

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT'S COMPREHENSIVE GUN VIOLENCE STRATEGY

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The McGuinty government is protecting Ontarians from gun and gang violence. Since 2005, the government has invested over \$68 million in new initiatives to fight gun crime.

Ontario's fight against gun crimes includes:

- Expanding the Guns and Gangs Task Force
- Hiring more police officers, more Crown attorneys, more victim services staff, and more probation and parole officers
- Opening the Operations Centre to provide coordinated investigation and prosecution of gun and gang crimes
- Opening two major crimes courts
- Expanding the OPP-led Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit.

TOUGH ON CRIME

Expanded Guns and Gangs Task Force — The task force includes police officers, Crown prosecutors and staff from the Victim/Witness Assistance Program who work together from the first day of an investigation.

Since 2005, the McGuinty government has expanded the task force to include a total of 72 Crown prosecutors working with police to investigate and prosecute gun violence at street level. This includes specially trained Crown prosecutors deployed to the province's six regions to work full-time as a resource to police and prosecutors on gun violence matters.

In addition, the government has added six new anti-gun smuggling Crowns to work with police for better coordination and collaboration in investigating and prosecuting gun-runners, smugglers and thieves.

Ontario and federal officials will also continue discussions with a view to creating teams of dedicated provincial and federal prosecutors working together to take action on gun and related drug crimes.

Operations Centre — The government has established a world class, state-of-the-art operations centre that better allows for highly coordinated investigations and prosecutions of gun and gang-related offences. The centre houses the expanded Guns and Gangs Task Force, which includes several police services including the Toronto Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, a team of specialized Crown prosecutors, support staff, probation and parole officers, and a victims' unit.

Major Crimes Courts — The province has established major crimes courts designed to increase the criminal justice system's capacity to respond to large-scale, gun and gang-related prosecutions. The first major crimes courtroom, located at 361 University Avenue in Toronto, opened in December 2006. The second, located at 2201 Finch Avenue West in Toronto, opened in October 2007. These courts are equipped with higher levels of security and are capable of dealing with complex cases involving multiple defendants. Three new judges have been appointed in anticipation of an increase in the volume of work.

No Deals for Gun Offenders — Ontario Crown prosecutors are instructed not to withdraw or plea-bargain firearms-related offences unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Crown must also seek appropriate sentences that will act as a deterrent and, in appropriate cases, consider seeking sentences higher than the mandatory minimum.

Community Impact Evidence — The Ministry of the Attorney General is implementing new and innovative ways for Crown prosecutors to seek tougher sentences by developing and presenting evidence to the court about the devastating impact of gun violence on individuals and communities.

Calling on Federal Government — Ontario led the charge for tougher gun laws, including increased mandatory minimums and reverse onus bail for gun crimes. Now that the federal parliament has responded with the passage of Bill C-2, Ontario is calling on the federal government to get more involved in fighting gun crime through:

- Tougher laws including a handgun ban
- Full federal funding of the 2,500 additional police officers promised nationwide
- Increased anti-gun smuggling security at the Canada-US border.

STRONG ENFORCEMENT

The Safer Communities — 1,000 Officers Partnership Program — This \$37.1 million program is a key part of the government's plan to foster safer and stronger communities in Ontario. Half of the 1,000 new municipal police officers are assigned to community policing, including school visits, street patrols and increased traffic enforcement. The remaining 500 new officers are assigned duties related to six priority areas:

- Guns and gangs
- Youth crime
- Organized crime and marijuana grow operations
- Dangerous offenders
- Domestic violence
- Protecting children from Internet luring and child pornography.

All 1,000 officers have been hired, trained and placed in communities across Ontario, including 250 in Toronto. Furthermore, the government is continuing to fund the \$30.7 million Community Policing Partnerships Program, which provides an additional 1,000 officers. Between these two programs, the government is investing over \$68 million in over 2,000 additional municipal officers in communities across Ontario.

On July 27, 2007, the government built on its strong anti-crime strategy by:

- Increasing the complement of OPP officers by 200 — This is the largest increase in OPP officer strength in well over a decade. The additional officers will be assigned to a number of priority areas to target criminal activity and protect Ontario citizens.
- Expanding the Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit — The addition of 50 officers in a three-phase implementation will expand the unit's ability to target domestic and international firearms trafficking, as well as to develop and coordinate intelligence-led, joint forces investigations targeting street gangs and other criminal groups with municipal, federal and American law enforcement partners. This will bring the total number of officers in the unit to 117 by September 2008.
- Enhancing the Chief Firearms Office (CFO) — This initiative will add three officers to the CFO to conduct investigations into the eligibility/suitability of certain individuals to possess firearms or a firearms license.

Funding for Policing in High-Priority Areas — In January 2006, the McGuinty government provided \$5 million to the Toronto Police Service to support its offensive against gangs in high-priority areas of the city. This effort included the establishment of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) – three rapid response teams each consisting of 18 highly trained police officers, specializing in drugs and guns interdiction to work on TAVIS.

In June 2007, the government announced a one-time payment of \$5 million to the Toronto Police Service to continue and expand the TAVIS program to the Entertainment District.

To date, Toronto police have seen tremendous results following the implementation of this program, including more than 10,804 arrests and the seizure of more than 450 guns.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Initiative — The government provided \$2 million to the Toronto Police Service to support the acquisition of 15 re-deployable camera systems to monitor high-risk crime areas. Evaluation results will be submitted to the ministry by January 2009.

Expanded guns and gangs and anti-violence intervention program — On June 6, 2007, the premier announced the government's \$12 million investment to further combat guns and gangs, organized crime and illegal drugs in Ontario, including: \$6.3 million to expand a successful guns and gangs anti-violence intervention program to Brantford, Halton, Hamilton, Niagara, Essex County, Durham, Kenora, London, Ottawa, Peel, Thunder Bay, Waterloo and York Region.

Crime Stoppers — The province has made funding for the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers permanent by investing \$200,000 annually to maintain the Crime Stoppers 24-hour, toll-free telephone tip line. In 2006, the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers received over 19,000 tips. This resulted in 3,297 arrests, the recovery of more than \$11 million in property and the seizure of close to \$200 million in illegal drugs.

Expanded OPP Asset Forfeiture Unit — This will enhance the capacity of the OPP working with municipal police to identify, locate and seize the illegal gains from criminal organizations, and seek their forfeiture through the courts.

Sheamus Murphy, Ministry of the Attorney General
Minister's Office, 416-326-1785
Brendan Crawley, Ministry of the Attorney General
Communications Branch, 416-326-2210

Laura Blondeau, Ministry of Community Safety and
Correctional Services, Minister's Office, 416-325-4973
Anthony Brown, Ministry of Community Safety and
Correctional Services Communications Branch,
416-314-7772