

## Herman Goldstein Award 2003

## A.T.I.P.: Auto Theft Intervention Program:

## Winnipeg Police Service

## The Problem:

Auto Theft increased in Winnipeg since 1992. 2000 saw a 15.7 % increase. Winnipeg had the dubious distinction of the highest auto theft record in Canada and in some years North America.

## Analysis:

The Winnipeg Police Service Stolen Auto Unit created a Proactive Strategy Coordinator in 1999. Through analysis of crime statistics a two-prong approach was created. Education and enforcement programs were developed and implemented over 2 years.

## Response:

Through the efforts of the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (MPIC) initiatives were created to prevent auto theft.

- **S.T.E.A.L.:** Satellite Tracking Eliminates Auto Loss: Funded through MPIC's HEATT (Help Eliminate Auto and Truck Theft). The WPS Stolen Auto Unit created "bait" cars set up with GPS tracking devices and covert camera systems.
- **Auto Theft Reduction Initiatives:** Created by the Stolen Auto Unit and Community Services Division. Implemented by Community Based Officers. Crime Analysis data was used to identify the top 10 at risk vehicles and city hot spots. Pamphlets were created to advise high-risk vehicle owners of methods of auto theft protection. Officers patrolled neighborhoods and targeted high-risk vehicles. Suspects in stolen vehicles were arrested and owners were informed how to safeguard their vehicles.
- **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.:** (Computer Automated Phone Tracking and Information Network): Through MPIC funding the WPS Community Services Division created a computer system that advised Neighborhood Watch Block Captains of auto theft trends in their area. Map Info data was used to support the proactive efforts of the Stolen Auto Unit and Community Based Police with timely data on auto theft trends.
- **Science Fair Auto Theft Prevention Contest:** High Schools students entered auto theft prevention projects into their Science fair program. There were 5 projects presented with awards of merit and one outstanding project. The student received several awards and was enrolled in the University of Manitoba Asper Business School Entrepreneur Program.
- **Sisler High School Young Offender Pamphlet:** Enterprising students in an inner city high school created a young offender pamphlet that targeted their peers at risk for auto theft. This pamphlet was instrumental in identifying the consequences of auto theft. These were distributed in inner city schools and through community based police storefronts. These youth created awareness of the problem of auto theft.

## Assessment:

Winnipeg's auto theft problem was reduced in 2003 by 12.3%. The first drop in auto theft in 5 years.

## **Scanning**

Community Based Policing was implemented into Winnipeg in 1989 through a pilot project. It was developed and changed over the years. By adopting the Broken Windows theory on Crime Prevention and using Total Quality Management Principles, the Service was able to impact on a great deal of community problems that had lingered for years.

Through continuous improvement the Winnipeg Police Service Community Based Policing Model is developing to the point that it's responding to community needs. Public Forums, Customer Satisfaction Surveys, and Internet Messages are some of the ways that the Service has received public feedback and been able to adopt solutions to community problems. The public has been informed about our cornerstones of community policing, which are: Community Consultation, Problem Analysis, Problem solving, and Call Management.

Initially Community Based Policing was started as a separate entity; however, the principles were adopted by diverse units such as general patrol and investigations units.

In the area of Stolen Auto Programs, the Winnipeg Police Service has used many methods of ensuring continuous improvement for the citizens. In the Stolen Auto Unit, officers were making phone contact with victims of auto theft. This was primarily used to inform owners of the results of their investigations and it was noted that many owners were frustrated as to the state of affairs in auto theft investigations. This information was used to implement the S.T.E.A.L. program as the owners provided information on how their vehicles were targeted.

The problem of auto theft was specifically examined and an approach that educated the public and targeted offenders was decided on as the best solution:

1. Educate the public to prevent auto theft.
2. Target offenders and have them arrested before they are able to steal more vehicles.

Several initiatives that fit into these categories were created. These involved police, youth, and community partners. Our two goals were as follows:

## **Goal #1 - Educational Initiatives:**

### **Winnipeg Police Service Members:**

- **Community Based Education Programs:** Community Based Officers were assigned to assist neighborhoods with various problem-solving programs. Based on citizen demand a stolen auto prevention lesson plan was developed by the stolen auto unit. This lesson plan was delivered to community groups through Community Services Division and Divisional Community Based Police.
- **The Auto Theft Reduction Initiative:** Created by the Stolen Auto Unit and Community Services Division and implemented by Community Based Officers. Crime Analysis data was used to identify the top 10 at risk vehicles and city hot spots. Pamphlets were created to advise high-risk vehicle owners of methods of auto theft protection. Officers patrolled neighborhoods and targeted high-risk vehicles. Suspects in stolen vehicles were arrested and owners were informed how to safeguard their vehicles. Officers were able to meet vehicle owners in a direct manner and assist them with safeguarding their vehicles. Many owners were unaware of their vehicles vulnerability and this was instrumental in preventing auto theft. Operation Street Smart personnel also went door to door in at risk neighborhoods, traditionally they had offered advice on safeguarding homes, they now also targeted owners of at risk vehicles and provided crime prevention advice.

