A Safer Alberta

United Conservative Strategy to Tackle the Rural Crime Crisis

July 2018
Introduction

The United Conservative Party Caucus has continued the work begun by its legacy parties to shine a light on the disturbing increase in crime across rural Alberta.

These crimes typically take the form of intrusions onto rural property and subsequent theft, often perpetrated by armed persons who are overtly threatening to the residents. Victims are understandably frustrated and upset when the police response is either inappropriately delayed or there is no police response at all. The RCMP have confirmed that complaints about delays are legitimate and a result of ongoing deployment and systemic deficiencies. Moreover, some rural residents are victims of repeated break-ins and thefts. Despite inadequate assistance from police, they are warned about engaging in self-defence using lawfully-owned firearms, leading to people’s increased frustration and fear for their families’ safety. Such circumstances have led to a growing lack of public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The dramatic increase in rural crime across the province is a complex matter that raises a number of operational, funding, and policy issues that encompass local, provincial and federal areas of jurisdiction. Rural property owners and residents, and indeed Albertans from all areas, are looking for substantive and targeted reforms which would result in significant reduction in rural crime.

The legacy Wildrose caucus launched the Alberta Crime Task Force in March of 2017, and together with the legacy Progressive Conservative caucus, the conservative opposition has been demanding action from the Government of Alberta for more than two years. United Conservative Leader Jason Kenney reaffirmed the caucus’s commitment to the issue by announcing the UCP’s Task Force on Rural Crime in November of 2017.

To date, the provincial government, led by the New Democrat Party (NDP), has done little to acknowledge and address the
rural crime issue or to improve Alberta’s criminal justice system and public safety generally. In March of 2018, the government finally announced a “Rural Crime Action Plan” with an additional $8 million in funding for more rural police officers and $2 million for more Crown prosecutors. The plan includes proposed measures to reduce police administrative requirements, target repeat offenders, increase inter-agency cooperation, and help property owners (and police) to track stolen vehicles.

The government’s plan still lacks detail on how to address many of the issues identified by Albertans who participated in dozens of town hall meetings held across the province by UCP MLAs. These meetings, which included local police and local crime prevention groups, have been extremely useful in providing case studies and discovering operational and systemic deficiencies. As such, this report was prepared by the UCP caucus after engaging in extensive consultation, and contains a number of recommendations to reduce crime rates across rural Alberta.

In early 2018, consultant and former Alberta Crown prosecutor Scott Newark LLB, was retained to consolidate the caucus’ work to date and make recommendations. His work involved the following:

• Review of relevant crime statistics, media incident reporting, and legislation/policies at various levels of government.

• Interviews with UCP caucus members, focused on specific rural crime issues within their ridings and the insight gained from their town hall meetings with constituents.

• Focused interviews with Alberta law enforcement personnel, including RCMP (current and retired), municipal police leaders, and executive members of the Alberta Federation of Police Associations.

• Receipt and review of RCMP materials specifically related to operational performance and rural crime issues.
  Focused interviews with rural government officials (county and municipal).

• Consideration of relevant technology to assist in crime prevention.

• Post-interview discussions with UCP caucus members and policy staff.
Findings and Recommendations

Members of the UCP caucus arranged town hall meetings with their constituents in order to hear their concerns, insights, and thoughts on how best to deal with the dramatic increase in crime in their communities. These meetings frequently included local law enforcement officials, municipal government representatives, and rural community groups. Local RCMP officials who attended these town hall meetings acknowledged the legitimacy of concerns raised about inappropriate police response times, communication deficiencies, and a lack of policing personnel.

Common themes emerged throughout the consultation process. It is clear that repeat offenders are committing a vast majority of the crimes in rural communities, after being released by what many call the "revolving door" justice system, further adding to victims' dismay. Furthermore, as confirmed by police, many of these offenders live in urban municipalities but deliberately travel to rural and isolated locations in order to take advantage of the delayed police response in these areas. Police have also confirmed that vehicle thefts are typically not isolated cases, but are part of organized crime activity facilitated by ‘chop shops’, illegal sales, and the drug trade.

Data Collection and Public Transparency

While anecdotes and observations from the front lines are invaluable sources of information when it comes to evidence-based and effective policy decision-making, it is also important to consider the most relevant statistical data available.

