



## VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT PLANNING, RESEARCH & AUDIT SECTION

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**To:** Leslie Steven, Sergeant #1711  
Planning, Research & Audit Section

**From:** Correen Yedon, Planning & Policy Analyst  
Planning, Research & Audit Section

**Subject:** ***Calls for Service: Historical Review***

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I have reviewed the number of calls for service, dispatched calls for service and crime statistics from the Police Services Division from 1989 to 2007. *Table 1* shows that from 1989 to 2007:

- Vancouver's population increased 29.4%
- 1992 saw the highest number of calls for service over this time period, with 716 per 1,000 population. Since that time, calls for service have decreased to 423 per 1,000 population.
- 1992 also saw the highest number of dispatched calls over this same time, with 456 per 1,000 population. Since then, dispatched calls have decreased to 319 per 1,000 population.

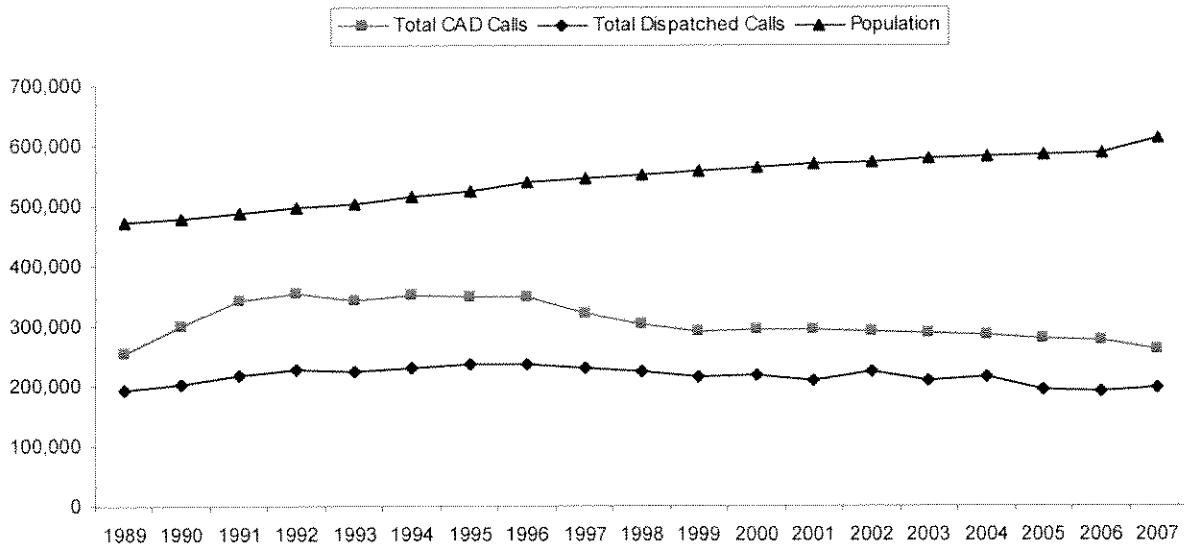
**Table 1: WebCAD & Versadex Calls for Service and City of Vancouver Population<sup>1</sup>**

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Total CAD Calls</i> | <i>Total Dispatched Calls</i> | <i>% Dispatched</i> | <i>Population</i> |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1989        | 254,559                | 193,189                       | 75.9%               | 473,983           |
| 1990        | 298,511                | 203,862                       | 68.3%               | 479,143           |
| 1991        | 341,389                | 218,595                       | 64.0%               | 487,052           |
| 1992        | 355,065                | 225,995                       | 63.6%               | 495,853           |
| 1993        | 341,076                | 222,958                       | 65.4%               | 503,019           |
| 1994        | 351,061                | 231,550                       | 66.0%               | 514,007           |
| 1995        | 349,833                | 235,588                       | 67.3%               | 525,715           |
| 1996        | 347,535                | 236,338                       | 68.0%               | 537,910           |
| 1997        | 320,784                | 228,978                       | 71.4%               | 546,772           |
| 1998        | 303,814                | 222,900                       | 73.4%               | 551,832           |
| 1999        | 290,571                | 214,923                       | 74.0%               | 558,262           |
| 2000        | 293,139                | 217,945                       | 74.3%               | 564,513           |
| 2001        | 293,790                | 208,487                       | 71.0%               | 570,835           |
| 2002        | 290,752                | 223,107                       | 76.7%               | 573,486           |
| 2003        | 287,178                | 208,270                       | 72.5%               | 577,638           |
| 2004        | 284,194                | 215,852                       | 76.0%               | 581,137           |
| 2005        | 279,282                | 194,694                       | 69.7%               | 584,623           |
| 2006        | 275,169                | 189,948                       | 69.0%               | 589,352           |
| 2007        | 259,209                | 195,830                       | 75.5%               | 613,286           |