Many community groups were instrumental in informing the public about auto theft.

### **Youth Based Educational Programs:**

- **The Alliance Boxing Club Auto Theft Information Program:** Stolen Auto Unit members trained inner city youth in auto theft prevention through a community forum. These youth then created pamphlets and made an area canvas of inner city neighborhoods plagued with auto theft.
- **Sisler High School Young Offender Pamphlet:** Enterprising students in an inner city high school created a young offender pamphlet that targeted their peers at risk for auto theft. This pamphlet was instrumental in identifying the consequences of auto theft. These were distributed in inner city schools and through Community Based Police storefronts.

The following initiatives were seen as an outstanding community partnership between police and the community:

**Community Group Based Educational Programs:**

- **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.:** (Computer Automated Phone Tracking and Information Network): Through MPIC funding the WPS Community Services Division created a computer system that advised Neighborhood Watch Block Captains of auto theft trends in their area. The community was also advised through a web site in regards to auto theft trends and prevention methods.
- **Science Fair Auto Theft Prevention Contest:** Inner City High Schools were offered an opportunity for students to enter auto theft prevention projects into their science fair program. Judged separately by WPS and MPIC officials there were 5 projects presented with awards of merit and one outstanding project, which received the top award. An enterprising student created a "club-like system" called the "hornet" with a clamping system that prevented the theft once the steering wheel was cut by suspects. The student received several awards and was enrolled in the University of Manitoba Asper Business School entrepreneur Program. High Schools and business groups were able to use their skills to make the public aware of auto theft prevention techniques.
- **Citizens for Crime Awareness Website:** A Community group had received funding through MPIC and had created a web site with information on auto theft trends. This web site was regularly updated with information from auto theft investigators. The top 10 at risk vehicles were listed as well as area hot spots. Information on how to safeguard your vehicle was also included.

**Goal #2 - Offender Targeting:**

- **S.T.E.A.L.:** (Satellite Tracking Eliminates Auto Loss): Funded through MPIC's HEATT (Help Eliminate Auto and Truck Theft). The WPS Stolen Auto Unit created "bait" cars set up with GPS tracking devices and covert camera systems. Through Crime Analysis data and input from Community Based Officers these vehicles were placed in high auto theft areas for their theft and controlled arrest of the suspects.
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- **Curfew Checks:** Winnipeg Police Service General Patrol and Stolen Auto Unit Members targeted offenders released on curfews. The information was continually updated and offenders were arrested when found in breach of their conditions.
- **The Auto Theft Reduction Initiative:** This approach combined education and enforcement. Created by the Stolen Auto Unit and Community Services Division and implemented by Community Based Officers. Crime Analysis data was used to identify the top 10 at risk vehicles and city hot spots. Pamphlets were created to advise high-risk vehicle owners of methods of auto theft protection. Officers patrolled neighborhoods and targeted high-risk vehicles. Suspects in stolen vehicles were arrested and owners were informed how to safeguard their vehicles. Officers were able to meet vehicle owners in a direct manner and assist them with safeguarding their vehicles. Many owners were unaware of their vehicles vulnerability and this was instrumental in preventing auto theft.
- **Forensic Stolen Vehicle Examination Program:** MPIC funded an initiative of the WPS involving the fingerprinting of 100% of all recovered stolen vehicles. This proved very successful and through AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) hits, offenders were identified. In the past these files had been followed up by Stolen Auto Unit. The offenders were now placed onto CPIC (Canadian Police Information Computer) and any officers checking a suspect on the database would then have grounds to arrest and interview the suspect for previous auto thefts. Traditionally this information was not known to officers spot-checking persons and many suspects would not be arrested without the AFIS hits coming to light. This new method cleared many files and prevented many auto thefts. Repeat Offenders are a continual problem and this system assisted in identifying and arresting repeat offenders.

## Analysis

In 1992 Winnipeg had a drastic increase in auto theft. Car thieves had been arrested and while in the Manitoba Youth Center they had been educating each other on methods of auto theft. This information was published in local papers and spread through the streets by offenders.