Juristat, a division of Statistics Canada, publishes the crime statistics most frequently cited by public officials,
such as the annual *Police-reported crime statistics in Canada* report.¹ Raw data is available through what are known as “CANSIM” tables, such as *Incidents-based crime statistics, by detailed violations, police services in Alberta*, which indicates a 43 per cent increase in breaking and entering incidences in Alberta from 2012 (19,282) to 2016 (27,655). The rate per 100,000 population increased by 32 per cent.²

While statistical reporting has improved over the past decade, there are areas where it remains deficient. First, it is important to recognize that, for a multitude of reasons, not all people report crimes to police. Juristat reports a disturbingly low crime-reporting rate of 33 per cent among Albertans in 2014.³ The stated reasons are varied but include low expectations from the criminal justice system, a common sentiment expressed to UCP MLAs.

While Juristat crime statistics are useful, improvements need to be made in what is analyzed and reported. This would not only help to inform policy reforms, but would also be a valuable resource for systemic accountability. For example, if the public is aware of disproportionately high volumes of crime being committed by persons on bail in one judicial district as compared to others, that may lead to targeted questions as to why. It may be a problem with particular Crown prosecutors not opposing bail or judges ordering it despite evidence that suggests detention is appropriate.

Furthermore, the RCMP has advised that all of its detachments produce annual crime statistics which are a source of information that should be utilized. Through the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, or its own databases, the provincial government is fully capable of gathering, analyzing, and publicly reporting the most relevant crime statistics to the people of Alberta and should do so.

Useful statistical data in the battle against rural crime would include the following:

- number of relevant offences reported (break and enters, vehicle/property theft, mischief, robbery, etc.);
- number of rural crime offences involving firearms, other weapons, threats, and assaults;
- number of rural crime offences committed by persons on bail, probation, conditional sentence, or conditional release, or by persons with three or more past criminal convictions;

² Table 35-10-0183-01: [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510018301&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.66](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510018301&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.66)
number of restitution orders made and the compliance rate; and
number of stolen vehicles, and number that have been recovered.

**Recommendations:**

- *Work closely with law enforcement agencies to improve crime data collection.*

- *Introduce the Public’s Right to Know the Truth Act, which would require an annual report to the Legislative Assembly containing detailed provincial crime statistics.*

- *Continue consulting with Albertans on the issue of rural crime in order to monitor the situation and determine whether policy reforms have been effective.*
Police Response Capability

The primary concern expressed by rural victims of crime is the delay or even non-response from RCMP rural detachments to calls from residents victimized by break-ins and thefts of property, including vehicles.

To combat this problem, the province should regulate a police response system for complaints from rural Albertans by phone, whereby all calls are immediately routed to the closest detachment and will, according to the nature of the request, be responded to as quickly as possible. All detachments should also be required to provide quarterly reports on all incoming calls, and the response provided, to the Director of Law Enforcement.

The Director of Law Enforcement would be responsible for ensuring that the police response system is linked with all other appropriately authorized law enforcement agencies for either expedited attendance at the scene or interdiction of any identified vehicles in the surrounding areas.

Furthermore, stakeholders have frequently suggested that there is a shortage of fully empowered police officers in rural Alberta to respond to calls. This deficiency appears to arise from both understaffed RCMP detachments, which serve rural municipalities and surrounding areas, and the absence of a police presence in remote locations.

Alberta’s current policing model involves policing at three levels: provincial, municipal, and First Nations. The Alberta government contracts the RCMP to deliver provincial police services to every town, village, and summer village that has a population of 5,000 or less, along with counties, municipal districts, and Métis settlements regardless of population. Provincial policing is funded through the Provincial Police Service Agreement between Alberta and
the federal government – at a ratio of 70 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. The current agreement is valid until 2032 and costs Alberta over $200 million each year.

The RCMP in Alberta is comprised of its headquarters (called “K” Division) and four districts (east, west, central, south). Each district is then divided into detachments. The RCMP reports that there are currently 118 RCMP detachments in Alberta, which is the second largest number in Canada – second only to British Columbia. From the available data, it is unclear how many detachments are not staffed to their contracted capacity, or whether the balance of deployment for municipal and rural policing duties is appropriate for the needs of the communities.

