

# The Value Produced by Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch Program – Initial Analysis

August 5, 2015



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This report is funded by:



# Highlights

## Program Background

- Safe City Mississauga (SCM) has run Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch (NW) program since 1992.
- The Neighbourhood Watch program engages residents in preventing crime by showing them how they can look out for each other and their property.
- During 2010-2014, SCM set-up and supported over 75 Watches that covered about 7,900 dwellings.

## Impact

- **During 2010-2014**, we estimate that **SCM's Neighbourhood Watch program prevented about 153 property crimes** (that would have been reported to the Police). That estimate excludes Watches that cover less than 80% of a street, so the program likely prevented slightly more crimes.
- The value of the program's other possible results (preventing other types of crime, increasing feelings of safety, and increasing community cohesion) are not included in this analysis because they have not been measured yet.

## Value

- During 2010-2014, SCM, the City of Mississauga, and Peel Regional Police invested about \$475,000 in the program.
- **During 2010-2014**, we estimate that the program **saved residents and taxpayers at least \$1,680,000** (about **3.5 times the program costs**) by preventing the costs associated with:
  - Stolen and damaged goods,
  - Pain and suffering,
  - Residents missing work,
  - Police services,
  - Court and legal aid services,
  - Housing criminals in jail.
- Over a 5 year period, Watches set-up in 2010 saved residents and taxpayers at least \$419,000 (about **5 times the 2010 program costs**). The value produced in more recent years will likely be greater, mainly because Police costs to deal with crime continue to increase.

# Neighbourhood Watch

The Neighbourhood Watch Program began in North America in the 1960s, and has since grown to be one of the largest crime prevention programs in existence. At its core, the program engages residents in preventing crime by looking out for each other and their property. Specifically, the program encourages residents to look out for suspicious activities and crimes, report them to the Police, and maintain signs that homes and the neighbourhood are occupied and cared for. The program is mainly meant to prevent property crimes such as break and enters, auto theft, vandalism, etc, but it can prevent other types of crime and increase feelings of safety and community cohesion. A 2008 systematic review of Neighbourhood Watch evaluations found that on average the program reduces crime by between 16% to 26%.<sup>i</sup>

## Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch

Safe City Mississauga (SCM) has run Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch (NW) program since 1992. Once SCM and key residents recruit enough Watch members in an area (50% of dwellings minimum), they host a Watch set-up meeting. During the meeting, SCM and a Peel Regional Police Officer describe the program, members' roles, and educate members on how they can prevent crime in their neighbourhood. After a Watch is set-up, SCM provides Watch members with crime prevention information. SCM also provides Neighbourhood Watch decals, and the City of Mississauga installs Neighbourhood Watch street signs. To help create awareness of the program and to help neighbours get to know each other SCM organizes Neighbours Night Out events. Since 2011, SCM has also conducted Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) surveys of Watch neighbourhoods, and used the results to inform members on how they can change their neighbourhoods' physical environment to prevent crime. To our knowledge, SCM is the only organization incorporating CPTED into the Neighbourhood Watch program.

**How it Works:** If SCM can educate and encourage residents to:

- Get to know and look out for each other;
- Look out for and report suspicious activity and crime;
- Maintain the appearance that homes and the neighbourhood are occupied, cared for, and being monitored;
- Make security improvements to homes and property;
- Modify their neighbourhood's physical design to make criminal activity more observable;

