

Student Essay on Bring on the Gangbusters

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Essay

Michael Bryant has signaled he plans to be an activist attorney-general with the announcement of a multi-pronged strategy to battle guns and gangs in Toronto.

Bryant wants the province to work in co-operation with Toronto Police to set up an elite "gangbuster" squad of police and Crown attorneys working as a team, with streamlined tools to investigate, infiltrate and get search warrants and wiretaps to break up gangs. His reasoning is that because gangs are getting better organized, the good guys better get their act together, too.

Any crackdown on crime that features more planning, less talk, is welcome in Toronto, where police estimate 28 of the 65 murders in the city last year were gang related.

Bryant's plan also calls for tougher prosecution, asking the federal government to beef up sentencing provisions if necessary to cut down on revolving-door criminals.

We hope Bryant will also look at "nip-it-in-the-bud" strategies used successfully in the United States, England and elsewhere. Experience in other jurisdictions shows that to really make a dent in gangs, you need preventive programs in schools that target children with anti-gang messages and teach them techniques to avoid revenge-driven violence.

Curiously, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino and then Tory premier Mike Harris made a similar pitch three years ago to crack down on gangs. Whatever happened to Fantino's plan then to deploy more officers to deal with gangs and guns"

Still, it is encouraging that there might at last be a plan to deal with the violent gangs that are prevalent in some parts of our community. Better police strategies than we have seen to date are clearly needed. Too much time has already been wasted in dealing with gangs that are gaining strong toeholds in our city.