
URBAN VIOLENCE: The Silent War of the Americas

Canada's Leadership Opportunity



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Executive Summary

Canada has recently signalled an intention to play a greater role in the Americas. Our country's leadership opportunity in the region is at a crossroads. If we truly wish to play a leadership role in the Americas, then we must address its most pressing challenge: widespread urban violence threatening the democracy, prosperity and security of our hemisphere. This crisis demands our response.

Canada is a major trading partner with the Americas, evident by the fact that foreign direct investment from Canada into the Americas now stands at close to \$100 billion and the Government also sees an opportunity for Canada to act as a model democratic regime for the region. Canada's security priorities in the Americas meanwhile are largely focused on Haiti and Colombia.

Despite Canada's positive ambitions for the Americas, there is a war being waged in the region today. Widespread urban violence is threatening the prosperity and security of the hemisphere, and is destroying the lives of children and youth.

Urban violence involves organized and unorganized violence at a level of harm that rivals that of some war zones. Unlawful killings, gang wars, shoot-outs with police, kidnappings, robbery and narco-trafficking are exacting terrible human, economic and social costs. Latin America, with only 14% of the world's population accounts for 42% of firearms-related homicides in the world. Unfortunately, in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the police and military responsible for providing public security are unable or unwilling to perform that function.

Children and youth are most significantly affected as victims of urban violence. They are victims of homicide and violent crime, forced to live in fear. Disadvantaged children and youth are ripe targets for gangs. For instance, some 5,000 to 6,000 children and youth are involved in the drug trade in Rio de Janeiro, employed by three drug factions.

Canada has an interest in a safe and prosperous hemisphere. Trade, human rights, and democratic practice in the region are all threatened by urban violence. But beyond these important high-level concerns, there is an insidious, direct link between drug gangs in Latin America and the Caribbean and the traffic of illegal narcotics to Canada.

Canada has an opportunity to play a leadership role in addressing urban violence in the Americas. We recommend that Canada confront the silent war of urban violence in the Americas through:

- Improving local responses to urban violence by helping reform the police and other institutions
- Breaking the cycle of urban violence through grassroots, community-based programs
- Reducing a key driver of urban violence through stemming the flow of illegal narcotics

Urban Violence – The Silent War of the Americas: Canada’s Leadership Opportunity

Canadian leadership in the Americas is at a crossroads. If Canada truly wishes to play a leadership role in the Americas, then we must address the region’s most pressing challenge: widespread urban violence. Urban violence is threatening the democracy, prosperity and security of our hemisphere; this crisis demands our response.

This report has been prepared as part of the Action Canada Fellowship Program (www.actioncanada.ca). Action Canada is a public/private partnership with a mandate to promote excellence in leadership in the public and private sector across Canada. Each year, Action Canada fellows are placed in Task Force groups to jointly develop a public policy project on a chosen theme. The project theme for 2007-2008 is “Canada as a World Leader,” and this Task Force of Fellows has chosen to focus on Canada as a leader in the Americas.

This report will argue that the challenge of urban violence is a significant obstacle to the development of various countries in the Americas and that Canada can play a leadership role with its partners in the region to address this challenge. The first section of this report will provide a brief background on Canada’s engagement with the Americas. The following section will review the core challenges associated with urban violence. The final section will provide a specific set of recommendations for Canada to play an active role in addressing this crisis.



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I. Canadian engagement with the Americas

Canada's interest in the Americas is both an inconsistent and relatively recent phenomenon. In the post-war period, through much of the 1960s, Canada avoided a profound relationship with the Americas. Confident that we would no longer have to engage with unsavoury regimes in the region or stand opposed to the United States over policy in the Americas, Canada finally became a full member of the OAS in 1990.

Canada quickly embraced the themes of integration and trade liberalization. By the time of the 1994 Miami Summit, Canada was one of the primary champions of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Interest in integration and liberalization waned, and most countries in the region focused instead on regional trade arrangements such as Mercosur, the South American regional trade agreement between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Given how thoroughly Canada had embraced the trade agenda, it is no surprise that Canada quickly lost interest in the Americas when the trade liberalization thrust stalled.