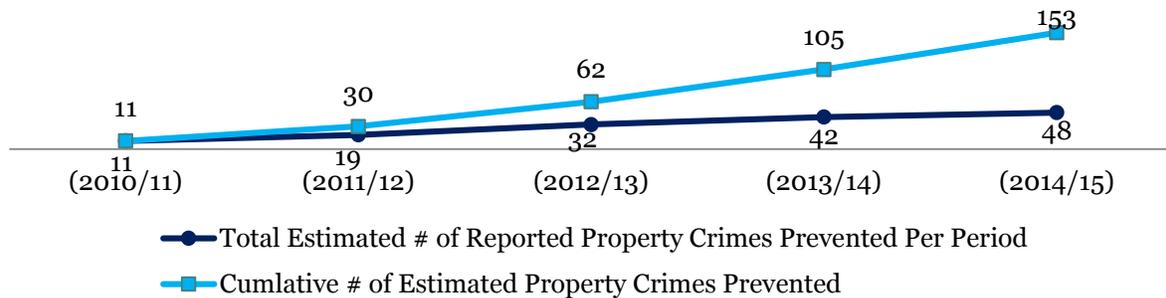
Then there will be less (property) crime, because criminals will think they will be more likely to be caught and it will be physically harder for them to commit a crime.

# Impact on Property Crime

We use our previous findings<sup>ii</sup> to estimate that all Watches that cover at least 80% of the street reduce reported property crimes by 35.6% in their first year and by 32.2% in their second year. We also assume that their impact decreases by 20% each year afterwards.

## Reported Property Crimes Prevented by Watches Set-up during 2010-14

Year of Watch Set-up	# of Property Crimes Reported 1 Year Prior to Set-Up	Estimated # of Reported Property Crimes Prevented				
		(2010/11)	(2011/12)	(2012/13)	(2013/14)	(2014/15)
2010	31	11	10	8	6	5
2011	25		9	8	6	5
2012	46			16	15	12
2013	41				15	13
2014	36					13



The above estimates do not include crimes likely prevented by Watches that cover less than 80% of the dwellings on their street (about 17% of Watches). Most often, those Watches are apartment or townhouse complexes.

Our impact estimate is based on crimes reported to Peel Regional Police. Easton, Furness, and Brantingham (2014) found that for every property crime that people report to the Police there are likely 3 other property crimes that go unreported.<sup>iii</sup> So, **Watches likely prevent 3 times more non-reported property crimes than reported property crimes.** To provide a conservative estimate of the program's value **we do not include non-reported property crimes** in our analysis.

Beyond avoiding property crime, **Watches can prevent other (non-property) crimes, can increase feelings of safety, and can increase community cohesion.** Those outcomes are **not included in our estimate** of the value produced by the program because we have yet to measure those outcomes.

# Value of Preventing Property Crime

## Stakeholders

The primary groups that benefit from Watches preventing property crimes are Watch residents and people that pay taxes for services that respond to property crimes.

## Timeframe

To estimate the value produced by Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch program we are comparing the value of the resources invested in the program from 2010 to 2014 to the value of the estimated number of reported property crimes prevented during that same period.

## Benefits

By preventing reported property crimes, the Watches are preventing stakeholders from experiencing a variety of costs. The table below presents the costs included in this analysis.

### Benefits Included in Estimating the Value of Preventing Reported Property Crimes

Benefits (avoidance of costs)	Stakeholder Group	Estimated Value Per Reported Property Crime	Estimate
Stolen and Damaged Goods	Watch Residents	\$1,263 in 2009 \$	Victims' reports on the General Social Survey.
Pain and Suffering	Watch Residents	\$120 in 2008 \$	Lowest estimate found in available literature (based on jury awards in the U.S.)
Loss of Productivity - Missing Work	Watch Residents	\$265 - \$285 from 2010 to 2014	Victims' reports on the General Social Survey, and on Statistical Canada data on average hourly wage and weekly hours worked
Police Services	Mississauga Police/Mississauga Taxpayers	\$5,715 - \$7,943 from 2010 to 2014	80% of Peel Regional Police budget/# of crimes reported to Peel Regional Police
Court Case	Provincial Government/Taxpayers	\$1,500 in 2012 \$	Total criminal court costs/total # of crimes known to police
Legal Aid	Provincial Government/Taxpayers	\$256 in 2012 \$	Average cost of an approved legal aid application in Ontario * chance that a reported crime will receive an approved application
Housing Criminal in Jail	Provincial Government/Taxpayers	\$123 in 2012 \$	Average # of days in jail likely to results from a reported property crime * average per day costs to house an inmate in a provincial prison

