

February 17, 2004

MEMORANDUM

To: Policy & Finance Committee

From: Mayor David Miller

Re: Community Safety Plan

In recent months Toronto communities have experienced a disturbing number of shooting deaths and other crimes involving guns. Many of these incidents have involved young people. The Listening to Toronto consultations confirmed that people generally feel that Toronto is a safe city. It was also clear that community safety is an issue that troubles many Toronto residents. Even though overall crime has actually decreased in many areas, we cannot ignore the tragic loss of life and serious injury that has resulted from the increased prevalence of guns in our city.

The Toronto Police Service is dedicated to keeping our streets safe, to stopping the illegal importation and use of guns, stemming from the drug trade and the violence which is associated with it, improving public cooperation with criminal investigations and protecting all residents, including those most at risk of being victims or becoming involved in illegal activities. The Service needs and deserves our full support in its efforts.

There is, however, much more that must be done. The Mayor and Council must take decisive action to address the violence, and every resident of Toronto must become an active partner in stemming the violence and increasing the peace.

The causes of crime are a complex mix of social and economic factors. Thus, solutions must also be multi-faceted. To be successful, the City's approach to improving community safety must balance enforcement with prevention. The central role of the Toronto Police Service in enforcing the law must be complemented by an effective blend of programs and services – particularly for youth who live in at-risk neighbourhoods.

An effective strategy must build on the strengths in our neighbourhoods, and must engage parents, agencies and youth in determining the fate and future of our communities. The strategy must acknowledge that there are no quick fixes and no 'one size fits all' solutions. The plan must recognize the need to address all forms of public violence, but must focus on immediate, short and long-term initiatives that address immediate concerns – the recent increase in gun violence and incidents of violence where young people are involved.

Finally the plan must recognize that significantly increasing economic opportunities for young people is critical to the success of any strategy. At a recent public meeting in Malvern, a youth was quoted as saying, "It's easier to get a gun than a job". This must be a wake-up call for Council and for the public, private, and voluntary sectors to act on employment opportunities and program initiatives.

In preparing this plan, I and my staff have met with and drawn on the experience and expertise of front line city staff, police officers, community leaders, youth, residents in at-risk neighbourhoods, business owners and community agencies. We have been in contact with other levels of government and other jurisdictions from whose experience we can learn. We have met with a number of Councillors and endeavoured to incorporate their recommendations into the overall plan.

Community Safety Plan

I am therefore proposing a Community Safety Plan and requesting that City Council, through the 2004 budget process, approve the resources needed to put it into motion.

The Community Safety Plan is a package of prevention initiatives that will act as a catalyst for civic action to improve public safety and will build on existing strengths in our communities. We will:

- Establish a Mayor's Panel on Community Safety
- Establish a Community Safety Secretariat
- Develop neighbourhood action plans for key at-risk communities
- Target programs and services to designated at-risk neighbourhoods
- Fast track the development of innovative programs to combat gun use and gang involvement
- Engage the corporate sector in developing additional employment opportunities
- Advocate with senior orders of government regarding required legislation
- Expand the Community Crisis Response program
- Engage Councillors in developing or expanding community safety initiatives in their wards

Mayor's Panel on Community Safety

This advisory group will bring together civic and community leaders to focus on solutions to gun related violence, with a particular focus on youth. The Panel will be chaired by Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. Members will include the Mayor, two City Councillors, the Attorney General of Ontario, the provincial Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, members of the judiciary, chairs of both school boards, as well as representatives of youth, business, labour, the media and other individuals with extensive experience and expertise in the field. The work of the Panel will include:

a) providing expert, informed guidance to the City and other orders of government on how to enhance community safety and effectively coordinate their enforcement and prevention initiatives;
advising on the development of Neighbourhood Action Plans to ensure that resources for prevention programs and services are directed to the neighbourhoods most at risk for crime and violence, and seek public and private partnerships and funding sources for programs in conjunction with designated neighbourhoods, developing success measures to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and recommend successful models that could be introduced into other neighbourhoods and communities

The Panel will ensure active participation by Toronto's communities and residents in developing appropriate solutions and contributing to their success, in partnership with the public, private and community-based sectors. It will also recognize the critical role and encourage the active participation of the faith communities.

Community Safety Secretariat

The Secretariat, located within Community and Neighbourhood Services, will support the work of the Mayor's Panel on Community Safety and City Council, co-ordinate the initiatives it recommends and co-ordinate the components of the overall Community Safety Plan.

The Secretariat will, in collaboration with residents and local agencies, develop and implement neighbourhood action plans in identified at-risk neighbourhoods. The Secretariat will also share information with Councillors as the City develops neighbourhood specific initiatives.

The Mayor will request that the Toronto Police Service designate a senior officer to act as an ongoing liaison to the Secretariat.