A municipality with more than 5,000 citizens must provide and pay for its own police service. For these communities, there are three options: two or more municipalities may sign an agreement to be served by a regional police service; a municipality may create its own independent police service; or a municipality may pay another government to deliver police services.

Over 40 communities across Alberta contract their municipal police services directly from the federal government through the Municipal Police Service Agreement. There are 10 independent police services in Alberta, seven are municipal and three are on First Nations. To help cover the costs of municipal policing, the Alberta government provides municipalities with funds through the Municipal Police Assistance Grant and Police Officer Grant.

The Alberta Sheriffs Branch also plays an integral role in promoting safe and resilient communities throughout the province. Sheriffs are sworn peace officers under the Alberta Peace Officer Act, and they perform a wide range of activities in concert with other law enforcement and policing partners in Alberta. The five sections include: Court Security and Prisoner Transport Services, Operations and Protection Services, Investigation and Enforcement Operations, Corporate Security Services, and Head Office.

In addition to sheriffs, Alberta has peace officers. Public Security Peace Officers work to uphold and enforce certain laws and regulations in Alberta and is given limited powers and authority under the current Alberta Peace Officer Act. They are not to be confused with police officers, who have a much wider range of authority.

Currently, there are over 3,000 peace officers in Alberta, working for some 284 different agencies, with provincial
government offices being the largest employer. All levels of government, as well as organizations like public health authorities and post-secondary institutions, may employ peace officers.

In consultation with police and local governments, the provincial government should initiate a detailed review of existing police resources in Alberta with a specific focus on:

- the amount of understaffing in specific RCMP detachments;
- the sufficiency of RCMP police resources in rural municipalities that serve surrounding areas, as measured through response times;
- the appropriateness of the current funding model used by rural municipalities and rural counties to cover the costs of RCMP policing in their communities;
- the effectiveness of the RCMP’s new Crime Reduction Units;
- how Alberta Sheriffs could be deployed to address rural policing shortages if their mandate was expanded to include a policing role;
- reviewing the mandate of various peace officer agencies to determine whether they can enforce the Trespass to Premises Act.

**Recommendations:**

- Create a provincially regulated police response system that would link all enforcement agencies to expedite assistance for citizens and facilitate interjurisdictional cooperation.
- Educate Albertans on the best way to report crime-related complaints in their area, what details to provide, and the complaint process if service is not provided as required.
- Initiate a detailed review of the sufficiency of police resources in Alberta and the appropriateness of the current police funding model.
- Review and consider extending the mandate of peace officers and Sheriffs provided there is proper training.

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**Alberta leads the country in auto-theft – 62 per day average, 3x national average**

*Calgary Sun, Mar. 7, 2018*
Victim Services

Rural residents are uncertain about what services are available to them as victims of crime. Alberta’s Auditor General identified concerns with Alberta’s Victims of Crime Fund in a February 2016 report. The fund had a $71 million surplus, while local victim support groups are struggling to keep their doors open.

The current system appears to provide funding for direct victim compensation, as well as funding to different community groups and police-based victim services. Funding for the victim service groups are capped at $150,000 per year for a three-year grant period.

As a result of the Auditor General’s revelations, it appears all victim service programs are under review by the Ministry of Justice. On April 3, 2018, the UCP questioned the Minister of Justice about this review, who said, “We hope to have more to say about that in the near future” (Meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, FC-833). It remains unclear when the ministry’s review will be completed or when the findings will be made public.

Victim services have evolved significantly in Canada over the past few decades and now include specialized services for domestic violence and sexual assault. In some provinces, full-time public victim services are available to assist victims in their interactions with police, the Crown, and corrections, as well as to help them achieve financial compensation as authorized by law.

Helping crime victims make their way through an often complex system includes keeping them informed on what is happening with their case and why, as well as helping to make their voices heard in the decision-making process. Not having that information or the opportunity to provide input can cause ongoing traumatization for victims who legitimately feel they and their concerns are being ignored by the criminal justice system.


