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## North Enders say violent reputation 'misdirected'

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**Participants in the mayor's community meeting on violence for the Halifax peninsula say the North End is taking the blame for violence in other neighbourhoods.**

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Residents in north end Halifax say their neighbourhood isn't a violent as people think -- it just looks that way on the news.

While the 60 people at Halifax's second community meeting on violence spent most of the Thursday-night session discussing the Youth Criminal Justice Act and ways to improve policing and recreation space, the issue of image came up often.



Mayor Peter Kelly speaks with a Sackville area resident at the first community meeting on violence. Photo: Andrea Klassen

"When I say I live in the North End and I love it, people are like, 'What?'" says Kim Veino, a North End resident for 19 years. "My kids have friends now and their parents outside the city don't want them to come over because we live in the north end."

Another participant at the meeting asked the group not to focus on area when discussing violence and to avoid referring to specific neighbourhoods when reporting on crime.

Two years ago, Statistics Canada said Halifax had the highest number of violent crimes per capita in the country. The city's violent crime rate is now significantly lower, but Mayor Peter Kelly is still facing harsh criticism over his handling of crime in the city.

Citizens have expressed outrage over a number of high-profile attacks, including an Aug. 27 assault on Halifax Commons by teenage girls armed with a table leg and the murder of 28 year-old Matthew Ayer on Oct. 15. Ayer was found stabbed on Gottingen Street – not far from the Ward 5 Community Centre on Russell Street, the site of Thursday's meeting.

The mayor is trying to confront the anger with a series of six meetings scheduled around the municipality over the next two weeks. The meetings will be used as research for the Mayor's Roundtable on Violence – a three-day conference on violence and public safety scheduled for mid-November. The first meeting was held Monday at the Sackville Heights Community Centre. Residents there focused on the need for community services and activities for youth in the area. Thursday's meeting was on only one scheduled for the Halifax peninsula.

At each meeting residents are asked what problems they have with violence in the city and how they can solve them. Participants at Thursday's meeting in the Ward 5 Community Centre tackled topics such as "Drugs, Violence and Guns" and "Media — Negative Images and Perceptions."

### Central or Northern?

Veino says her neighbourhood has a reputation for violence it doesn't deserve, and the media is to



### The Mayor's Round Table on Violence, a selected chronology:

2006

- Nov. 4.: Damon Crooks, an American sailor, is murdered outside a downtown bar while trying to break up a fight.
- Nov. 9: Mayor Peter Kelly announces plans for a round table discussion on violence after a summit on violence with downtown business owners, provincial politicians and police.

2007

- Feb. 19: Criminologist Don Clairmont, Director of the Atlantic Institute of Criminology, becomes the round table co-ordinator. A research plan is announced, which includes a telephone survey of 1,200 residents, 5,000 mail-in surveys on violence in the HRM and multiple focus groups.
- Oct. 22 - Nov. 6: Six community round tables are scheduled in neighbourhoods around the municipality.
- Nov. 15 - 17: The Mayor's Round Table on Violence begins. The results of the surveys and meetings will be presented and used to plan a long-term strategy to combat violence in the municipality.

### Related Websites

- [Statistics Canada](#): Criminal victimization study, 2005
- [Halifax Regional Municipality](#): Feedback form based on questions from the community meetings
- [Safer Streets and Communities](#): A provincial taskforce set up to address violence in public safety in N.S.

blame.

"Violent, regular crime -- the drugs and stuff -- that often gets reported as North End, but it's the central area of the city and it happens there," she says. "I think we're grouped together with the crimes that happen in the central area around Uniacke Square and I hate to point to that group, but there's a reason to point."

Though Uniacke Square is only a few blocks away from the community centre, Venio doesn't see it as a part of her small, close-knit neighbourhood. She said she's sick of seeing crimes attributed to the North End when they've happened just outside the area.

Patrick Murphy, city councillor for Halifax's north end, said he's gotten phone calls and e-mails about the issue before.

"People call me up and are quite mad," he says. "With the media outlets, something happens on the Commons and they mention the north end... It does do a disservice to the community when something happens that's really outside of it and they mention the area."

### "I feel like I'm in heaven"

Peter Lavell, another longtime north end resident, doesn't think crime is on the rise in the area either. In fact, he says his neighbourhood has improved since the crack house he used to live next to shut down.

"From my perspective things look better," he says. "There was a guy killed in my driveway... Now I feel like I'm in heaven, because the crack house is gone."

But, he adds, there are still too many violent crimes in Halifax. And there are areas of the city he won't walk in at night, "particularly as a white middle class guy."



"In your opinion, what are the major challenges – in the areas of violence and public safety – in your community?" Photo: Andrea Klassen



City councillor Patrick Murphy says many of his constituents don't see Gottingen Street or the Halifax Commons as part of the North End. Photo: Andrea Klassen