Specific functions of the Secretariat would include:

working with City departments, agencies boards and commissions to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for programs and services in at-risk communities and that those services are provided in a co-ordinated, effective manner, and to identify employment, job training and or internship opportunities for youth;

develop neighbourhood action plans, in collaboration with residents, community leaders and local agencies (see #3 below)

building productive relationships with community agencies, ethno-racial groups, businesses, faith groups, service clubs and other organizations to collaboratively address community safety issues;

facilitating ongoing community dialogue, input and reporting out on the progress the City is making on community safety.

linking with other levels of government and jurisdictions on community safety issues, such as the FCM Standing Committee on Crime Prevention, the National Crime Prevention Centre and the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime

Develop neighbourhood actions plans for key at-risk communities

The Listening to Toronto sessions sent several clear messages to Council, one of which was “spend for impact”. In keeping with this recommendation, specific neighbourhoods have been identified as at-risk, requiring focussed attention and targeting of resources. The neighbourhoods identified are strong, resilient communities where residents and community groups are actively working to improve the quality of life in the area. Residents are proud of their community, however a recent increase in gun-related incidents, has adversely affected their sense of safety and the community’s image.

To assist these communities, neighbourhood action plans will be developed in collaboration with residents, community leaders and local agencies. The action plans will include targeted programs and services, innovative programs to combat gun and gang involvement and specific initiatives to increase economic opportunities. The first designated neighbourhood will be Malvern in Scarborough, followed by Jamestown in Etobicoke and Jane-Finch in North York.

Targeted City programs and services in designated at-risk neighbourhoods

The targeted programs and services will support existing community based initiatives and will build on the pride, resilience and commitment of residents to improve the image and quality of life in these communities. The initiatives will include:

targeted implementation of some of the programs funded through the Ontario Works Incentives, e.g. “Youth Cents”, Youth Safety Community Forums, etc.

developing job placement, private sector training partnership and training programs that provide marketable job skills to youth who are out of school and out of work; and

increasing co-ordination of outreach workers and service planning

encouraging private sector investment in these neighbourhoods

Innovative City programs to combat gun and gang involvement

a case management approach to enable individual youth to disengage from gang activity. Supports might include income maintenance, skills training, housing re-location, educational alternatives, counselling and court liaison, and

a comprehensive system of referral and diversion programs as envisioned in the Youth Criminal Justice Act, drawing on the experience of the Youth Referral Program and youth justice council.

Develop employment opportunities

The Secretariat will engage business – both small and large – to help develop employment, internship, and training opportunities for young people living in at-risk neighbourhoods.

Advocate with senior orders of government

The Mayor will convene a meeting with the provincial Attorney General and Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and the federal Minister of Justice to discuss gun control, a gun amnesty and the enactment and endorsement of legislation and sentencing provisions which would deter the importation, possession and use of illegal firearms. The meeting will include Councillors, the Chief of Police and other relevant federal and provincial Ministers.

Community Crisis Response program

This program will be expanded to work with community organizations to provide immediate assistance to neighbourhoods coping with violent crimes and other traumatic occurrences and to support longer-term community development. A Community Crisis Fund will be available to support neighbourhood response initiatives.

Ward Specific Community Safety Initiatives

Many Councillors already have developed innovative community safety initiatives, in conjunction with residents, local police divisions and community organizations. Other Councillors are interested in developing similar programs. The Secretariat would provide support to Councillors by providing information on community safety models, and advice on available resources. The Mayor will request that the Toronto Police Service assign a police officer from each division to assist local Councillors in the development and/or expansion of community safety programs.

Recommendations

Specifically, I am recommending that:
City Council adopt the proposed Community Safety Plan;

The Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services be directed to report to Budget Advisory Committee, as part of the 2004 budget process, to establish the Community Safety Secretariat and related programs.

Mayor David Miller

Attachment

Executive Summary

Mayor's Report to Policy and Finance Committee – Community Safety Plan

Following January's Policy and Finance Committee meeting, at which the Mayor's office assumed direction of the work of the Community Safety Task Force, the Mayor set out to prepare a plan to address current safety and crime issues in the city.

The Mayor will ask Council to invest strategically in key communities and neighbourhoods that are seen to be "at-risk", and to ensure that the City's approach to improving community safety is driven by a balance of prevention and enforcement.

The Mayor's Community Safety Plan includes:

Establishment of a Mayor's Advisory Panel on Community Safety, to be chaired by Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. The advisory panel will include the provincial Attorney General and Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, members of City Council, civic and community leaders with relevant experience, who will focus on solutions to gun-related violence.

Establishment of a Community Safety Secretariat, to be located within Community and Neighbourhood Services. The secretariat will ensure a coordinated approach to safety and anti-crime work involving the City of Toronto. The Mayor will request that the Toronto Police Service designate a senior officer to act as an ongoing liaison to the Secretariat.

Development of neighbourhood action plans in consultation with residents, community leaders and local agencies. This will be one of the key functions of the secretariat. Coordinated action

plans will allow the City to use its resources in the most needed areas and in the most effective ways.

Targeting City of Toronto programs and services to key at-risk communities.

Development of innovative programs to combat gun use and gang involvement.

Engaging the corporate sector in creation of job opportunities

Advocating with senior orders of government for legislative change, on issues such as gun control and sentencing.

Expansion of the City's Community Crisis Response Program

Engaging City Councillors in developing or expanding community safety initiatives in their wards. The Mayor will ask the Toronto Police Service to assign a police officer from each division to assist Councillors with these initiatives.

The Mayor's Report to Policy and Finance Committee recommends that City Council adopts the proposed Community Safety Plan, and that the Commissioner of Community and Neighbourhood Services be directed to report to Budget Advisory Committee, as part of the 2004 budget process, to establish the secretariat and related programs.