Canada's strategy for the Americas has three pillars: democracy, prosperity, and security

In 2000, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori fled the country facing a massive corruption scandal. After his resignation, Peru proposed an Inter-American Democratic Charter, an initiative taken up by Canada at the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. This represented the high-water mark for Canadian involvement and leadership in the Americas. However, Canadian attention was again drawn elsewhere in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the conflict in Afghanistan.

In 2007, however, the Government of Canada signalled its intention to re-engage in the Americas. Prime Minister Stephen Harper outlined the Government's intentions for the region during a July 2007 trip through the region. While in Chile, the Prime Minister said:

"Canada is committed to playing a bigger role in the Americas and to doing so for the long term. Three key objectives form the basis of our engagement in the Americas:

First, to strengthen and promote our foundational values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Second, to build strong, sustainable economies through increased trade and investment linkages, as well as a mutual commitment to expanding opportunity to all citizens; and

Third, to meet new security challenges, as well as natural disasters and health pandemics.

*We are undertaking these actions with a sense that the Americas today stand at a crossroads."*¹

¹ Government of Canada, Media Release, "Prime Minister Harper signals Canada's renewed engagement in the Americas" (17 July 2007) Retrieved March 17, 2008 online: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1759>. [Harper, S. (2007, July 17)].

Canada's strategy for the Americas has three pillars: democracy, prosperity, and security. To help guide Canada's re-engagement with the region, an "Americas Strategy Secretariat" has been established in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The Government made clear at the March 2008 "Canada and the Americas" conference that it does not intend to produce a public Americas strategy document, but instead wishes to be judged by its actions.

It remains to be seen whether a substantial shift in Canadian foreign policy in the Americas is underway. In a recent interview, John Graham, the Chair of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), noted that this is the third time in less than twenty years that Canada has declared a major policy initiative in the Americas: this current action follows joining the OAS in 1990 and the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001. In both cases, Graham said, "the government was distracted by other priorities and the momentum on both occasions eventually fizzled." But he noted that, "So far, the indication is that the policy has some legs."² Indeed, the Government has already taken action consistent with the security, prosperity and democracy pillars central to its Americas strategy.

In his July 2007 speech, Prime Minister Harper noted that, "[f]oreign direct investment from Canada into the Americas now stands at close to 100 billion dollars – a number that is more than twice the size of Canadian investment in Asia. And this is growing rapidly, making Canada the third-largest investor in Latin America and the Caribbean."³

Canada has existing free-trade agreements with the United States and Mexico (NAFTA), Chile, Costa Rica, and very recently concluded a free-trade agreement with Peru. The Government is also pursuing free-trade agreements with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Dominican Republic and Colombia.

The Government also sees an opportunity for Canada to act as a model democratic regime for the region. The 2007 Speech from the Throne noted, "[t]he Canadian model of constitutional democracy and economic openness combined with social safety nets, equitable wealth creation and sharing across regions has much to offer those countries struggling to build a better future."⁴

Canada's security priorities in the Americas meanwhile are largely focused on Haiti and Colombia. Canada has committed \$555 million over five years to Haiti for immediate security needs. Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Bernier also recently announced a \$75-million road construction project and \$19 million to support police reform and border management in Haiti.⁵ Since 2005, Canada has also provided \$3.6 million through the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) for peace building in Colombia.⁶

2 Jeff Davis, "Canada's Latin American Policy Vague: Envoys. Embassy" Embassy Canada's Foreign Policy Newsweekly (2007, November 14) online: Embassy <http://www.embassymag.ca>. [Davis, 2007].

3 Harper, S. (2007, July 17), supra note 1.

4 Parliament, "Speech from the Throne". Retrieved March 17, 2008 online: <http://www.sft-ddt.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1364>.

