

Justice and Public Safety Roundtable
Wednesday February 17th 2010
Cobourg Police Station
Noon to 1:45pm

Chair: Rick Norlock, MP, Minister for Justice Rob Nicholson

Opening remarks from Rick Norlock following an introduction by attendees.

Minister Nicholson brings opening remarks; the justice agenda is a priority with the current government. Additionally, these roundtables provide Rick Norlock with authority when addressing these issues (public safety, crime and justice) in government. Key issues our Government is focussed on include; identity theft; raising the age of consent to 16; 3 for 1 time, no reduction in time served for delay, making Canadian laws reflective of new technology; and provisions for auto theft.

Phil Pike, Northumberland O.P.P.:

Officers are noticing that a number of impaired drivers are not being dealt with the way expected. Impaired driving charges have been replaced as Careless Driving by the Crown or Prosecutor; perhaps because of costs incurred for trial.

David Keast, Trent Hills Police Service Board:

In the case of 'Grow Operations' those charged often receive limited punishment (short period of incarceration) and are easily/quickly replaced within that criminal organization. Considerations should be made for applicants of Canadian citizenship that break Canadian laws, this should invalidate application process.

Jim Benham, Alnwick/Haldimand Community Policing:

The Government must maintain strict screening process for all immigration applications despite pressure to fast track any applications. Also, mandatory minimum sentences are integral to apprehend criminals that are transferred between Federal and Provincial authorities/institutions.

Ken Rose, Quinte West Police Services Board:

Sentencing for drug crimes and first degree murder is not strict enough; despite a reduction of crime statistics in Quinte West drug crimes continue to be a concern. This was discussed further by the group; there is no longer a multiple discount for criminals that commit multiple murders. Finally, security/surveillance camera footage is a great resource in apprehending criminals, particularly when shared between detachments. This was also discussed further by the group; one initiative our Government has financed is with Interpol, in an effort to quickly apprehend international criminals when there is an increase in the use and quality of technology.

Brian Ostrander:

Restorative justice programs are often ineffective when apprehending youth as they can choose not to participate. This was discussed further by Minister Nicholson who discerned that provisions will be

brought forward to give Judges more power to act when dealing with these small groups of 'out of control' youth.

Jack Cooke, Crime Stoppers:

The proceeds (or a portion) gained by police forces from crime, through convictions and charges, should be used at a local level. Crime Stoppers in particular helps to keep down policing costs yet gets no federal funding.

Greg Kay, Lawyer and N.L.A:

Advances in technology have drastically changed the face of crime in the last 10-20 years. The Criminal Code must keep pace with technological advancements; it takes month to adjust Canadian law whereas technology can change on a regular basis. Minister Nicholson referenced legislation associated with child pornography; in the early 1990's possession of this material on a computer became a crime, rather than the exchange of capital. Minister Nicholson has also introduced a PMB that would require ISP's to provide information regarding the possession of pornographic material, to local authorities.

Jim Hunt, Lawyer:

Reiterated the importance of; the criminal code keeping pace with technological advances and; the proceeds of crime should be used specifically for criminal justice.

Nicola Crow, Rebound Child & Youth Services Northumberland:

When dealing with youth crime and justice, prevention of future crimes by avoiding further alienation from society should be considered. There are a number of issues to be taken into account (family relations, socio-economic status, mental health etc.) that contribute to youth being in conflict with the law. Preventative approaches and opportunities need to be implemented. Consideration for federal jurisdiction offences to be capable for diversion to Youth Justice Committees which provide youth with the opportunity to address the harm they commit against communities.

Terry Demill, Cobourg Police:

Police officers feel disenfranchised when their legwork is not supported by the court system. Too often statements are not used, and in the case of impaired driving charges, they are often knocked down to careless driving, a charge that could easily be handed out at the scene if officers felt necessary.

Dave Cromlish, Cobourg Police:

Sentencing for first degree premeditated murder has been watered down; the 'Faint Hope Clause' needs to be examined. Minister Nicholson further discussed technical changes that will be made for those eligible for 'Faint Hope' that would require the individual to apply within 90 days of the 15 year time served, and again 90 days after 20 years time served.

Paul Sweet, Chief of Police, Cobourg Police:

Crime can be discouraged by taking away the ability for a person to profit; Internet crime is one area that should be looked at closely. Also, in Northumberland the illegal use and sale of prescription drugs is

an increasing concern, in particular Oxycontin. This drug abuse is not limited to a particular age group, and the drug is very easy to obtain. There needs to be more cooperation between health agencies and hospitals to raise awareness of this drug abuse. Finally, Bills C-46, and C-47 are important to considerations for updating the Criminal Code, they concern technical issues that are priorities of Canadian Police Chief Association.

Follow-up Comments

Joe McNutt, Cramahe Community Policing:

Reiteration of the difficulty for police officers today in giving impaired driving charges supported by the court system. Furthermore, impaired driving considers drug as well as alcohol abuse, yet no formal testing exists to assess an individual's use of illegal drugs when an officer is operating a ride program. Even if a system for testing existed there is no corresponding legislation setting guidelines for limits to use of drugs (ex. What amount of T.H.C is too much or not enough to warrant a charge?) There are recommendations by some police agencies to reduce the alcohol limit from .08 to .05, however we need to clean up the system we already have for impaired driving before introducing new limits to alcohol.

Ken Rose, Quinte West Police Services Board:

Community policing work in 2009 replaced the work of three police officers, support of our community policing network is necessary. In situations where a criminal is caught in the act of a 'Break and Enter', too often the court sentence does not reflect the severity of the crime. When the court system does not support the work of officers, they become disheartened with the work they do.

Phil Pike, Northumberland O.P.P.:

Cases of domestic abuse are dealt with at Northumberland O.P.P detachment on an almost daily basis, legislation requiring mandatory sentencing in the case of repeat domestic violence cases should be considered.

Not Attributed:

Additional to the comments on domestic abuse, the group also discussed that Northumberland Services for Women is best placed to help women in a domestic violence situation, and that women need to consider advocating to the public (through the media) on behalf of themselves.

Jim Benham, Alnwick/Haldimand Community Policing:

In the case of terrorism, the potential for the damage that terrorists intend to incur should be taken into consideration during sentencing.