



# **Vancouver Police Department Traffic Court Follow-Up Audit**

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## **1 Introduction**

**1.1** In September 2008, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) Audit Unit concluded the Traffic Court Audit (PR2008-1002). The main purpose of the Traffic Court Audit was to estimate how often VPD members fail to appear in Traffic Court or attend Traffic Court on overtime.

**1.2** The Traffic Court Audit showed that approximately one quarter of all traffic violations disputed at the Robson Square Provincial Court were dismissed want of prosecution (DWP) in the first half of 2008 because the prosecuting officers failed to appear. This accounted for two thirds of all successfully disputed traffic violations during this period.

**1.3** This report complements the Traffic Court Audit and presents more recent high-level data on traffic cases disputed at the Robson Square Provincial Court. The new data strongly suggests that prosecuting officers are now more likely to attend Traffic Court as scheduled.

## **2 Background**

**2.1** In September 2008, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) Audit Unit concluded the Traffic Court Audit (PR2008-1002). The audit findings and recommendations were presented to the Document Services Unit in August 2008 and the Executive Committee on 2008-11-04.

**2.2** In response to (and/or in conjunction with) the Traffic Court Audit, various business processes were amended or refined with the objective of improving attendance at Traffic Court hearings. Effective October 2008, all accident-related traffic violations started to be managed using a formal notification process involving an electronic VPD1556 Court Attendance Notification form. A police-only phone number was published as part of an operational bulletin dated 2008-10-23, allowing prosecuting members to notify the Traffic Court Registry in case they find themselves unable to attend Traffic Court due to operational constraints. For members that need to notify the Traffic Court Registry of last-minute delays or impediments, additional emergency phone numbers were published in an operational bulletin dated 2009-05-13.

**2.3** These various process improvements were designed to simplify the involvement of prosecuting members scheduled to attend Traffic Court. In turn, the changes were expected to lead to at least a moderate increase in the attendance rate at Traffic Court hearings.

### 3 Methodology and Findings

3.1 Using data from the Justice Information System (JUSTIN), the Audit Unit estimated the attendance rate at Traffic Court hearings by prosecuting members. A total of approximately 30,000 violations disputed at the Robson Square Provincial Court between January 2007 and June 2009 were analyzed. The analysis is intended to complement the Traffic Court Audit, which covered the first half of 2008 in details.

3.2 The following table summarizes the Traffic Court data examined by the Audit Unit.

**Table 3-1 Number of Traffic Court Violations by Outcome**

	2007		2008		2009
	Q1-Q2	Q3-Q4	Q1-Q2	Q3-Q4	Q1-Q2
Deemed Not Disputed	1,793	747	2,055	2,836	3,904
Dismissed Want of Prosecution	1,589	619	1,258	1,755	1,976
Guilty	1,452	537	1,131	1,701	2,671
Not Guilty	50	22	92	115	141
Dismissed, Stayed or Withdrawn	443	240	383	555	975
Other	248	81	81	238	317
<b>TOTAL VIOLATIONS</b>	<b>5,575</b>	<b>2,246</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>9,984</b>
<b>TOTAL TICKETS</b>	<b>4,903</b>	<b>1,984</b>	<b>4,320</b>	<b>6,380</b>	<b>9,027</b>

**Table 3-2 Proportion of Traffic Court Violations by Outcome**

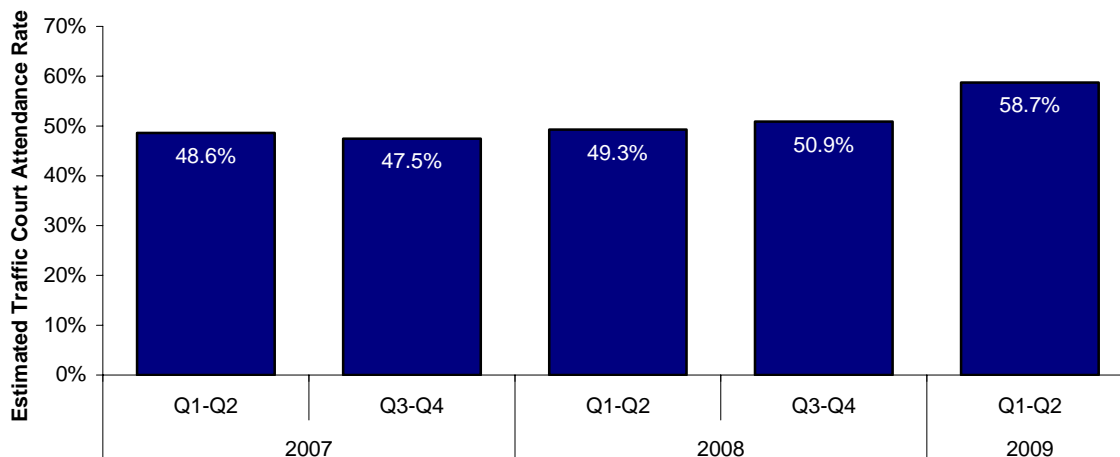
	2007		2008		2009
	Q1-Q2	Q3-Q4	Q1-Q2	Q3-Q4	Q1-Q2
Deemed Not Disputed	32.2%	33.3%	41.1%	39.4%	39.1%
Dismissed Want of Prosecution	28.5%	27.6%	25.2%	24.4%	19.8%
Guilty	26.0%	23.9%	22.6%	23.6%	26.8%
Not Guilty	0.9%	1.0%	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%
Dismissed, Stayed or Withdrawn	7.9%	10.7%	7.7%	7.7%	9.8%
Other	4.4%	3.6%	1.6%	3.3%	3.2%
<b>PERCENTAGE VIOLATIONS</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

3.3 The data examined by the Audit Unit suggests that prosecuting members are now more likely to attend Traffic Court as scheduled.