5 Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Defining Re-Engagement 'Canada in the Americas'" (Notes for an address presented to the Centre for Trade Policy and Law – Canadian Foundation for the Americas Conference on Canada and the Americas, March 13, 2008), Retrieved March 17, 2008 online from http://w01.international.gc.ca/minpub/Publication.aspx?isRedirect=True&publication_id=385948&language=E&docnumber=2008/5.

6 "Supporting Colombia's Search for Peace." Retrieved March 17, 2008 online from <http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/library/supportingpeaceincolombia-en.aspx>.

II. Urban violence in the Americas

Despite Canada's positive ambitions for the Americas, there is a war is being waged in the region today. Widespread urban violence is threatening the prosperity and security of the hemisphere, and is destroying the lives of children and youth.

In response to this considerable affront to democracy, prosperity and security in the region, Canada has so far been a distant and reserved neighbour to the North. If Canada truly wishes to play a leadership role in the Americas, then Canada will have to contribute to addressing the challenges of urban violence in the Americas.

Scope of Urban Violence Problem

Urban violence involves organized and unorganized violence with a level of harm that rivals that of some war zones. Unlawful killings, gang wars, shoot-outs with police, kidnappings, robbery and narco-trafficking are exacting terrible human, economic and social costs.



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Latin America, with only 14% of the world's population accounts for 42% of firearms-related homicides in the world.⁷ Brazil has the highest number of national gun-related deaths in the world, surpassing even Iraq on a per capital basis in 2006.⁸ In Guatemala, less than 2% of homicides result in criminal charges, with approximately 20,000 gang-related murders in the past five years.⁹

As Figure 1 demonstrates, homicide rates in major cities in Latin America are dramatically greater than in a major Canadian city like Toronto.

Causes of Urban Violence

The causes of urban violence are complex and interrelated. Generally it is agreed that there are several key structural, developmental and social factors that provide an environment that fosters urban violence.

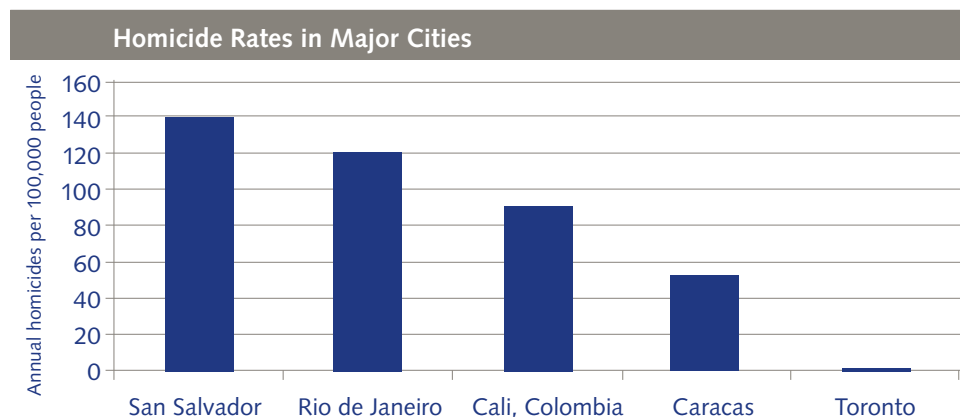
7 Rebeca Pérez, "Citizen security, urban violence and youth: the Brazil case", En la mira – The Latin American Small Arms Watch, online: <http://www.comunidadsegura.org/?q=en/node/37989>.

8 Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Fast Talk Report: Endemic Urban Violence, (January 2008) at 5 and 7 [Department of Foreign Affairs, Fast Talk Report].

9 A. Grace and E. Moore, "Endemic Urban Violence," (Paper presented to the 2nd Human Security and Cities Conference, Vancouver, B.C. March 3-4, 2008), at 1-2 [Grace & Moore].

