



**Date: Saturday February 14, 2009**

**Event: Gangs and Guns Announcement in Prince George**

---

***Check Against Delivery***

---

- Thank you all for coming today.
- I'd like to begin by thanking Mayor Dan Rogers, Superintendent Brenda Butterworth-Carr and police leaders who've taken time to join us.
- I am also pleased to say that they are all here to champion the safety of our streets and our community.
- If I could list all the reasons we are here, that list would begin with the names of innocent victims, and of the families they left behind...
- And it would end with a vision and a call to action – for our government, for Ottawa, for police, for each of us and for the quality of life we expect in British Columbia:
- No more gangs. No more gunshots. No more innocent victims.
- Yesterday Premier Campbell announced a sweeping plan to rid our cities of gang violence.
- A vital component of that plan is adding 168 new officers over the next two years, to nearly double the number of police officers who are focused on gangs and gun violence in British Columbia.
- Today, we are announcing that 16 of those new officers will be based right here in Prince George.
- This is an integrated unit – that means some RCMP officers will be recruited locally, but could also come from independent municipal departments.
- The unit in Prince George will be an integral part of the provincial team.
- Its mandate: to fight gang violence and organized crime, here and in northern B.C.

- The team will also augment local police efforts to deal with the related drug activity that drives these violent criminals.
- This unit is part of a seven-point plan the Premier has announced that 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 want to especially acknowledge Deputy Premier Shirley Bond: it's because of her efforts and her diligence in pursuing the gun violence issue with me that we are here today.
- I know that unfortunately, 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 and illegal use 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 to prevent the issuance of 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.
- And when I talk to people in Ottawa, I will tell them that residents of Prince George have put up with enough.
- This is a community with strong values, a place where safety for all residents is of paramount importance.
- This is a community where people support their police and crime prevention programs.
- This is a community that has pulled together over this problem. And together we will put an end to the violence.
- Thank you all again for joining us, and for your interest in a safer British Columbia, now and in the future.