3.4 Between 2007 and 2008, prosecuting officers were attending roughly 50% of all Traffic Court cases they were responsible for. In the first half of 2009, by comparison, prosecuting officers attended approximately 59% of all Traffic Court cases they were scheduled to attend. This represents an improvement of nine percentage points (18%)

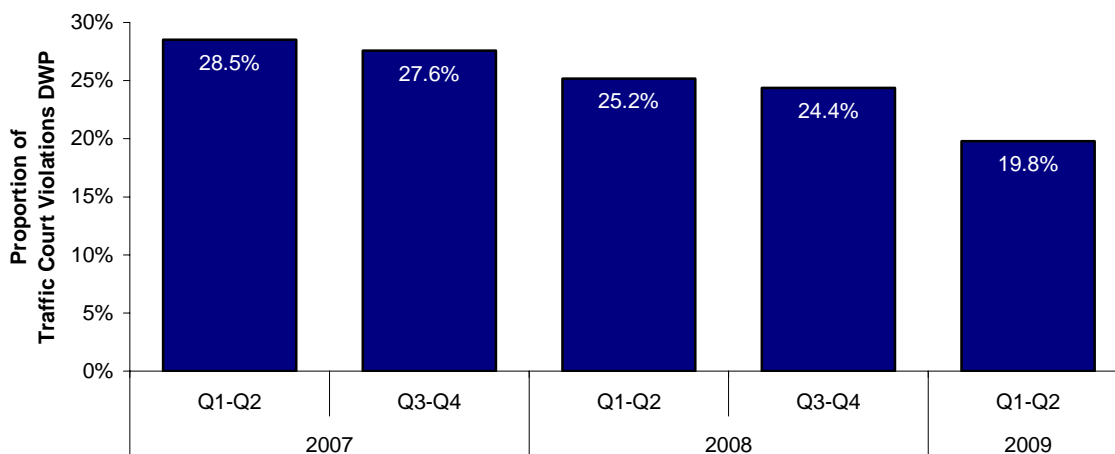
in the Traffic Court attendance rate. The following graph illustrates the progress accomplished between 2007 and the first half of 2009.

**Figure 3-1 Traffic Court Attendance Rate**



**3.5** This progress translated into a higher success rate in Traffic Court. Between 2007 and 2008, approximately 26.1% of all violations disputed at the Robson Square Provincial Court were dismissed want of prosecution (DWP). In the first half of 2009, the proportion of violations dismissed want of prosecution decreased to 19.8%. This represents a fall of more than six percentage points (24%) in the Traffic Court dismissal rate. The following graph illustrates this.

**Figure 3-2 Traffic Court Violations Dismissed Want of Prosecution**



## 4 Conclusion

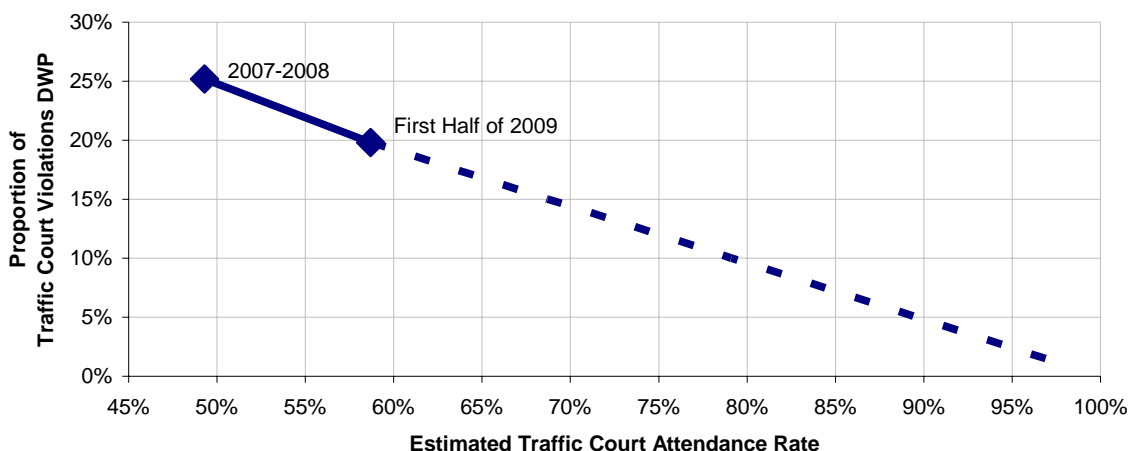
4.1 Overall, the trends documented by the Audit Unit are encouraging.

4.2 Compared to 2007-2008, traffic violations disputed at the Robson Square Provincial Court in the first half of 2009 were 24.1% less likely to be dismissed want of prosecution and prosecuting members were roughly 18% more likely to show up in Traffic Court as scheduled.

4.3 Only for the first half of 2009, these gains would translate into roughly 465 to 620 additional successfully prosecuted traffic violations. This contributes to the VPD's commitment to traffic enforcement and may contribute to deter frivolous Traffic Court disputes.

4.4 Everything else being equal, each marginal gain of one percentage point in the Traffic Court attendance rate is expected to reduce the proportion of Traffic Court violations dismissed want of prosecution by approximately half a percentage point (25 to 50 violations). This relationship is illustrated by the following graph.

**Figure 4-1 Court Attendance and Violations Dismissed Want of Prosecution**



4.5 The Audit Unit will continue to monitor Traffic Court attendance by VPD members. In particular, the Audit Unit intends to track whether the gains obtained in early 2009 are sustained in the second half of 2009 and in 2010.



**4.6** This report is submitted for information.