Auto theft was increasing with a drop in 1995 by the expansion of the Stolen Auto Unit through MPIC funding. All vehicles were now being fingerprinted when recovered and run through the Identification Units AFIS system. Stolen Auto Unit members were making multiple arrests with multiple charges however the problem continued. Suspects were stealing as many as five cars a day and dumping them in neighborhoods where other thieves would then re-steal them.

Auto theft continued to increase yearly with a 15.7% increase in 2000.

|  |       |                    |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| 2000 = 10,077 stolen vehicles<br>15.7 % increase |       |                    |
| 1999   | 8,710 | 1994 7,849         |
| 1998   | 8,470 | 1993 6,508         |
| 1997   | 9,033 | <u>1992 2,411*</u> |
| 1996   | 8,349 | 1991 2,400         |
| 1995   | 7,887 | 1990 2,388         |

This includes snowmobiles, trailers, attempts as well as vehicles

*Highly impossible jump - probably a statistical change*

Auto theft was growing to the point that Winnipeg had the highest auto theft rate in Canada and in some years North America. Approximately 24 vehicles a day were being stolen.

The Stolen Auto Unit Supervisor, Sgt. R. Harris, created a Proactive Strategy Coordinator in 2000 with the goal of reducing auto theft.

To reach this goal the following objectives were established:

1. Combined efforts of investigative units and crime prevention units were needed to deal with auto theft.
2. Education programs for the public were needed to advise owners of auto theft prevention.
3. Proactive Enforcement programs were needed to react to the growing problem of auto theft.
4. Programs would be consistent and flexible, able to respond in a timely manner to any emerging auto theft crime concern.
5. New partnerships would be developed. This would allow police to rely on the expertise and input of other community organizations, the Attorney General's Office, and Manitoba Public Insurance.
6. Funding for the programs would be obtained through an application under the Help Eliminate Auto and Truck Theft grants (HEATT) established by the Manitoba Government and MPIC. Initiatives that were low cost would also be established when possible using existing WPS funds.

Programs would need to be developed based on input from young offenders, youths, community groups, community-based police, MPIC and other sources. Input from the WPS Crime Analysis Unit was needed to analyze city hot spots for auto theft, high-risk vehicles, and offender demographics.

The immediate goal was to reduce auto theft by 4% in 2002.

Objectives were divided into education and enforcement. Education of the public was seen as being paramount. A decision was made to inform the public as to the most vulnerable vehicles and how to prevent auto theft. Media campaigns were developed and area stakeholders from the community were identified. Meetings were set up and interested parties were assisted with information on auto theft prevention.

Enforcement projects were set up through the creation of the **S.T.E.A.L.** Program's "bait" car system and the **Auto Theft Reduction Initiative** incorporated an education component for the public and an enforcement angle that targeted at risk vehicles and offenders.

Once the goals and objectives of this program had been established, funding became an issue. The Winnipeg Police Service had no existing budget authorization for the expenditure of money on the creation of any auto theft prevention programs, so other funding sources had to be considered.

Every effort was made to create programs that required limited funding. This was through existing WPS budgets. For a limited amount of expenditure, education programs targeted at risk vehicle owners, at risk youth, and the public about auto theft. The following programs required limited funds to cover pamphlet and poster costs.

- **Auto Theft Reduction Initiatives**
- **Science Fair Auto Theft Prevention Contest**
- **Sisler High School Young Offender Pamphlet**

In 1999, the Provincial Government and Manitoba Public Insurance announced the HEATT programs funding program. They indicated that an application for funding could be applied for. The WPS Stolen Auto Unit applied for and was awarded funding for the **S.T.E.A.L.** Program.

Through research on other jurisdictions auto theft programs, "bait" cars showed some success in curtailing auto theft, increasing prosecutions through video and audio evidence, and identifying auto thieves. The WPS **S.T.E.A.L.** program used high tech surveillance and GPS systems in at risk vehicles operated by the WPS. These were placed in area hot spots to attract thieves. Unique problems in Winnipeg's weather were anticipated and heating and cooling systems for the sophisticated equipment were developed.

The program was expanded city wide once the initial test site proved successful. The media was used and will continue to be used to educate the public and auto thieves of the **S.T.E.A.L.** program. Anecdotal information from car thieves was obtained stating that many thieves were wary of stealing cars thinking they may be WPS "bait" cars.

