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Toronto Implements Month-long Gun Amnesty

[Critics Say Gun Violence Needs More than 'Band-aid' Solution](#)

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Earlier this month, Toronto police chief Bill Blair announced a new gun amnesty that will run until the end of November. The plan is part of an effort to address the gun violence that has shaken the city and left 44 dead this year. Under the amnesty, anyone who turns in a gun will not be charged with gun possession.

But critics doubt that the amnesty will achieve the desired effect in deterring the escalating gun violence in Toronto, and suggest that the program may just be another band-aid solution to a greater social problem.

"I'll be surprised if they get any guns in this areas" commented Mark DeZilva, the community coordinator for the website [Jane-Finch.com](#). Jane-Finch is a high poverty and crime area in the city where a number of recent shooting have occurred.

According to DeZilva, what we really need are more programs to keep the kids off the street and keep them busy. He complained that there is not enough money to start programs for youths and keep them going.

"I see no impact from the gun amnesty. I see it as a great way for the police force to look great in front of the community...we are looking for long-term solutions, not band-aid solutions" said DeZilva.

"Guns have always been there, but now there is more free time for youths to do things" commented a social worker in community development specializing in youth programs.

Recent funding cut-backs to education, community centres, recreational programs and organisations that serve youths had resulted in more youths being out on the street and turning to gangs, rather than participating in extra-curricular activities.

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According to Ontario Attorney General Michael Bryant, the recent shootings in Toronto had left a “blanket of fear” over the city. To fight against this situation, the Ontario Attorney General had expanded the Toronto Guns and Gangs Tasks Force to include more crown persecutors and police officers. 1000 more police officers will be hired for community policing and to service the six high priority areas, which includes guns and gangs. Furthermore, a new law will require public hospital to report a patient with gunshot wounds.

On Wednesday, the federal government also rolled out plans to quell gun and gang violence through a number of initiatives that range from amending the criminal code to prescribe harsher punishment to repeat offenders, to pouring money into funding to try to address social problems at the root.

"Violent gun crime and gangsterism is not something we can accept nor something any community in Canada should be asked to endure," said Prime Minister Paul Martin. "The Government's approach recognizes the complexity of these issues. Shortly, the Minister of Justice will be announcing changes to the Criminal Code to increase mandatory minimum sentences for certain firearms-related offences. In addition, the Government, in consultation with the provinces, will report back on every possible option to address the supply of illegal weapons and ammunition."

The federal government's new plan takes a three-pronged approach at addressing gun violence. One is to implement tougher sentencing and increase mandatory minimum jail terms for offenders. The second is the creation of a new \$50 million "Gun Violence and Gang Prevention Fund." Over the next five years, the fund will work to prevent youths from entering gangs (and assist them in getting out of the gang environment) through community-based intervention and prevention projects in Canada's urban centers.

Finally, the federal government will also create new funding initiatives to support communities at risk by helping young people to find jobs and participate in extra-curricular activities.

As for Toronto's gun amnesty, the Toronto Police plan to issue an update on Friday on the program's progress and report on how many guns have been turned in so far.

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