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## **Late Night Great Night Report to Police Board November 9<sup>th</sup> 2010**

### **Background**

Mayor Dean Fortin established a Task Force in May 2009 to develop a plan of action to ensure that the City maintains a vibrant downtown core that balances the needs of local businesses, residents, visitors and late night entertainment. The Task Force's November 16, 2009 report outlined a strategy to move forward with a collaborative approach to address the challenges experienced downtown in the late hours. While the full strategy has not yet been implemented, the City and other stakeholders have implemented a number of initiatives identified in the Task Force Report, including:

- a pilot project of three supervised taxi stands;
- a three-month extended bus service pilot; and
- additional police officers assigned to the downtown entertainment district on nights when the taxi stands are in operation.

The City established three supervised late night taxi stands in the downtown core as a six-month pilot project from December 3, 2009 to May 29, 2010. The stands were located to draw people away from problem gathering areas and provided a safe location for taxis to pull over and pick up clients. Each stand was staffed by two Commissionaires from midnight to 4:00 am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The Commissionaires recorded over 6,000 pickups at the stands during the pilot period.

In late December 2009, BC Transit initiated a three-month late night bus service pilot on three key routes. They estimate that 11,000 rides were provided on the trial service. Users included University of Victoria and Camosun College students as well as people who work downtown at night. Due to the success of this initiative, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission has decided to reinstate the service this past September, for the duration of the 2010/2011 university/college school year. Victoria Police has seen the benefits of this service in providing additional safe means of transportation out of the City and would like the hours to extend even later from the last bus of 0130 hrs to perhaps 0230 hrs.

Starting December 3, 2009, four additional police officers were assigned to the downtown core from 10:30 pm to 3:30 am on nights when the taxi stands were in operation. The officers

patrolled the entertainment zone on foot with regular stops by the three taxi stands. The policing style emphasized welcoming patrons to the downtown. Patrol members:

- attended licensed establishments over 600 times during the pilot project period;
- removed a number of individuals from licensed establishments under the Barwatch program;
- gathered criminal intelligence; and
- identified Criminal Code, violation ticket and municipal ticket offences.

Police statistics indicate 10% fewer calls for service downtown at night for selected call types during the pilot project period when compared to the same time period the year before. Fight and mischief calls were down by 24% and 20%, respectively.

### **Additional police officers**

Due to current resourcing demand, scheduling and case load per officer, the Victoria Police Department was unable to resource additional officers requested during peak times. The City of Victoria then made the decision to independently fund overtime for four-member police patrols on Friday and Saturday nights from 10:30 pm to 3:30 am. These patrols provide a visible presence in the downtown core during peak evening weekend hours. There are also occasional police patrols on Thursday nights, when police determine additional resources are warranted. This duty is voluntary overtime for members, and also includes one or two Reserve officers who accompany the officers on their patrols to provide a greater visible presence.

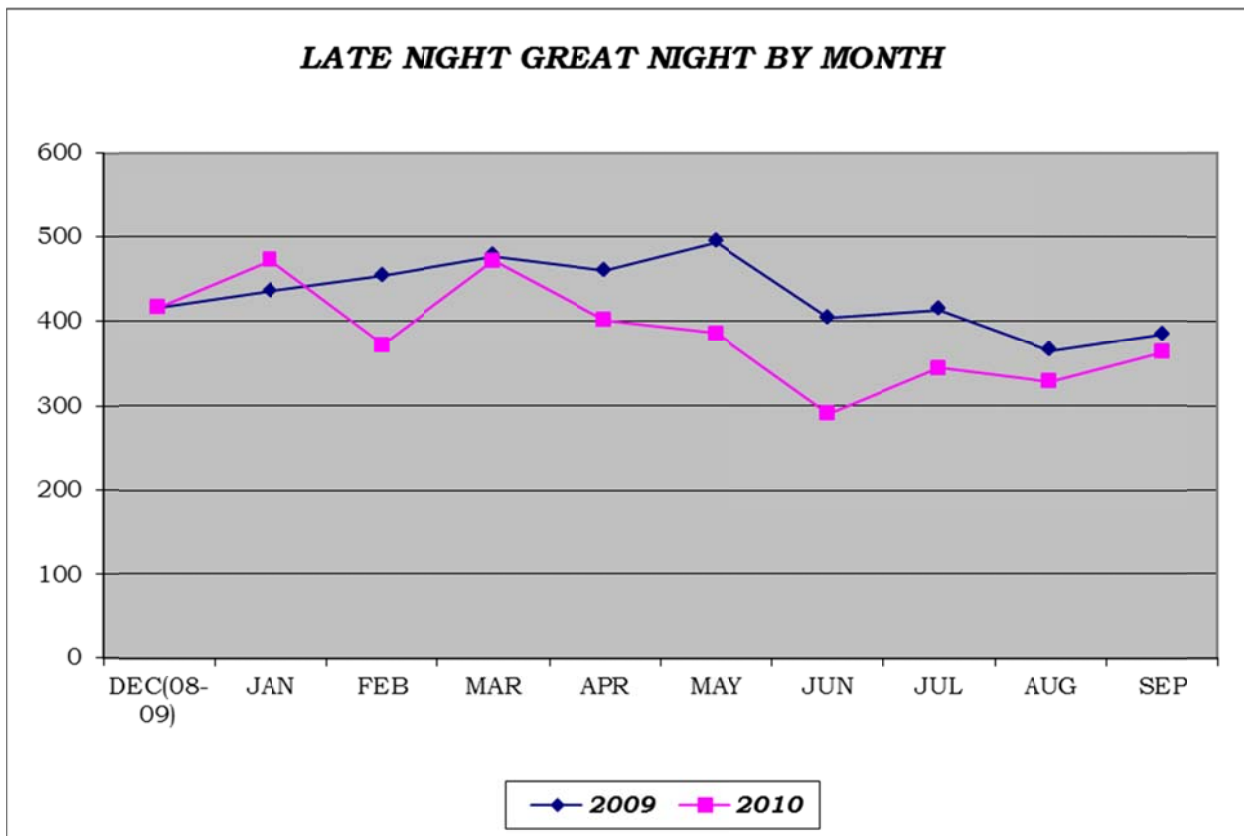
The purpose of the patrols is to encourage members to maintain a welcoming attitude to patrons who frequent the downtown, but apply a strict enforcement approach where infractions of the Liquor Control and Licensing Act, City bylaws and the Criminal Code are identified.

