

Letter to the Editor

Crime: A Problem
Liberals Won't Address

Over the last year, as P.C. Critic for the Ministry of the Solicitor General, I have been very concerned about the high levels of violent crime in Ontario and the devastating effects it has on the people of this province.

I have been particularly interested in issues such as the release of dangerous psychiatric patients on Warrants, the declining support for our police by the Liberal government, the disturbing presence of drug abuse and drug related crimes and the increased incidence of, and viciousness by, youth street gangs.

In each of these areas, I believe the government has failed to show the courage and

leadership necessary in a contemporary, growing province. I have questioned the Solicitor General about these and other problems that the government has refused to address.

I am appalled by the odd attitude of the Solicitor General regarding law enforcement in Ontario. Consistently, she has failed to support police officers across this province for the effective job they do for us on a daily basis. On a number of occasions, police officers have been injured or wounded while on duty and it has been the Progressive Conservative party, rather than the Solicitor General or any member of the Liberal government, who has risen in the House to acknowledge and applaud these life-threatening efforts.

The recent prominence of vicious street gangs in Metro Toronto provides an illustrative example of the problems police face in the administration of justice in Ontario. While the number of murder convictions in Toronto declined from 58 to 51 between 1987 and 1988, other convictions, such as assault, robbery and weapons possession, increased dramatically.

In this environment, police clearly need increased support from the Ontario government. However, that support has been slow to arrive and, as a result, many people in Ontario - particularly Metro Toronto - needlessly live in fear, while the Solicitor General refuses to provide adequate moral or financial support for our police. While changes in the Young Offenders' Act would

certainly make violent young people more accountable for their actions, legal reforms are not enough. The Liberal government must regain the respect of the police after months of treating them like second class citizens.

In a civilized society, criminals must be punished and lawlessness and intimidation cannot be ignored. Police are doing their best to protect the law abiding citizens of Ontario. The time has come for the government to support them in these efforts, rather than leaving them, and the people of this province, in an intolerable state of insecurity and uncertainty.

Yours Sincerely,
Bob Runciman, M.P.P.
P.C. Critic for the Ministry of the Solicitor General



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