<sup>1</sup> Population statistics received by Mr. Iain James, Police Services Division, on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Figure 1 illustrates a gradual increase in Vancouver's population from 1989 to 2007, and with the exception of 2001, a decrease in calls for service since 1994. On average, calls for service have decreased approximately 2.3% each year since 1994.

**Figure 1: 1989 to 2007 Population and Calls for Service & Dispatched Calls for Service**



Crime rates allow for more reliable comparisons over time, and are often used to assess the level of risk for victimization. Table 2 shows that from 1989 to 2007:

- Vancouver's 2007 crime rate reached an 18-year low with 96 crimes per 1,000 population compared to 1991, which had the highest crime rate with 202 crimes per 1,000 population
- The violent crime rate has decreased from 17 violent crimes per 1,000 population in 1992 and 1993 to 12 violent crimes per 1,000 population in 2007
- The property crimes rate has also decreased from 161 crimes in 1996 per 1,000 population to 61 crimes per 1,000 population in 2007

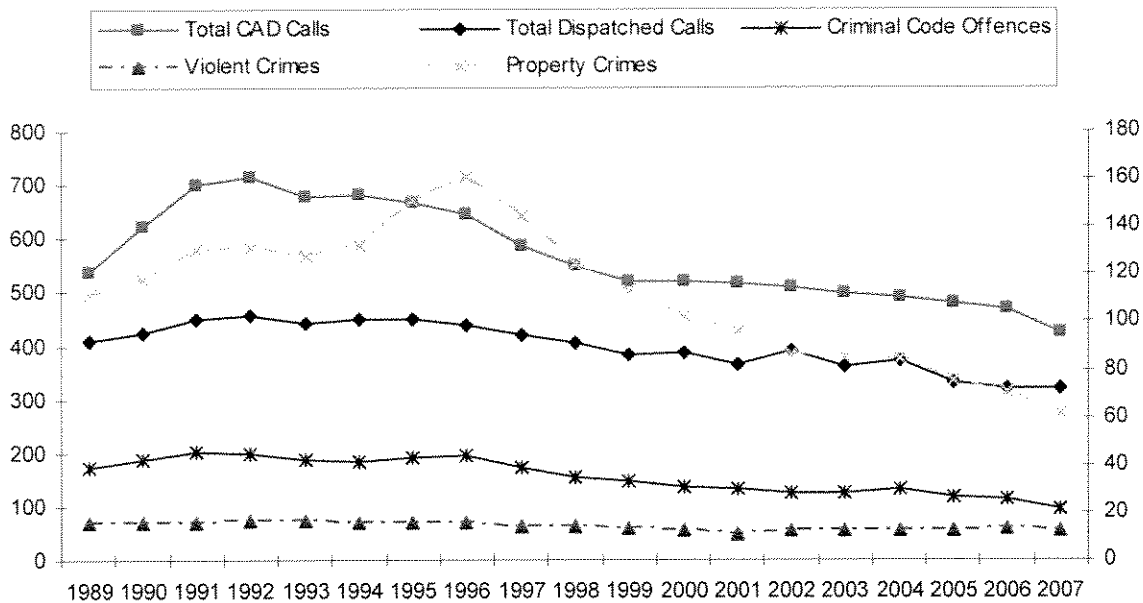
**Table 2: Police Services Division Population & Crime Statistics<sup>2</sup>**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Crime Rate/1,000</b> | <b>Criminal Code Offences</b> | <b>Violent Crime Rate/1,000</b> | <b>Violent Crimes</b> | <b>Property Crime Rate/1,000</b> | <b>Property Crimes</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1989        | 473,983           | 175                     | 82,883                        | 16                              | 7,520                 | 112                              | 52,868                 |
| 1990        | 479,143           | 187                     | 89,420                        | 16                              | 7,440                 | 118                              | 56,557                 |
| 1991        | 487,052           | 202                     | 98,470                        | 16                              | 7,649                 | 131                              | 63,606                 |
| 1992        | 495,853           | 200                     | 99,144                        | 17                              | 8,350                 | 131                              | 65,059                 |
| 1993        | 503,019           | 189                     | 95,014                        | 17                              | 8,545                 | 128                              | 64,412                 |
| 1994        | 514,007           | 186                     | 95,742                        | 16                              | 8,244                 | 132                              | 67,726                 |
| 1995        | 525,715           | 191                     | 100,274                       | 15                              | 8,080                 | 151                              | 79,415                 |
| 1996        | 537,910           | 197                     | 105,895                       | 16                              | 8,587                 | 161                              | 86,520                 |
| 1997        | 546,772           | 175                     | 95,490                        | 14                              | 7,903                 | 144                              | 78,852                 |
| 1998        | 551,832           | 155                     | 85,562                        | 14                              | 7,735                 | 124                              | 68,516                 |
| 1999        | 558,262           | 147                     | 81,815                        | 13                              | 7,206                 | 113                              | 63,105                 |
| 2000        | 564,513           | 138                     | 78,107                        | 12                              | 6,845                 | 102                              | 57,647                 |
| 2001        | 570,835           | 131                     | 74,812                        | 11                              | 6,147                 | 96                               | 54,824                 |
| 2002        | 573,486           | 125                     | 71,791                        | 12                              | 6,951                 | 87                               | 49,694                 |
| 2003        | 577,638           | 127                     | 73,534                        | 12                              | 6,958                 | 85                               | 49,165                 |
| 2004        | 581,137           | 132                     | 76,649                        | 13                              | 7,286                 | 85                               | 49,277                 |
| 2005        | 584,623           | 117                     | 68,635                        | 13                              | 7,316                 | 76                               | 44,363                 |
| 2006        | 589,352           | 116                     | 68,262                        | 13                              | 7,746                 | 71                               | 41,656                 |
| 2007        | 613,286           | 96                      | 58,936                        | 12                              | 7,521                 | 61                               | 37,648                 |