A sexual assault victim should not be given second tier justice simply because of where they reside.
In its review of victim services, the government should examine and consider:

- any disparities between levels of assistance in rural communities versus urban communities;
- practices in other provinces;
- whether the compensation process can be accelerated for approved services;
- available assistance to obtain and collect restitution orders; and
- compliance by the courts in imposing victim fine surcharges.

A recent amendment to the Criminal Code (s. 722.2) now permits community victim impact statements. Work should be done to develop awareness within rural communities of the opportunity to make such statements. The Crown Policy Manual should be revised to direct support for and facilitation of such impact statements to be made and subsequently taken into account by sentencing courts. Criminals' deliberate exploitation of the vulnerabilities of rural communities is having a negative impact on rural Albertans' unique way of life.

The non-imposition or collection of court ordered restitution is also a frequent complaint from rural victims of crime that must be addressed. Interestingly, s. 737.1 of the Criminal Code requires sentencing judges to consider making a restitution order, but it may well be that, like imposing victim fine surcharges, courts are not fully complying with this obligation. Provincial action can help correct this.

The Crown Policy Manual should be revised to require Crown prosecutors to seek restitution orders in defined circumstances, which include rural property crimes, and to report non-compliance by judges to the minister for consideration of complaints to the appropriate judicial oversight body.

UCP also heard reports of a serious deficiency in rural victim services with respect to sexual offences against women. It appears that many rural communities do not have medical practitioners who are appropriately trained or equipped to extract and store forensic evidence from victims so that it will be admissible in subsequent court proceedings. A sexual assault victim should not be given second tier justice simply because of where they reside. Police, the Crown, and medical authorities should immediately conduct a review of services gathering medical and forensic evidence in rural communities to determine what improvements are required. If necessary, the appropriate measures should be ensured through regulation.
Recommendations:

- **Ensure all funds contained in the Victims of Crime Fund are directed to support and compensate victims.**

- **Explore the creation of a Victims' Ombudsman Office to advocate on behalf of victims.**

- **Raise awareness of the opportunity for rural communities to make community victim impact statements to be taken into account during sentencing.**

- **Amend the Crown Policy Manual to require prosecutors to seek restitution orders in defined circumstances, including rural property crime cases.**

- **Take steps to improve the collection of medical and forensic evidence in rural communities.**

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The government dismissed our call for an emergency debate

Nov. 27, 2017
Court Delays

Court delays are an issue that applies to Alberta’s entire criminal justice system. The Supreme Court of Canada’s recent Jordan decision has largely resulted in more court delays which have resulted in a staying of charges regardless of guilt or the seriousness of the crime. This is because the delays can be a breach of an accused person’s rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Court delays not only create a potential “out” for offenders, but they serve to re-traumatize victims and deny them the justice they deserve.

These issues are complex and cannot be resolved through any single measure, but provincial governments must do better in addressing them.

Recommendations:

• Establish a digitally secure electronic evidence disclosure database that will share evidence and forensic reports more efficiently.

• Require basic disclosure by police and prosecutors by first court appearance.

• Work with the judiciary, defence bar, Crown, and police to assess if standardized requirements for acquiring warrants and ensuring admissibility of evidence can be developed and implemented.

• Increase resources and expedite the decision-making process for diversion programs.

• If Bill C-75 (Justice Reform Bill) is enacted by the federal government, prepare to shift resources to the provincial court system and develop acceptable affidavits for police evidence in accordance with the bill.

• Establish temporary court facilities and hire additional prosecutors to deal with and eliminate backlogs in the system.
Repeat Offenders

A defining feature of the Canadian criminal justice system is that a disproportionately small number of offenders are responsible for a disproportionately large volume of crimes.

The justice system’s continuous failure to deal with repeat offenders properly is also a major contributor to systemic delay. When repeat offenders are targeted by operational measures or policy/legislative reform, the result is a significant reduction in crime and an increase in public safety. While this is an area that is primarily within federal jurisdiction, there are measures the province can take in addition to advocating for specific legislative reforms at the federal level.

The government should develop and implement a Repeat Offender Policy, with both a provincial and federal component.

