



Date: Saturday February 14, 2009

Event: Gangs and Guns Announcement in Kelowna

Check Against Delivery

- Thank you all for being with us today.
- I'd like to begin by thanking the mayor, and the police leaders who've taken time to join us.
- You are the front line in keeping our streets safe and, in many ways, defending the quality of life we expect in British Columbia.
- That includes the freedom to go about our daily lives.
- Everyone here is aware of the top reasons why we are here today.
- They've been in headlines and photos, and on all of our minds:
- The innocent victims of gang violence, and the families they've left behind.
- The circumstances behind their suffering are totally unacceptable anywhere in our Province.
- And that's why our government has stated a clear vision and an urgent call to action – for our government, for Ottawa, for police, and for each of us:
- No more gangs. No more gunplay. No more innocent victims.
- The sweeping plan Premier Campbell announced yesterday isn't about displacing gang violence from the Lower Mainland.
- It's about going after gangs wherever they congregate or try to set up shop in B.C.
- It's about seizing illegal guns and putting violent criminals away.
- A critical component of our plan is adding 168 new officers over the next two years.

- This will nearly double our police who are focused on gangs and gang violence in British Columbia.
- Today, we are announcing that 16 of those new officers will be based right here in Kelowna.
- This is an integrated unit – which means some RCMP officers will be recruited locally, but others could bring expertise from B.C.’s independent municipal departments.
- The new unit’s mandate: to fight gang violence and organized crime in the Kelowna area.
- The team will also augment local police efforts to deal with the related drug activity that drives these violent criminals.
- This local unit is just part of a seven-point plan the Premier has announced.
- That plan includes:
 - More police officers
 - More prosecutors
 - More jails and secure courts
 - Tougher laws
 - A crackdown on illegal guns
 - Outlawing armoured vehicles and body armour, and
 - A new gang hotline and tipster rewards program.
- Your police and my MLA colleagues have told me what you’re dealing with here.
- I know that unfortunately, like the Lower Mainland and Prince George, you’ve seen growing gang and drug violence in your own home town.
- It is frightening, outrageous, and completely unacceptable.
- Sadly, with these brazen acts of violence come innocent victims – and we are reaffirming with our new plan, resources and strategies that we won’t tolerate it any more.
- We have also released an independent report that I commissioned to look into the illegal movement of guns in British Columbia.
- Further to that report and its recommendations, we are taking immediate action on many fronts:
 - We are establishing a new provincial weapons enforcement unit that will take an aggressive approach to investigating crimes involving illegal guns.
 - We want a transfer of responsibility for administering the Canadian firearms program from the federal government to the Province.

- We are demanding that the Chief Firearms Officer immediately review its current licensing, auditing and inspection procedures.
- This officer has a critical role to play, as it currently issues large numbers of single, multi-purpose business licences, especially in relation to theatrical or prop-master licences.
- I want to be clear that we are NOT after legally registered firearms.
- But we do want to limit firearms trafficking and we believe restrictions are needed on the number of licences granted for one particular activity – businesses supplying firearms for movie industry use.
- I have long recognized the critical importance of Ottawa’s role in dealing with gangs and illegal guns.
- We have worked with our federal counterparts and colleagues on many of the matters in our plan.
- Matters that we don’t control in Victoria:
 - Criminal Code changes, equitable federal resources, and greater provincial control over unique illegal gun issues facing our province.
 - To this end, the Attorney General and I will travel to Ottawa to lobby for many of the urgent matters we’ve identified in our plan.
- Thank you all again for joining us, and for your interest in a safer British Columbia, now and in the future.