Figure 2 depicts the number of calls for service, number of dispatched calls for service and the violent and property crime rates per 1,000 population. It is clear that although the population of Vancouver continues to increase, calls for service, dispatched calls and crime rates are declining.

<sup>2</sup> Police Services Division 1989 to 2007 statistics received by Mr. Iain James on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

**Figure 2: Calls for Service, Dispatched Calls for Service and Crime Rates per 1,000 Population**



Although there is not a singular explanation as to why calls for service or dispatched calls for service increase or decrease, some possible explanations are highlighted below that have been extracted from staffing reports, annual reports and the Intranet, which may assist in explaining these trends:

**Police Initiatives**

Factors that May have Decreased Call Load or Calls Dispatched

- 1992            The Shoplifting Quick Release Program began in 1992. Two hundred and fifty Loss Prevention Officers completed Reports to Crown Counsel whenever a shoplifter was apprehended. VPD members were not dispatched to conduct the preliminary investigation, thereby reducing the number of dispatched calls.
  
- 2001/2002    The establishment of the Telephone Response Team (TRT) in 2001/2002 allowed Priority 3 calls to be taken over the phone and Internet, thereby reducing the number of dispatched officers.
  
- 2002            The creation of the Bait Car Program initiated by the VPD and ICBC in August, 2002, may be partially responsible for the decrease in property crime. After the program had been in operation for ten months, there was an overall 6-8% reduction in stolen vehicles in Vancouver, which amounted to approximately \$10 million in savings. The Bait Car program has since expanded to become a regional initiative throughout Greater Vancouver.
  
- 2003            Internet reporting in July 2003 meant fewer officers dispatched to certain call types, such as theft under \$5,000, theft from auto and mischief under \$5,000.