The growth of gangs (called *pandillas*, *maras*) in Latin America and the Caribbean is directly connected to growing rates of violence.¹⁰ In some cases, gangs have consolidated their power over a given urban territory and imposed their will on residents, with the police turning a blind eye. For example, in São Paulo there is concern that the declining homicide rate is not attributable to improved police tactics, but instead to the brutal control exercised by gangs like the *Primeiro Comando de Capital* (PCC).¹¹

Figure 1



Source: Roberto Briceño-León; Urban violence and public health in Latin America: a sociological explanatory framework, *Cad. Saúde Pública*, Rio de Janeiro, 21(6)1629-1664, Nov-Dec, 2005; and StatsCan.

Unfortunately, in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the police and military responsible for providing public security are unable or unwilling to perform that function. The Canadian Consortium on Human Security has observed that these state actors may contribute negatively to the situation due to, “endemic corruption, repressive tactics (e.g. extrajudicial executions, social cleansing, etc.), and inappropriate organizational capabilities and policies (e.g. using heavy arms in battles with gangs in high density slums).”¹² Communities distrust the police because they may be politicized, are unresponsive or have a history of involvement in serious human rights violations.¹³

Brazil had more gun-related deaths per capita than Iraq in 2006

Police institutions in the Americas face many challenges that compromise their efficacy in promoting public security. Police hierarchy is still structured along military models without any means of recourse, either internally or externally.¹⁴ The lack of professionalization of the police force, which

10 Department of Foreign Affairs, Fast Talk Report, *supra* note 8 at 7.
 11 G. Willis, “Security but not Safety: The Primeiro Comando de Capital and Security in São Paulo” (Paper presented at the 2nd Human Security and Cities Conference, Vancouver, B.C., March 3-4, 2008).
 12 Canadian Consortium on Human Security, “Human Security: Cities” (Conference materials at the 2nd Human Security and Cities Conference, Vancouver, B.C., March 3-4, 2008) at 3; Mercedes Hinton, “A distant reality: democratic policing in Argentina and Brazil”, (2005) 5(1) *Criminal Justice* 75 [Hinton].
 13 Elizabeth Leeds, “Serving States and Serving Citizens: Halting Steps toward Police Reform in Brazil and Implications for Donor Intervention” (March 2007) 17(1) *Policing and Society* 21[Leeds].
 14 *Ibid.*

“In El Salvador, a 2003 law authorizes detention of any person with a tattoo. This *mano duro* (“strict hand”) policy has made it difficult for former gang members to start new lives.”¹⁸

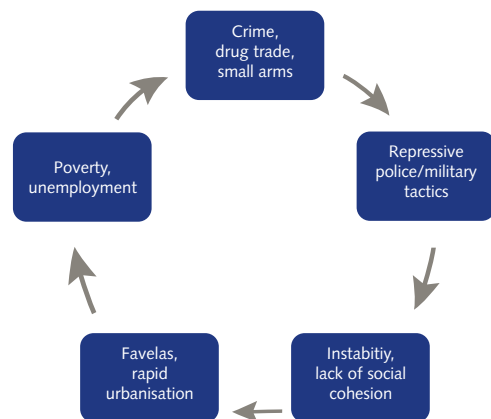
would include modern training, appropriate salaries, performance criteria and merit reward, has helped to reinforce their public image as corrupt and ineffective.¹⁵ They often lack the training, supplies and mobility to effectively handle organized criminal groups.¹⁶ As a result, many rely on repressive *mano duro* (“strict hand”) policies, excessive force and extortion.¹⁷

The inability or unwillingness of the police to democratize is a major stumbling block in rebuilding its link to the community. Currently, there is a profound distrust of the police. This relationship is essential, since quality of policing is directly linked to the level of civic engagement.¹⁹ Therefore, empowering civil society can, in turn, create an environment which encourages a more enabled and accountable police force.

A comprehensive approach to police reform is a long-term commitment. The strategy would include creating the vision that effective policing can respect human rights, promote organizational change that is more proactive and responsive to the community, and encourage mutual trust between police and the community.²⁰

Impact of Urban Violence on Youth

Children and youth are most significantly affected as victims of urban violence. They are victims of homicide and violent crime, forced to live in fear. Poverty is perpetuated in overcrowded slums, where there is a lack of education and employment opportunities. A culture of violence and broken families results in high instances of domestic abuse.²¹ With fading hope for the future, many have little confidence in public institutions and democracy.



