

A HISTORY OF COORDINATED CRIME FIGHTING

February 26, 2009

The McGuinty government and its justice partners, including police leaders, are working to keep Ontarians safe by forming a united front to combat violence. This collaboration has grown as the government and its partners build on lessons learned, and find new ways of working better together to strengthen public protection.

January 2004 – The first “**Guns and Gangs Crown**” – a Crown attorney is assigned to work directly with Toronto Police Service to provide expertise in the investigation and prosecution of guns and gang-related cases.

October 2005 – The government expands the Guns and Gangs Task Force by adding 26 experienced police officers and 32 additional Crown attorneys to work exclusively on gun and gang cases.

January 2006 – Funding for Guns and Gangs Operations Centre and TAVIS – The government announces a \$51 million strategy to combat gun crime including the addition of 31 gun and gang prosecutors, bringing the number of Crowns on the Guns and Gangs Task Force to 64, and including the establishment of major crime courtrooms and \$26 million to create a new, state-of-the-art Operations Centre for the Guns and Gangs Task Force.

This funding also included \$5 million in immediate funding for Toronto police to establish the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) as the Guns and Gangs Task Force’s “on-the-ground” presence in high-priority neighbourhoods. This funding has since grown to \$17 million to provide surveillance cameras in high-risk areas and four rapid response teams each consisting of 18 highly trained police officers, specializing in drugs and guns interdiction. These officers also make community contacts to get at-risk neighbourhoods on the right track.

As of October 31, 2008, TAVIS has seen tremendous results, including close to 13,000 arrests, the seizure of more than 600 firearms and more than 68,300 business and nearly 141,000 community contacts.

May 2006 – Provincial Expansion of Guns and Gangs Task Force – The government announces the deployment of specialized anti-gun and gang Crowns to all six regions in the province. An Information Technology Crown prosecutor and Crown policy specialist are also appointed to support gun and gang-related prosecutions province-wide.

September 2006 – Inter-provincial Organized Justice Agreement – The Attorneys General of Québec, Ontario and Manitoba announce the signing of an inter-provincial agreement to combat organized crime through better sharing of prosecutorial expertise. Justice officials from the three provinces agree to hold annual forums to share successes and lessons learned based on major prosecutions.

December 2006 – Major Crime Courts – The first major crime court is unveiled at 361 University Avenue in Toronto, including extra security measures, a prisoner box that can

accommodate multiple accused and larger jury boxes. A second major crime court at 2201 Finch Avenue West in Toronto begins operating in late 2007.

February 2007 – Opening of the Guns and Gangs Operations Centre – The Centre begins operating at an undisclosed location in the Greater Toronto Area. It houses approximately 270 full-time dedicated staff including police, Crown prosecutors, victim and witness support workers, and probation and parole officers. The Centre is the first of its kind in Canada and is equipped with the latest technology in forensic testing.

This cooperative crime-fighting model cuts the time needed to investigate, find, charge and prosecute those responsible for gun and gang related crime - in one case, collaboration resulted in an extensive wiretap application being prepared in a quarter of the time.

To date, Guns and Gangs Task Force Crowns have been involved in 11 major crime prosecutions involving over 450 arrests and over 3,500 charges laid.

June 2007 – Expanded Guns and Gangs and Anti-Violence Intervention Program – The government announces \$12 million in funding to further combat guns and gangs, organized crime and illegal drugs in Ontario, including \$6.3 million to expand the guns and gangs Provincial Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (PAVIS) program to several communities outside of Toronto.

July 2007 – Anti-Gun Smuggling Investments – The government announces funding for 200 new OPP officers, including 53 officers for the OPP-led Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit (PWEU) dedicated to combating illegal guns, and six new anti-gun smuggling Crown attorneys to better track, investigate and stem the flow of handguns and restricted guns across the province.

In 2008 PWEU seized 659 weapons and laid 1,037 weapons-related charges province-wide.

June 2008 – Justice on Target – The government announces a four-year *Justice on Target* strategy to further improve public safety by building on the model of collaboration to ensure justice participants work together to make the most effective use of justice system resources. The strategy includes a target to reduce time to trial and number of appearances by 30 per cent, by:

- Focusing more justice system resources on the most serious and violent cases, particularly those involving repeat violent offenders
- Minimizing the risk of charges being stayed due to delay
- Reducing the time spent by police officers in court and increasing their time on the streets, keeping our communities safe.

Progress is being measured and reported online at <http://www.ontario.ca/justiceontarget>.

September 2008 – Inter-provincial Justice Effectiveness Agreement – Ontario's *Justice on Target* strategy fuels a joint effort to help strengthen criminal justice systems across Canada. At a meeting of federal/provincial/territorial justice ministers in Québec City, Attorneys General commit to share information and best practices based on their own experiences in administering criminal justice.

November 2008 – Major Case Advisory Crowns – The government announces Major Case Crown attorneys to be embedded in police stations, an innovative model of police-prosecution collaboration that focuses on the pre-charge advisory stage of large and complex cases, starting in Toronto, Peel Region, Niagara Region, Ottawa, and Windsor.

November 2008 – Exit Point Task Force – The government announces specialized senior Crown attorneys who will provide advice to Crown prosecutors across Ontario at the main “exit points” of the justice system – bail, sentencing, and post-sentence, and to help ensure additional support is provided at every stage to keep repeat violent offenders off our streets.

A working group involving representatives from eight police agencies and officials from the Ministries of the Attorney General and Community Safety and Correctional Services has begun meeting regularly to find additional ways to address the issue of repeat violent offenders.

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