

Ontario's Support For Aboriginal Policing

June 3, 2009

In November 2003, the McGuinty government appointed Justice Sidney Linden to lead an independent public inquiry into the events surrounding the death of Anthony O'Brien (Dudley) George in 1995. The government also asked Justice Linden to make recommendations to help avoid violence in similar circumstances. On May 31, 2007, Justice Linden published his report and recommendations. Guided by these recommendations, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are working in close partnership with First Nations leadership in Ontario to ensure high-quality sustainable police services that meet the needs of First Nation communities in the province.

Sustainable First Nations Policing

In response to the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry, the government committed to engaging with First Nations partners to achieve sustainable and high-quality policing for First Nation communities in Ontario.

- In December 2007, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (MAA), with First Nations leadership in Ontario, established the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee (IIPAC) to work collaboratively to prioritize and implement the recommendations of the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry.
- MCSCS is represented at IIPAC and is working closely with First Nations leadership and MAA to develop a sustainable approach to First Nations policing based on Justice Linden's recommendations.

Aboriginal Policing Initiatives

In his report, Justice Linden characterized OPP Aboriginal policing initiatives as "impressive in their breadth and depth." The OPP has continued to build on its progress, building strong relationships with Aboriginal communities, and minimizing the risk of violence while preserving public order during Aboriginal occupations and disputes.

- The OPP Framework for Police Preparedness to Aboriginal Critical Incidents. The framework recognizes the unique historical and cultural characteristics of Aboriginal occupations and protests and promotes strategies that minimize the use of force required to maintain public order.
- In 2007, the OPP established the Aboriginal Policing Bureau. The bureau brought together several existing OPP units and initiatives to provide a day-to-day focus on Aboriginal issues and to expand OPP capacity to support more consistent and effective policing services within First Nation communities.

- Since 2007, the OPP has added 31 new full-time positions dedicated to Aboriginal policing units and initiatives.
- Ontario will fund 40 additional officers for First Nations police services through the federal Police Officers Recruitment Fund.
- The OPP Aboriginal Relations Team and Major Event Liaison Team program provide support and assistance to build relationships, establish open lines of communication and provide a knowledgeable liaison function between police services and different communities, including Aboriginal peoples and communities and non-Aboriginal communities that may be impacted by Aboriginal protests and occupations.
- In the event that emergency medical response is required during a critical incident, the OPP established a Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS) program. The TEMS program was created within the OPP to enable Advanced Care Paramedics to provide emergency medical care in a variety of OPP tactical incidents.

Police – Government Relations

- OPP incident command training reinforces formal reporting roles and procedures to maintain an appropriate buffer between police operations and the government.
- The ministry has procedures in place to ensure the appropriate flow of information between operational commanders and the corporate bureaucracy through to the minister. These procedures are designed to minimize the risk, or perception, of political interference in operational matters during a critical incident.

Education and Outreach

To effectively serve the community safety needs of First Nation communities it is important that front-line officers understand the rich and varied history and traditional teachings of those communities.

- Aboriginal awareness training is now mandatory for all OPP recruits and members of specialty units. At the Ontario Police College, new recruits for all of Ontario's police services receive Aboriginal awareness training, and the Ontario Correctional Services College provides similar training to the province's correctional officers.
- The Ontario Police College produced an Aboriginal and First Nations Awareness e-learning training modules which are distributed through the Canadian Police Knowledge Network to police services in Ontario. The module has also been made available to the Ontario Correctional Services College and other ministry personnel.

The OPP Aboriginal Policing Bureau is making significant efforts to mentor and engage Aboriginal youth and to expand educational initiatives for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

- Walking the Path and Niigan Mosewak are two youth empowerment programs that promote self-worth, self-esteem, and respect for others with the use of healing circles, cultural teachings, role models and community awareness.
- The North of 50 Cops and Kids summer camp provides two weeklong sessions for at-risk youth from Pikangikum. The camp experience is an opportunity to have fun with healthy activities and to explore positive lifestyle choices, with the guidance of police officer camp counsellors.

Investing in First Nations Policing

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is working with First Nations, through the federal First Nations Policing Policy (FNPP), to fund culturally appropriate policing for First Nation communities. Under the FNPP, costs of First Nations policing are split between Ontario and the federal government, with Ontario providing 48 per cent and the federal government 52 per cent.

Within Ontario, nine self-directed First Nations police services provide policing to 95 First Nation communities. Nineteen other First Nation communities receive policing from OPP-administered First Nations police services. Of the remaining 20 communities, 18 are policed from the nearest OPP detachment and the other two receive policing from two different municipal police services.

- In 2008-09, Ontario contributed \$28 million to First Nations police services under First Nations policing agreements.
- Through the federal Police Officers Recruitment Fund, Ontario has dedicated \$4 million annually for the next five years to fund 40 additional officers for First Nations police services.
- Since 2003, \$2.4 million in funding has been provided under the Community Policing Partnerships program for 14 police officers hired by First Nations police services.
- First Nations police services have also hired an additional nine officers with \$1.6 million in funding under the government's Safer Communities – 1,000 Officers Partnership program.
- In 2009, Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service received \$325,000 to fund activities and initiatives under the Provincial Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (PAVIS). PAVIS, based on the successful Toronto model, has the goal of reducing violence in communities by focusing on intervention, prevention, enforcement and community mobilization.
- Since 2003, First Nations police services have received approximately \$216,737 to provide Reduced Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) programs.
- Since 2004, First Nations police services have received approximately \$158,674 through the Safer and Vital Communities Grant program to support crime prevention programs.
- Between June 2005 and April 2009, the Ontario Police College provided training to 155 First Nations Police Services recruits at no cost to the First Nation communities they serve.

The ministry has also made investments in policing infrastructure within First Nation communities.

- Since 2003-04, the ministry has invested \$3.5 million, within the First Nations Policing Grant, to improve police infrastructure in the communities of the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service.
- Since 2005-06, the ministry contributed a total of \$352,616 to fund rent payments on a new facility within the Wikwemikong Police Service.
- Since 2006, the ministry has provided \$346,007 to fund a detachment facility within Walpole Island First Nation, a community within the OPP-administered Ontario First Nations Policing Agreement.
- Since 2007-08, the ministry contributed a total of \$606,632 to fund rent payments on a new headquarters facility for the Treaty Three Police Service.
- Since 2007-08, the ministry contributed a total of \$229,071 to fund rent payments on a new facility within the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin Police Service.