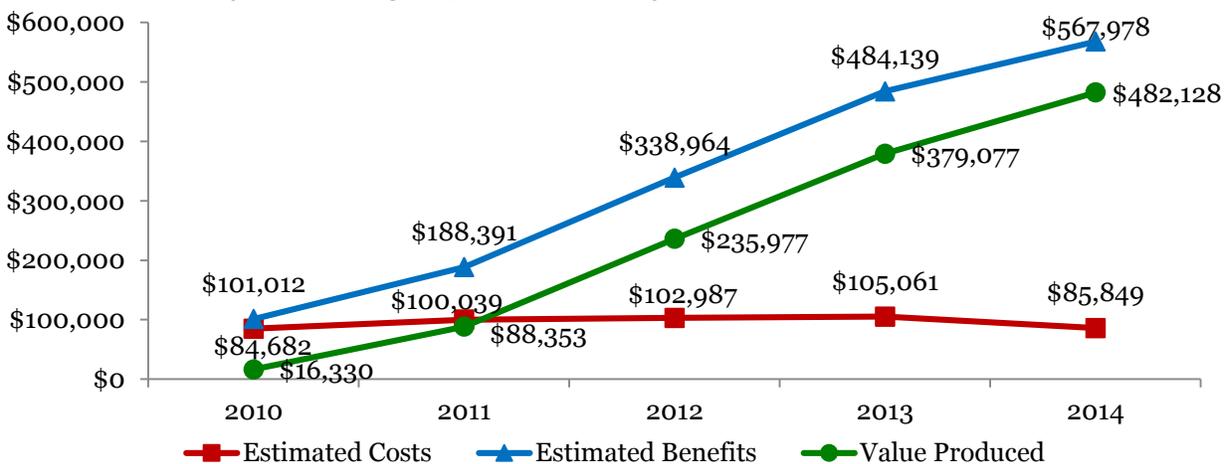
Further details on our estimates' data sources, calculations, and assumptions can be found in the accompanying Excel Workbook.

Preventing reported property crimes may also prevent other costs and benefits not included in our estimate. Losing other forms of productivity because of a property crime occurs infrequently and is difficult to value. Increases in fear and efforts to maintain personal security are not included in our value estimate because we have yet to measure those outcomes and because Watches try to affect those outcomes in other ways.

## Results

Across the five years, we estimate that **SCM's NW program produced \$1,680,000 in benefits** by preventing reported property crimes. The benefits produced are 3.5 times what was invested in the program during the same time. The value produced by the program is likely greater than our estimate because we chose to use conservative estimates and did not include the value of the outcomes we have not yet been able to measure.

### Value Produced by Preventing Reported Property Crime Overtime



Total Estimated Costs=\$478,618 Total Estimated Benefits=\$1,680,483 Overall Benefit-Cost Ratio=3.51

Our analysis shows that the value of SCM's Neighbourhood Watch program increased overtime. During each year, most of the costs were for setting up new Watches, while older Watches continued to prevent crime with little ongoing investment.

To get a sense of the value produced by the program in a single year, we can look at Watches set-up in 2010. Over the next 5 years, those Watches saved residents and taxpayers at least \$419,000 (about **5 times the 2010 program costs** (\$84,680)). The value produced by Watches set-up in more recent years will likely be greater, mainly because the cost of law enforcement intervention per crime continues to increase.

# References

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<sup>i</sup> Bennett T, Holloway K, Farrington D. The effectiveness of neighborhood watch. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2008:18

<sup>ii</sup> Bakker, P. (2015). "Crime Prevention Results of Safe City Mississauga's Neighbourhood Watch Program." Safe City Mississauga: Mississauga, Ontario. Available at: [http://safecitymississauga.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Crime\\_Prevention\\_Results\\_SafeCityMississauga\\_Final.pdf](http://safecitymississauga.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Crime_Prevention_Results_SafeCityMississauga_Final.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Easton, S., Furness, H., & Brantingham, P. (2014). Cost of Crime in Canada: 2014 Report. Fraser Institute.