School Resource Officer Proposal

Pembina Trails School Division

Proposal Supported by the Parent Councils of:

Acadia Junior High School
Arthur A. Leach
Charleswood Junior High
Fort Richmond Collegiate
Henry G. Izatt Middle School
Oak Park High School
Royal School
Ryerson School
St. Avila School
Shaftesbury High School
Vincent Massey Collegiate
Westgrove School
(More to Follow)

December 13, 2007

SUMMARY OF INITIATIVE

The School Resource Officer (SRO) is a proposed initiative supported by the Parent Councils of 12 Pembina Trails Schools representing all four families of schools. Support is continuing to build throughout the division and more schools will soon be added to this list. The purpose of this initiative is to provide a strategic preventative resource for the youth of Pembina Trails School Division's (PTSD) family of schools.

The focus of this initiative is to establish and strengthen the partnership between police, schools and the community by increasing the physical presence of police officers in the four divisional High schools as well as Middle and Junior High schools. Although the School Resource Officer would be available to all schools in the division, the above schools have expressed considerable interest in the initiative and have had strong representation from their respective parent groups.

Based on divisional demographics the initiative will fund 2 officers for a trial period of three years at an approximate cost of $100,000/officer for each of the years of the program. The SRO initiative will be funded on a cost shared basis with the Pembina Trails School Division, the Winnipeg Police Services and the Province of Manitoba. Alternative funding models have been explored, however it is our belief that a cost shared approach is the best model.

BACKGROUND

Our Junior High and High Schools have experienced significant loss of Community Police Services. Due to staff shortages, the Community Police Office on Pembina Hwy was closed approximately three years ago. The high schools and junior high schools in the district relied heavily on police support from this office. Proactive relationships were being established within the school community addressing issues of crime and safety in our schools. Since the closure of the Community Police Office schools have access to an educational resource officer from the district police office for scheduled events and three officers from the community response unit. However, the community response unit officers can be re-deployed to areas of need which supersede the needs of the schools within the district.

It is difficult to establish relationships with the schools as the need for services elsewhere takes priority. The ongoing, consistent presence and relationship between schools and police has been lost.

The ability of police officers to support schools in responding in a timely manner is also lost with the re-deployment as sometimes it can take several days or longer to respond to a school request for service. Should an issue arise within the schools requiring non-emergency police services a response may not be received for up to two to three days.

This current model provides police support to the school in times of crisis but lacks a coordinated and proactive approach to building relationships with youth and schools. Frequent turnover of staff and infrequent contact with schools outside times of crisis has a limited impact with regards to building a safer community.

CURRENT INITIATIVE

The current initiative is a proactive (not a reactive) model providing police support to schools on a consistent, on-going basis.

With the cost being shared by the school division, the city and the province, School Resource Officers are committed to the family of schools and cannot be deployed to areas of need elsewhere in the district.

The officers are City of Winnipeg Police Officers reporting to a City of Winnipeg Police Supervisor but paid for by three different stakeholders and therefore the control of resources is not determined by need within the police services. Strong working relationships are developed with students so that intervention can take place before a crisis occurs. Issues of concern that will be addressed through this initiative are:

- Drug intervention
- Bullying
- Internet/cell phone safety
- Gang threats
- School violence
- Overall school safety

In the first month of classes in September, 2007, six incidents of violence or threatened violence occurred in five Winnipeg high schools. One of these threats occurred in Pembina Trails School Division. Many, if not most, of these incidents could have been averted had a School Resource Officer been in place. In Winnipeg One School Division a serious incident involving violence was averted due to the efforts of the School Resource Officer on his third day on the job. This incident involved a student from PTSD and was handled in confidence and without attention from the media before a crisis occurred. There are numerous examples of incidents in PTSD where police and schools working together have been able to respond to a safety concern in a quiet and dignified manner that respected the students and families involved by not drawing media attention to the event. Through the partnership, the police and schools have been able to mobilize supports for youth at risk so that continued involvement with the law has been avoided and community safety issues have been addressed.

REPRESENTATION

Direct representation for this initiative is from the following Parent Advisory Groups and Administration:

Fort Richmond Collegiate

Vincent Massey Collegiate

Oak Park High School

Shaftsbury High School

Acadia Junior High School

Henry G. Izatt School

Letters of support have also been received for this initiative by the following Parent Groups within the family of schools (See Appendix A)

Ryerson Elementary
Arthur A. Leach
Charleswood
Fort Richmond
Shaftesbury
Henry G. Izatt
St. Avila
Royal
Ryerson
Vincent Massey
Acadia
Oak Park
(More to follow)

Also included is a letter of support for School Resource Officers from Kevin Cameron, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Responses. (See Appendix E)

In this letter he states… “I have consistently said, ‘there is no better violence prevention than dedicated police members in schools’. Although funding is always a debate, the benefit of joint school district and police (and others) funding is that it gives the school jurisdictions more say in ensuring that school friendly police officer(s) are hired or assigned to this key school role.”

PROJECT BUDGET

See attached Appendix C

PROJECT EVALUATION

A committee would be established to oversee the evaluation component of the initiative. The stakeholders involved in the initiative, including students, parents, school administrators, Winnipeg Police Services and the Province of Manitoba would meet on an annual basis to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. This committee would be responsible to collect data from the pilot project in the form of reports from the officers and data collection from administration, students and parents. A sample of some of the summary statements and conclusions from the Winnipeg School Division's pilot project from Feb. 2005 is included in appendix D.