These criminals should be caught and prosecuted, no matter what the underlying issues are that led them to steal from other people to feed their addiction.

But, saying that we ought to “catch these people and throw them in jail” is a lot easier than actually catching them in the act, making an ironclad case against them that can be successfully prosecuted, getting the case in front of a judge in a timely manner, getting a conviction that is commensurate with the crime, and incarcerating these individuals in a manner that doesn't simply enable them to learn to be better criminals when they are released (which is often sooner than later for minor property crimes).

We do not have sufficient RCMP resources to have a police presence in every neighbourhood, never mind every street corner as some people suggest, in order to prevent crime. And, we live in a land of laws designed to protect all citizens from the vagaries of the justice system, which requires the police to provide solid, evidence-based cases against anyone they charge, even repeat offenders and even against people caught “red-handed.” The requirement for prosecutable evidence is a hugely resource demanding process for the most minor of infractions and more so for major crimes and criminal activity, like busting known drug houses.

Quesnel City Council is very much aware of the current increase in property crime in the City, and we are just as angry and frustrated as the direct and indirect victims of this assault on the safety and security of our community. We are taking steps to address the issue, but we have very limited ability to directly influence the situation and make the changes needed to quickly remedy it. Those tools are in the domain of the Provincial and Federal governments, to which we have written a letter outlining our need. [Read the letter here.](#)

While we make every effort to get the resources we need to catch and prosecute the criminals in our community, please take every measure to protect your property by locking your homes and vehicles, not leaving any valuables in plain sight, and reporting any incidents to the RCMP as soon as they occur.

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