Disadvantaged children and youth are ripe targets for gangs. For example, between 5,000 to 6,000 children and youth are involved in the drug trade in Rio de Janeiro, employed by three drug factions. These young people are armed and take part in shootouts with rival gangs and police.²² Children and youth are also used as lookouts and informers for gang members, and become involved in street

15 Hinton, supra note 12.

16 Lucia Dammert and John Bailey, “Police Force Reform and Military Participation against Delinquency”, (January/June 2005) 1(19) Revista Fuerzas Armada y Sociedad 13(translated by Sin-Yin Antonela Andreani Chia).

17 Margaret Shaw, “What is the Role of Policing in Endemic Urban Violence” (Paper presented to the 2nd Human Securities and Cities Conference, Vancouver B.C., Mar 3-4 2008) at 1 [Shaw].

18 Grace & Moore, supra note 9 at 3.

19 Ibid.

20 Leeds, supra note 13 at 26.

21 Caroline Moser, “Urban violence and insecurity: An Introductory Roadmap”, (2004) 16(2) Environment and Urbanization 8.

22 L. Dowdney, “Understanding Urban Violence in Rio de Janeiro and Beyond” in M. Hawrylak & W. McAvoy, eds., Human Security for an Urban Century: Local Challenges, Global Perspectives, (Ottawa: Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2006) at 46.

crime at a young age. With their gang affiliations, they may be targeted by rival gangs and face repressive tactics by the police. These young people face a bleak future, one that can lead to imprisonment or being killed on the streets. In this way, children and youth suffer from extreme violence as both victims and perpetrators.²³

Significance to Canada

Canada has an interest in a safe and prosperous hemisphere. Trade, human rights, and democratic practice in the region are all threatened by urban violence. But beyond these important high-level concerns, there is an insidious link between drug gangs in Latin America and the Caribbean and the traffic of illegal narcotics to Canada. The drug trade that provides fuel to the urban violence in the Americas has also penetrated our borders. Once in Canada, these illicit drugs from the Americas feed street crime and foster gang activity in Canadian cities.

Cocaine is a lucrative source of income for gangs and armed groups that perpetuate urban violence. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that Colombia accounts for half (50%) of global coca cultivation, followed by Peru (33%) and Bolivia (18%). Peru and Bolivia mainly produce coca paste and cocaine base, only Colombia produces cocaine hydrochloride, the main product imported into Canada.²⁴

Cocaine and hashish oil smuggled into Canada fuels urban violence in the Americas and criminal activity in Canada. Some 2,676 kilograms of Colombian cocaine was seized in Canada in 2006, with a street value of \$107 million.

In order to reach Canada, drug traffickers with links to gangs in Latin America and the Caribbean are spreading their influence and routes in the region. The Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada has noted this expansion of drug trafficking destined for Canada:

*“Most cocaine consumed in Canada originates from South America and travels to Canada either directly or through one or more transit countries. The Caribbean is a significant transit region for the smuggling of cocaine into Canada. Of cocaine seized at Canadian points of entry, Jamaica and Haiti were the major transit points identified, followed by other islands such as, St. Lucia, St. Martin and Curaçao”.*²⁵

Cocaine arrives in Canada through transit countries like Venezuela, Caribbean countries, Mexico, and the United States. Some 2,676 kilograms of Colombian cocaine was seized in Canada in 2006, with a street value of \$107 million.²⁶ From 2004 to 2006, 1.6 tons, which represent 40% of all cocaine

23 E. Chavarría and A. Quirós, “The Face of Urban Violence in Central America”, online: The Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress <www.arias.or.cr/download/INGLES.pdf.

24 RCMP (2007), The Drug Situation Report — 2006, Retrieved March 17, 2008 online: RCMP http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/drugs/pdf/drug_situation_2006_e.pdf. [RCMP, The Drug Situation Report].