Police don't take a "heavy" approach, but clearly address any issues that arise and take enforcement action where appropriate. A strong visible presence in the liquor establishments and bars also are meant to proactively reduce late night assaults and issues associated at bar closing. This is typically the busiest time of the night for our Department and a significant draw on our resources. It has been found that the extra police presence has been able to reduce police call load and has allowed officers to intervene prior to situations escalating.

Officers are able to maintain a continual visible presence in the liquor establishments which has improved the relationship with bar staff and patrons. Patrons at first questioned the presence of

police in the establishments, but have come to find the presence as reassuring with female patrons also having commented that they feel safer with the increased police presence.

The Department believes the response to the initiative has been extremely positive both from an operational policing perspective and community awareness. There has been an increase in public safety because officers have been able to attend bars and other licensed establishments and routinely ejects inadmissible people through the Barwatch program. There has been a 10% reduction in reported offences within the downtown core which could be attributable to a deterrent effect produced by the additional police presence downtown.



Police calls tracked in the downtown core between the hours of 2200-0400hrs. Dec-Sept. (2009-2010)

## **Barwatch**

Currently there are 13 bars and pubs that participate with Barwatch Victoria. The Victoria Bar and Cabaret Association operates the program which is supported by the Victoria Police Department. There are specific “Barwatch House Rules” (see Appendix I) that are posted outside of the establishment’s main entrance. Barwatch establishment’s scan patrons ID prior to their entry into the premise. If an individual has caused any issues within an establishment, he/she may be flagged on the “Treoscope system”. A onetime grant was provided by the DVBA (Downtown Victoria Business Association) to the participating Barwatch establishments to offset the costs of the Treoscope system. This system is linked to all Barwatch bars and can identify patrons that have caused problems within the establishments prior to their entry. This allows the establishments to identify problem individuals and restrict their access for a set time depending on the circumstances (one night to two years). This has shown to greatly reduce the likelihood of problems within the bars and enable patrons to feel safer within the establishment. Police, however, are still encountering some establishments are not consistently using the Treoscope screening system. One establishment indicated that they only screen patrons who are not known to staff. Other establishments have indicated that they have not used screening at times because of equipment problems or when it is too busy to scan all patrons. Police and the Victoria Bar and Cabaret Association are meeting regularly to address these concerns as the program continues.

Late night patrols also provide police with an opportunity to gather criminal intelligence. The number of “street checks” entered by Victoria police increased 17.5% during the period of the pilot project compared to the same time period the previous year. Street checks are used to record information on the whereabouts and activities of persons of interest or known offenders, including gang members and associates, drug dealers and violent individuals.

Task Force stakeholders who commented on the issue felt that the additional police presence downtown had been effective in reducing late night disorder and should be continued. The Victoria Bar and Cabaret Association, in particular, attributed a change in behaviour downtown and in their establishments to the additional police presence. The majority of DVBA survey respondents also indicated that the additional police presence had been effective in reducing problem behaviours downtown, although approximately one-third of respondents were not aware of the initiative.

## Appendix 1

### **BARWATCH HOUSE RULES**

- No gang members or gang associates permitted in this establishment
- No gang colors, clothing, support clothing, paraphernalia, tattoos, jewelry, or any other item or items promoting gangs or gang activity
- Patrons must abide by individual house-rules and discretionary policies before, during, and upon exiting this venue
- Unlawful or uncivil behavior will not be tolerated, such behavior will result in ejection and or banning
- Intoxicated individuals trying to gain entry will be refused
- Patrons must open bags and or purses upon request for inspection before entering this establishment
- Patrons may be subject to metal detecting wands and or frisking at anytime
- Patrons shall surrender government ID for scanning and be willing to be photographed upon entry
- Jackets must be coat checked where available
- Data from security system will be accessible to police to assist in the investigation of a crime on or in relation to this property
- Police have the right to refuse entry and remove patrons from this establishment at anytime

**\*\*\*This establishment reserves the right to refuse entry and or service to any individual or group at anytime\*\*\***