The HEATT grant money not used by **S.T.E.A.L.** and other WPS initiatives was then used by the WPS Community Services Division to create the **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.** Funding provided for the creation of a crime analysis clerk for data entry on auto theft statistics. This data was then placed onto the **C.A.P.T.A.I.N.** system to advise Neighborhood Watch Block Captains of auto theft trends in their

neighborhood. The program also developed a map info database that was used by the Stolen Auto Unit to identify timely auto theft trends. This information was then used by the **S.T.E.A.L.** program to select areas for "bait" car deployment. It was also used to develop special patrols and projects by the Stolen Auto Unit and District Patrol units to target offenders and high-risk vehicles.

## Response

The first step was to form partnerships with community groups. A stolen auto think tank was created comprised of academics, government, law enforcement, and community groups. Informal meetings between the Stolen Auto Unit Proactive Strategy Coordinator and area high schools and community groups were conducted throughout the run of these initiatives.

Education programs were implemented first. The media was utilized to warn the public about Winnipeg's problem. The most at risk vehicles were identified in media broadcasts in print, radio and television. Websites were created to advise people on auto theft prevention techniques.

Other jurisdictions were consulted with and "bait" car programs were seen as having some success. Two "bait" cars with kill switches requiring officers be within 100 meters was experimented with. This proved costly as members were on surveillance for a long time. This was manned through Stolen Auto unit and Community Based Officers.

Brainstorming sessions with Community Based Police and stolen auto members were implemented to examine our response to the auto theft problem. A "bait" car system that could be remotely monitored through the communications center was seen as the most cost effective.

Programs requiring equipment creation were implemented on an experimental basis. Companies were checked and a bait car system called S.T.E.A.L. was created. This was started in 2001. Once the equipment was up and running high risk areas were targeted. Auto theft went down in these areas and it was expanded city wide in 2002.

A time frame was built into each program and they were implemented in a high crime area. As a program was created it was implemented as a pilot project to monitor its impact. The program was then set up citywide once its results were examined. Programs such as **S.T.E.A.L.** required longer planning and analysis due to its reliance on new technology.

The **Auto Theft C.A.P.T.A.I.N.** was created in 2001 and is continuing to develop other strategies. A future effort will see this information broadcast to Citizen on Patrol Groups to assist them in locating stolen vehicles in their area. This will reduce the time between an auto's theft and recovery and reduce costs to MPIC and citizens.

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In 2002 Analysis by the WPS and MPIC indicated a 12.3% reduction in auto theft in Winnipeg. The goal had been for a 4% reduction, which would have seen a drop in auto theft costs in the millions.

Programs that had a public education component required different methods to analyze its impact. A decrease in auto theft was our only measure. A 12.3% drop was a clear indication that our programs were having an effect. In previous years our auto theft rate would rise by 3 % to 5 % based on our traditional enforcement model. Our auto theft unit would react to reported crimes and follow up based on fingerprint "hits" in stolen vehicles. This method was very time consuming and although our officers would frequently clear several auto theft reports from one offender this was obviously not our best method in dealing with our problem.

A paradigm shift was needed and by utilizing methods from Community Based Policing we were able to see the problem from a new angle.

Area youths were used to design pamphlets targeting young offenders through the Sisler Program. Other youths did area canvasses through the Alliance Boxing Club. Citizen on Patrol Groups and neighborhood Watch Block captains informed the public on auto theft trends in their neighborhoods. The Citizens for Crime Awareness Community Group created a web site through MPIC funding. This website was updated regularly through the Stolen Auto Unit. This was a new initiative that linked a traditional detective unit with a community group thus promoting the community-policing model.

Manitoba Public Insurance was instrumental in providing funding to projects and media announcements on auto theft awareness.

## Assessment

Our Crime Analysis Unit and an independent analysis through Manitoba Public Insurance saw a 12.3% reduction based on our crime statistics.

Media articles were positive on our programs success and saw many articles assisting in our goal of auto theft awareness. One unique program was the Science Fair Initiative. The winner, Wally Kwong created the "Hornett" as an anti theft device. For details refer to attached news release.

It should also be noted that Wally Kwong attended the University of Manitoba Asper Biz Camp for entrepreneurs. Based on his marketing plan for the "Hornett" he received their top award and received one year's free tuition at the Asper School for Business.

Our results have been better than anticipated. A 4% reduction would have translated into \$4,000,000 savings. A 12.3% reduction was our outcome.

Our dubious distinction of being the auto theft capital of Canada and in some years, North America, has finally been eliminated. As reported in the media, Surrey, B.C. now has this problem. It should be noted that Surrey has now looked into a "bait" car program to assist them in their crime prevention efforts and members of their Crime Prevention Bureau came to Winnipeg for a review of our **S.T.E.A.L.** Program and other initiatives.