25 Criminal Intelligence Service Canada (2005), Annual Report: 2005 – Illicit Drugs, Retrieved March 15, 2008 online: CISC http://www.cisc.gc.ca/annual_reports/annual_report2005/cocaine_2005_e.htm.

26 RCMP, The Drug Situation Report, supra note 24.

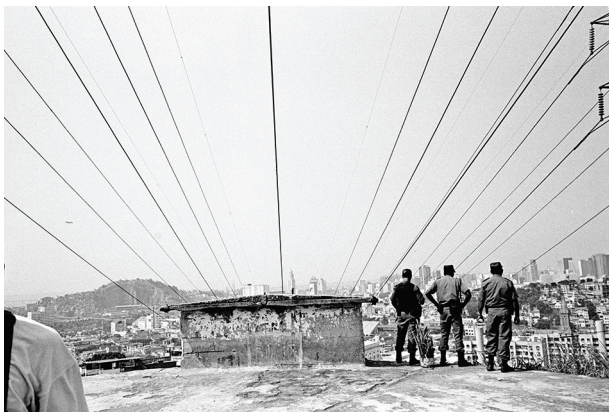
seized at Canadian ports of entry originated in the United States and most seizures were made at land borders.²⁷

In 2000, less than 7% of all heroin seized by the RCMP at Canadian ports of entry originated in the Americas. But between 2004 and 2006, 20.7% of all heroin seized by the RCMP originated in Mexico and Colombia.²⁸ In recent years, the portion of heroin arriving in Canada from Latin America has tripled and this trend is continuing. Latin American criminal organizations have taken control of a significant portion of heroin on the Canadian market while dominating heroin trafficking in the United States. These groups will increasingly supply Canada, and much of this heroin is expected to come through the United States.

The RCMP reports that nearly all hashish oil smuggled into Canada comes from Jamaica. The RCMP also seized 1.5 tons of hashish oil, of which 99% also originated in Jamaica.²⁹ From 2004 to 2006, the RCMP seized 2.4 tons of marijuana at Canadian ports of entry, of which 85.3% originated in Jamaica. Commercial and passenger aircraft as well as container ships have been used to bring drugs into Canada, with proceeds flowing back to Jamaica.³⁰ These substances are often smuggled through Pearson International Airport in Toronto.³¹

Canada's Opportunity

In recent years, Canada has begun to take some action in the Americas to help bring peace and stability to Haiti and Colombia. These are positive steps, but much more is needed.



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Canada has played an important role in Haiti to help re-establish security in this Caribbean nation since February 2004. Canadian police, military and corrections personnel are deployed as part of MINUSTAH (the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) mission in the country. The Government of Canada is working with local communities through the UN National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (NCDDR) to assist with violence reduction in Haitian communities, and is helping with some infrastructure development.³² As a result, there is some expertise in the region that could

27 Public Safety Canada (2008), US - Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment 2007, Retrieved March 18, 2008 online: Public Safety Canada http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/le/oc/_fl/us-canadian-report-drugs-eng.pdf. [Public Safety Canada].

28 Public Safety Canada (2008), US - Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment 2007, Retrieved March 18, 2008 online: Public Safety Canada http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/le/oc/_fl/us-canadian-report-drugs-eng.pdf. [Public Safety Canada].

29 Ibid.

30 RCMP, The Drug Situation Report, supra note 24.

31 Ibid.

32 Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Reconstructing Haiti (Ottawa: Communication Group, 2007), Retrieved March 17, 2008 online: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/reconstructinghaiti-en.aspx.

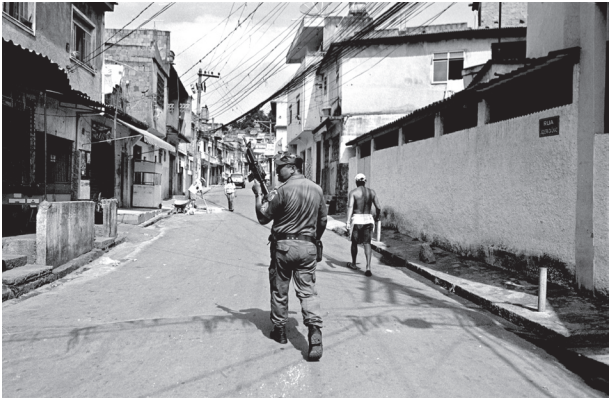
be drawn upon to make an even greater impact on issues related to urban violence.