**Recommendations:**

- **Develop a policy that deals specifically with repeat offenders in order to ensure they are dealt with consistently and effectively across the entire system.**

- **Encourage increased use of electronic monitoring of high-risk and repeat offenders.**

- **Establish a high-risk repeat offenders unit in each judicial district and dedicate resources to dealing specifically with these cases.**

- **Amend the Crown Policy Manual to require prosecutors to produce criminal records at bail hearings.**

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**Break-ins in Bonnyville were up 133% last year.**

*Bonnyville Nouvelle, Nov. 21, 2017*
• Amend the Crown Policy Manual to require Crown prosecutors to ask judges to record the reasons for a case adjournment and provide the information to the public on an annual basis.

• When appropriate, oppose pre-trial custody credit in cases where bail has been denied due to a person’s past record. (See sections 515(10)(b) and 719(3) of the Criminal Code.)

• Review Chief Justice Wittman’s ruling requiring prosecutors to conduct bail hearings and explore whether an alternative model can be developed to maximize the productivity of resources.

• Lobby the federal government to make it a crime to breach the conditions of parole or statutory release, as is currently the case for bail or probation breaches.

• Lobby the federal government to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to keep offenders that who breach parole or conditional release requirements behind bars by:
  • replacing presumptive statutory release at expiration of two-thirds of the sentence with earned parole for persons serving a second or subsequent federal sentence;
  • creating escalating parole eligibility delay consequences for offenders on conditional release that commit new indictable offences;
  • requiring the reporting of a breach of conditional release to the Parole Board for consideration of release revocation; and
  • requiring consideration by the Parole Board of past breaches and the availability of post warrant expiry supervision orders.
Protection of Property

An effective rural crime strategy must include measures aimed at preventing crime before it occurs, as opposed to reacting only after it occurs. This reality was a consistent theme articulated during UCP town hall meetings, and it has been reinforced by local rural governments and community crime prevention groups. Community groups like Alberta Rural Crime Watch and Citizens on Patrol are regularly engaged in preventative and information gathering activities, and the government must work with these groups to support their efforts.

It is important that these groups have a formal relationship with the RCMP, as well as interagency policing groups such as the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT). They are potentially valuable sources of information for police and can help detect potential and ongoing criminal activity. They can also be a valuable resource in locating stolen vehicles and identifying the suspected vehicles of criminals, many of whom are coming from urban centers to commit crimes in rural areas.

Rural community groups can also potentially assist property owners in identifying and deploying appropriate security technologies to deter crime, such as enhanced locking systems, motion detection and camera systems, alarm systems, neighbor alert systems, and pre-installed vehicle tracking systems. This should also include ensuring appropriate signage is installed to trigger the protections of the Trespass to Premises Act. These actions can also support proactive interaction, supported by the provincial government, with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to reduce insurance costs when approved security technologies are deployed.

The government should support provincial and federal
funding for approved rural community groups such as Rural Crime Watch and Citizens on Patrol for defined activities including:

- community monitoring and reporting to police of suspicious activities;
- enhancing property owner awareness of appropriate crime prevention measures including signage and technology deployment as well as restrictions on the use of force in defence of persons or property;
- assistance, if necessary, in helping rural crime victims enforce restitution orders and receive compensation for vehicle towing and storage fees;
- liaising with police for information sharing; and
- liaising with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to help reduce insurance costs for rural crime victims and rural property owners.

Rural municipalities can also consider the deployment of appropriately licensed and equipped private security, especially in areas that are without RCMP detachments.

The provincial government could also review the current policy that does not require vehicles to have front licence plates which, as some community groups have noted, potentially hinders vehicle detection and interdiction.

Finally, the provincial government can advocate for Criminal Code reform by the federal government to clarify and strengthen the defence of person and property provisions, and to define the circumstances of rural crime as an aggravating factor that the courts must consider at sentencing. If such actions are successful, they must be publicly articulated, because deterrence only works if criminals are aware of the heightened consequences for their illegal behaviour.

Property owners who are victims of repeated break-ins and thefts, without suitable police response, are warned by police, or even charged, when they use their lawfully owned firearms to defend themselves, their families, and their property from brazen criminals. Property owners are understandably seeking greater clarity on what measures they are allowed to use in self-defence, but the answers provided are necessarily cloaked in imprecise terms like "reasonable force".

