



Decrease in crime shows we have less to fear

Edmonton Journal, August 6, 2010

Re: "Fifth most violent city in Canada; Western provinces record highest crime rates, StatsCan says," The Journal, July 21.

I read this article with concern. I realize the Journal has to localize the statistics to have the story appeal personally to readers, but I believe that emphasizing the overall decrease in crime -- particularly a 10-per-cent decrease in violent crime -- would have been more responsible.

Montreal Gazette chose "Canada's crime rate continues to dip," and the National Post said "Crime rate falls 17 per cent in past decade."

To your credit, in the body of the article you note that Edmonton's crime rate has decreased a substantial seven per cent in crime severity and 10 per cent in violent crime, but you go on to include the statistic that there are more murders now than in 1999. Yes, but there is nearly twice the population -- but not twice the murders, reflecting that murder rates are indeed going down.

As Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province, my concern is this: When people are fearful, they demand more "security." This usually means more surveillance.

When people are afraid they are more willing to give up privacy and other civil rights. When people are afraid, they are more suspicious of others, especially anyone who is "different."

These numbers show we have less to fear. As a country, a society, we should feel good about a 10-per-cent decrease in violent crime.

Frank Work, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Edmonton

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