- 2004 In April 2004, Project Lucille targeted licensed premises, pawnshops and corner stores involved in illegal activities. This three-month initiative may also have been responsible for a decrease in property crime.
- 2004 The Firearms Interdiction Team (FIT), initiated in August 2004, may have caused a decrease in violent crime from 2004 onwards. Their mandate is to locate, detain and search gang members, their associates and their vehicles when found driving in Vancouver. FIT's goal is to reduce gun-related violence by putting pressure on the gang members visiting the Downtown core and the surrounding area.
- 2006 Another initiative that may have assisted in decreasing the number of dispatched calls for service took place on March 12, 2006. On this date, all non-emergency calls and incidents with no suspect, would be dealt with on the non-emergency police line (604-717-3321).
- 2007 In January 2007, the District Alternate Response Service (DARS) was established. DARS handles low priority calls for service by scheduling appointments in advance with complainants or victims. Although this initiative increases the number of dispatched calls, it does help with respect to the level of customer service Vancouver residents receive from the VPD.

### **Policy/By-Law Changes**

#### Factors that May have Decreased Call Load

- 1997 In March 1997, members stopped attending minor motor vehicle accidents. Although the number of calls for service may not have decreased, the number of calls dispatched would have decreased with respect to this call type.
- 2004 In October 2004, a new by-law addressing false alarms was implemented. This by-law greatly reduced the number of dispatched officers who would normally attend such calls. This is because programs were designed to provide training to alarm system users in the use and operation of security alarm systems.

#### Factors that May have Increased Call Load

- 1999 In 1999 there were 360 arrests made under the Mental Health Act. In 2007, there were 1,744 arrests for the same types of offences. With mental health institutions closing and government funding for social housing decreasing, more and more mentally ill people are forced to turn to the streets. This situation calls for an increase in calls and puts additional strains on an already depleted Patrol resource.
- 2001 The increase in liquor seat density in 2001, and 4:00 am bar closing – later reduced to 3:00 am also may have influenced the number of calls for service, violent crimes and property crimes in Vancouver.
- 2007 In January 2007, ERT and the Dog Squad started using the CAD system to record their activities, which undoubtedly increased the number of dispatched calls.

2007 In March 2007, driving complaints, reported impaired drivers and indecent acts were now dispatched to a patrol-based unit instead of being broadcast to all members for general information. This policy will directly affect the number of units dispatched as these were not incidents that were assigned in the past.

### **Impact of Technological Changes**

2001 PRIME BC was implemented on March 21, 2001. This changed the way crime statistics were recorded and captured. As a result, comparisons to previous year's data became more error-prone. In addition, E-Comm staff was involved in Union job action until the Fall of 2001. During this time, E-Comm staff did not accept crime reports over the phone and advised victims to attend the VPD to report the incident. This influenced the number of offences reported, the number of officers that would have otherwise been dispatched, and perhaps even the overall calls for service if the public knew they would not be getting the service they requested.

2002 On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Altaris CAD was adopted by E-Comm to improve efficiencies in call management and record keeping; however, several issues arose with its introduction that creating difficulties with statistical reporting for December 2002. In some cases, incidents were recorded more than once due to an initially slow network speed. This situation led users to believe that their original submissions were not accepted, prompting them to re-enter their reports, thus resulting in over-inflated numbers.

2005 On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the VPD changed from Altaris CAD to Police CAD. This change over affected the way statistics were extracted from RMS. Bar checks, person stops and traffic stops were no longer assigned a GO number unless the officer specifically requested one be assigned. All such checks now fall under the Unit Activity (UA) tab in Versadex. Therefore, it would appear that calls for service had gone down; however, these workload issues were simply noted elsewhere in Versadex. Before Police CAD came into effect, bar checks, person stops and traffic stops were included in the total calls for service/dispatched calls, therefore, Altaris CAD would have inflated the calls for service numbers.

Keeping the above events in mind and adding to it the millions of people who come to Vancouver weekly for work, play, sporting events, demonstrations and tourism, Vancouver continues to be successful in managing an increase in population and at the same time, enjoy a decrease in calls for service, dispatched calls for service and crime rate.

Correen Yedon