As a result of established partnerships the WPS has joined MPIC and Manitoba Justice in a new program that will target inner city high schools. Students will be provided an opportunity to submit songs/poems, short stories/comics, video/audio PSAs (Public Service Announcements), and posters, for judging and possible monetary awards for the best anti auto theft message. This will be completed in June of 2003. Based on techniques used in previous initiatives this and other programs are being developed.

The **S.T.E.A.L.** Program has resulted in a similar program developed by the RCMP for use province wide. Many other jurisdictions have visited Winnipeg to see our state of the art program. Others have received information on our program through email and interest is increasing. Our next step in this program is a media campaign. We are looking at using the media to advise thieves and potential thieves that these "bait" cars are out there. The natural paranoia of our thieves should work to have them seeing "bait" cars everywhere, which will enhance our program and assist our citizens.

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The success of the **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.** has seen its expansion into a Graffiti Prevention Program with Map info data being used to track graffiti trends. This is also being implemented to augment the C.O.P.s (Citizen on Patrol) program being developed. Our community groups will have more timely information to prevent auto theft. Our Stolen Auto Unit Proactive Strategy Coordinator has identified the following assistance provided to their unit through the **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.:**

- Tracking of Stolen/Recovered Vehicles
- Tracking of arrested persons and associates for Auto Theft and related crimes
- Analysis of Theft patterns that may be related to a specific offender
- Types and makes of vehicles commonly stolen by a specific offender
- Top 3 Hot spots for Stolen/recovered vehicles in all districts
- Early warning of areas becoming hot spots
- Information packages for proactive projects
- Top 10 vehicles being stolen daily, monthly (extremely timely information)
- Timely identification of areas where Bait vehicle deployment should be considered
- Tracking of Offenders by alias or street names (extremely useful)

Future programs considered for Stolen Auto Unit:

- Tracking of Offender curfew and court orders.
- Mapping software visually showing Hot spots.

Other jurisdictions will need to identify their top 10 vehicles. Our types of vehicles are unique to Winnipeg. Our commonly stolen vehicles are as follows:

| Top 10 Stolen Vehicles in Winnipeg in 2000 |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| ■  | Dodge Caravan      |
| ■  | Plymouth Voyager   |
| ■  | Dodge Neon         |
| ■  | Oldsmobile Cutlass |
| ■  | Pontiac 6000       |
| ■  | Ford F150          |
| ■  | Chevrolet Cavalier |
| ■  | Pontiac Sunbird    |
| ■  | Chevrolet Blazer   |

Many of our programs can be easily transferred to other jurisdictions although our auto theft problem is unique to Winnipeg. We have an approximate 91.3% recovery rate, which indicates we have a "joyriding" problem. Our vehicles are stolen as a quick transportation solution or to be used for crimes such as break and enters, robberies, or other criminal acts. Our offenders are primarily young offenders as these statistics indicate:

| Demographics of Auto Theft Offenders for 2000                       |             |                   |      |
|---|-------------|-------------------|------|
| Total:  | 668 arrests |                   |      |
| Average:  | 17 charges  |                   |      |
| Highest:  | Male        | 118 charges       |      |
|   | Female:     | 30 charges        |      |
| Males:  | 543         | Gang affiliation: | 221  |
| Females:  | 125         | Gang affiliation: | 27   |
| Male youths 14-16 yrs. Account for 57.1 % of stolen vehicle charges |             |                   |      |
| 12 yr olds:   | Male: 1.9%  | Female:           | 0.4% |
| 13yrols:  | Male: 4.1 % | Female:           | 1.5% |

The Science Fair Initiative, Auto Theft Reduction Initiative, and Young Offender Pamphlet Program can easily be adapted and brought into a jurisdiction with little cost. "Bait" car programs such as **S.T.E.A.L.** and computer-tracking programs such as the **Stolen Auto C.A.P.T.A.I.N.** will have greater costs due to the technology inherent in the systems.

Community Based Policing has traditionally been a uniform patrol entity in Winnipeg. By incorporating the philosophy into an investigative unit we have seen tremendous results in reducing crime. These methods have made an impact on auto theft; however, they can also impact on other crimes.

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**Agency and officer information:**

These initiatives were created at the constable and front line supervisor level. Many individuals had training and backgrounds in investigation and crime prevention, as well as Community Based Policing and Total Quality Management prior to the commencement of the initiatives.

No incentives were needed other than the results of a decrease in auto theft.

Past experience with problem solving in the area of panhandling, graffiti and gang intervention was used to assist with creation of these new programs to deal with auto theft.

As stated most programs were implemented within existing Service budgets. Additional funding was sought through HEATT (Help Eliminate Auto and Truck Theft) Grants available through MPIC and the Provincial Government.

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