Rural community groups might be able to assist property owners by offering a platform for police and Crown prosecutors to explain the circumstances when force can be used to protect property and people when crimes are in progress. This is an important issue which
was repeatedly raised during consultation. While the circumstances of every case are different and appropriate use of "reasonable force" cannot be explained in advance with certainty to cover all situations, making residents aware of relevant factors used when determining what constitutes "reasonable force" may help prevent future problems.

The government should also review the Crown Policy Manual to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the following issues in determining whether the use of force in self-defence, as outlined in sections 34 and 35 of the Criminal Code, should preclude prosecution against victims of crime. In addition, the government should advocate that the federal government amend the Criminal Code to require that appropriate consideration is given to the following issues in determining the applicability of the use of force in self-defence:

- significant delay or non-response by police to the request for assistance due to the remote location of the crime being committed;
- failure of the offender to depart the premises when confronted, which in the absence of evidence to the contrary shall be viewed as threatening; and
- the number of persons committing the crime and the perception of their intoxication by alcohol or drugs;

Furthermore, the government should also advocate that the federal government amend s. 718.2 of the Criminal Code to specify that the following should be considered by a sentencing court to be an aggravating factor and that the principles of deterrence and denunciation should be prioritized:

- evidence that the accused selected a remote location to commit the crime in recognition of the victim’s enhanced vulnerability;
- evidence that the accused refused to depart the scene of a break and enter or theft when confronted by the property owner; and
- evidence that the accused and/or his accomplices were armed with a weapon and/or exhibited threatening behaviour to persons on the property.

Rural community groups may also find a role in retaining counsel and helping present legal arguments to the Crown and police in the event of an incident where force is used in an effort to maximize considerations of the self-defence provisions in the Criminal Code and minimize the chance of charges being laid and prosecuted against
victims of rural crime. Similarly, specialized services could be offered to help rural crime victims enforce restitution orders and recover the costs related to stolen vehicle recovery including towing and parking, which rural crime victims are currently required to cover themselves.

**Recommendations:**

- **Strengthen the relationship between the government, law enforcement agencies and local community crime prevention organizations.**
- **Encourage the use of technology and signage for crime prevention purposes.**
- **Educate the public on their rights and responsibilities when it comes to defending loved ones and property.**
- **Require crown prosecutors to consider vulnerabilities specific to rural areas when considering prosecution of property owners who acted in self-defence.**
- **Lobby the federal government to amend sections 34 and 35 of the Criminal Code, as well as sentencing guidelines, to include vulnerabilities of rural victims in the existing list of aggravating factors.**

**Break-ins in Innisfail were up 94% last year.**

**Innisfail Province, Nov. 21, 2017**
Additional Recommendations and Remarks

As the Government of Alberta initiates its own reforms, it is critical that the province also closely monitor what the federal government is doing, or not doing, that would impact the administration of justice and public safety in Alberta. As the order of government responsible for enacting and reforming Canada's Criminal Code, the federal government clearly has a hugely influential role when it comes to the safety and security of Albertans. Officials from all orders of government must recognize the importance of cooperation and continual contact.

Current areas of scrutiny would include the following federal pieces of legislation: C-45 and C-46 (marijuana), C-51 (terrorism reforms), C-71 (firearms), C-75 (justice system reforms), as well as funding levels for various relevant federal programs: crime prevention, victim assistance, policing, cyber security, domestic violence, First Nations, gun and gang violence, border security, and so on.

While some solutions would not require increased government spending, other changes may come at a cost. There are, however, alternative revenue options to examine, including:

- community monitoring and reporting to police of suspicious activities;
- collecting unpaid fines, bail forfeitures and victim fine surcharges;
- preventing payments from the government to persons that owe fines/forfeitures/surcharges to the government;
- ensuring relevant provincial funding is being used to intended and maximum productivity; (ex. Victims of Crime Fund, Legal Aid, etc.)
Conclusion

All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their own homes, and the goal of this report is to assist in the fight against crime, especially in rural areas.

The recommendations contained in this report are actions that can be taken to strengthen police response capability, effectively deal with repeat offenders, improve data collection, combat court delays, improve services for victims, strengthen crime prevention efforts, and reduce property crime in rural communities. The problems go far beyond a lack of funding – there are longstanding, systemic issues that need to be thoughtfully addressed.