Canadian public opinion wants our country to be a better neighbour in the Americas. A recent Léger Marketing poll asked 1,500 Canadians which areas of the world should be given priority. While Afghanistan received 62% support by respondents, the Caribbean and Latin America were favoured by 67% and 75% of respondents respectively.

Not only is urban violence the most pressing security issue in the Americas, but a failure to address the challenge will damage economic opportunities for the region. A thriving economy relies on certainty, the rule of law, security, human capacity, and infrastructure; all of which are threatened by urban violence.

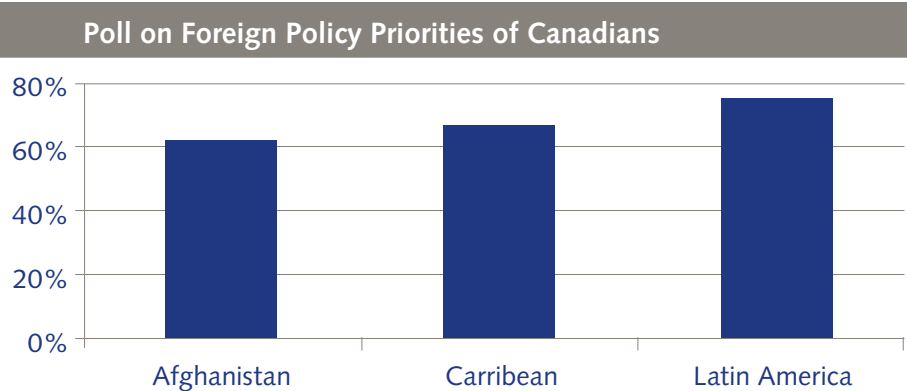
The magnitude of the urban violence is in part a product of the failure of democratic institutions and processes. Corruption and human rights violations perpetrated by state institutions tend to exacerbate the problem. Furthermore, when democracy fails to address pressing challenges, it can be no surprise that people begin to lose faith in democratic processes and institutions.

The problem of urban violence in the Americas demands a response. If Canada wishes to be a leader in the region then Canada must apply its substantial resources to addressing the challenge.



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Figure 2



Source: FOCAL, Léger Marketing , October 2007.

III. Recommendations: Confronting Urban Violence in the Americas

Canada has an opportunity to play a leadership role in addressing urban violence in the Americas. We recommend that Canada confront the silent war of urban violence in the Americas through:

- Improving local responses to urban violence by helping reform the police and other institutions
- Breaking the cycle of urban violence through grassroots, community-based programs
- Reducing a key driver of urban violence through stemming the flow of illegal narcotics

1. Improving local responses to urban violence: Reforming the police and other institutions

Security and police forces in the Americas too often find themselves ill-equipped or ill-prepared to respond to the complicated and violent challenges presented by urban violence in the region. The military and judiciary are important institutions in addressing these challenges as well, but these recommendations will focus on police as the front-line organization called upon to face the challenges of urban violence most directly.

- The Canadian government should support initiatives in the Americas to:
- Identify, train and deploy Canadian expertise in policing to facilitate effective technical mentorship.
- Support initiatives that promote the democratization of public safety institutions. These initiatives should involve the support for local or municipal reform as well as providing training opportunities in Canada for police professionals from the Americas.
- Fund community policing initiatives that forge links between the police and the citizenry.

