



Remarks for press conference

On

Tackling Gangs

at

BC Association of Chief of Police

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Victoria, BC

BY

**Deputy Director General Steven Chabot
President
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police**

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Good morning Minister, Chiefs of Police, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to offer the voice and support of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to the fight against the growth and proliferation of street gangs.

First and most importantly allow me to offer my condolences and sympathies to those British Columbians who have so tragically and directly been touched by gang violence.

To the families of those victims I offer the thoughts and support of all of my fellow police leaders across Canada and give them our assurance that we, like the government of British Columbia, are taking action.

The CACP was formed in 1905 and is known today as the trusted voice of policing and community safety.

Our membership includes police who serve in federal, provincial, regional, First Nations, municipal and military police agencies. As well, our members include representatives from the corporate security and technology sectors and other agencies active in criminal justice.

We are unique in bringing together police chiefs and senior executives from all jurisdictions so that they can speak with one voice on national issues such as the reform of criminal justice.

The matter of street gangs is not a new issue for the CACP. Our committees such as the Law Amendments, Crime Prevention and Organized Crime Committees

have been working tirelessly over the years educating the public and all levels of government and pushing for solutions. That is why I am so pleased to stand before you today and wholeheartedly support the government of British Columbia and Minister Van Dongens plan to help us tackle street gangs and the damage they bring to our society.

In October of 2007, the CACP sponsored the “International Congress on Street Gangs” in Montreal. That very successful event brought together criminal justice partners, academics, service providers and community members to share knowledge and look for solutions.

From that Congress came an understanding that the response to gang violence starts in the homes where street gang members grow up. It comes in the culture that pulls our young people into a lifestyle of drugs and violence. We learned that the reasons, causes and the solutions are complex and many.

We need strong legislative measures, rigorous investigations and enforcement, timely prosecutions and effective corrections. This is our immediate response and we must respond this way to the threat posed by gangs in our communities.

We also know that in order to stem the growth in the longer term, we must look equally at prevention and re-integration into mainstream society of those young persons who have selected to live the gang lifestyle. Experts have clearly identified some of the risk factors that lead people to join gangs. Poor parenting, low school achievement, cultural norms and a lack of

access to recreation and jobs are real factors that our governments and communities need to address if we are to prevent the proliferation of gangs and the violence they bring to our communities.

Yet a critical part of tackling gang violence is an effective and efficient criminal justice system. As the national voice for policing in Canada, the CACP advocates continuously before the federal government for meaningful reform to our laws. We advocate for the effective legal tools that the police need to keep Canadians safe and secure. We are very pleased therefore to see that British Columbia's strong voice will be heard on the need to update our laws concerning electronic surveillance, disclosure and illegal firearms to name a few. Permit me to focus on two of these for a moment.

Our laws concerning electronic surveillance were written in 1974. Criminals now have Blackberries, the Internet and cell-phones which did not exist at the time that part of the criminal law was written. For well over ten years now the CACP has urged the federal government to act through a succession of federal Ministers of Justice. This is our top legislative reform priority.

The legislation is ready to go, the consultations with stakeholders have taken place and there is almost universal understanding that this is a crucial area of the law in need of updating. Indeed almost all of our international partners updated their laws years ago. What is required now is for the government of Canada to act; to do so decisively and to do so quickly.

Another area of focus for the CACP is the area of reform of the law of Disclosure. I had the pleasure very recently to attend an important meeting in Vancouver with top criminal justice officials from the police to the prosecution to the judiciary. Without exception all agreed that reform to the law surrounding disclosure is critical to preventing the erosion of confidence in the criminal justice system. Endless hours of police officers, judges and court official's time tied up on endless motions for disclosure of documents and the inconsistent way the law is applied across this country all point to the critical need for reform. It has become a costly drain on police resources. Those resources are needed on the street.

In the interests of time I will not refer to the other legal reforms and initiatives outlined in the BC governments plan on Tackling Gangs other than to say that all of these are equally long standing matters of importance to the CACP. I therefore applaud you and your colleagues Minister for making these matters your priority. Let me assure you that they are also our priority. The CACP will continue to work with the provincial Chiefs associations including the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police to move these matters forward in the interests of the safety of all Canadians.

Thank-you.