Reform is necessary to rebuild the relationship between the government and its citizenry, moving away from repressive tactics that have been the traditional response to urban violence.³³ Democratic policing can be defined as “conformity of actions to law; adherence to international standards of human rights, especially political rights; accountability to external authority based on the capacity to collect and willingness to publicize information about operational activities; and responsiveness to ordinary citizens.”³⁴

Canada has the opportunity to be a resource that can provide technical assistance to public safety institutions, including the police and the military. This assistance can be directed at the national, municipal, or community level. It does not involve a specific recipe for change; it must be responsive to local issues and needs.

33 Leeds, *supra* note 13 at 25-26.

34 David Bayley, *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) at 23.

Canada can take a leadership role, while involving bilateral and multilateral partners to build a pool of experts on policing. Multilateral partnerships will not only strengthen our involvement, but will also inject more regional expertise. As an example, this approach has been successful in the area of judicial reform through the CIDA-funded Justice Studies Centre of the Americas (JSCA).³⁵ Canada can build on our previous role in Haiti, partnering with the RCMP and Corrections Services Canada to train and deploy police and correctional mentors who can provide technical assistance on the ground. This partnership will help to reinforce democratic policing practices.

CANADEM, Canada's civilian reserve, can play a larger role in facilitating mentorship programs with police and military if it has sustained support. **This roster of experts in rule of law, governance and human rights and security should be strengthened. This reserve can include training that is specifically relevant to issues affecting the Americas.**

Police professionalization is encouraged through linkages to academic institutions.³⁶ This bridge can encourage new methods of police training and evaluation, while moving away from the traditional military model. **Canada can be a facilitator in this partnership, either through exchange opportunities with Canadian institutions or support of local or regional expertise.**

Canada can also participate in funding initiatives that encourage civic engagement and community partnerships. Community policing initiatives have had some success and can encourage police to work with, instead of against, communities. This approach fosters a local approach which is receptive to needs on the ground.³⁷

2. Breaking the cycle of urban violence: Grassroots, community-based action

Children and youth trapped in cycles of violence and poverty too often have no hope of escape. The Canadian Government should take a leading role in helping to provide new opportunities for youth involved in, or affected by, urban violence:

- Canada can take a leadership role by supporting grassroots programmes that target high-risk youth and promote alternatives to gang membership.
- Canada can partner with organizations such as ROCA, which is an internationally successful organization committed to serving disenfranchised youth.

Roca, a non-governmental organization based in Boston, provides a first-rate model for “transformational relationships” for high-risk youth. A transformational relationship refers to the establishment of a community-level relationship that provides the structure and support necessary for an individual to substantially change patterns of behaviour. The Roca model of change is heavily rooted in restorative processes. Since its inception in 1988 Roca has evolved into an adaptive, effective, and entrepreneurial organization that has established a reputation for successful multi-cultural work with very

³⁵ Justice Studies Centre of the Americas, online: <http://www.cejamericas.org>.

³⁶ Leeds, *supra* note 13.

³⁷ Shaw, *supra* note 17.

high-risk young people. Roca has been sought after regionally, nationally and internationally for its intervention model.

The Roca model to achieve transformation relationships is based on five strategic methods:

- persistent street work and outreach;
- transformational relationships;
- peacemaking circles;
- opportunities for life skills, education, and employment; and
- engaging the institutions that are part of young people’s lives.

Figure 3: Overview of Stages of Change

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	APPLICATION
PRE-CONTEMPLATION	Unaware of the problem, hasn't thought about change <i>"This stage is all about no – 'I don't need help, I don't need to change'"</i>	Increase awareness of need for change, personalize information on risks and benefits
CONTEMPLATION	Thinking about change, in the near future <i>"This stage is all about maybe – 'Maybe I could do something different'"</i>	Motivate, encourage to make specific plans
PLANNING, DECISION, DETERMINATION	Making a plan to change plans, setting gradual goals <i>"This stage is all about thinking about what a person might do differently"</i>	Assist in developing concrete action
ACTION	Implementation of specific action plans <i>"This stage is all about the actual change"</i>	Assist with feedback, problem solving, social support, reinforcement
MAINTENANCE	Continuation of desirable actions, or repeating periodic recommended step(s) <i>"This stage is all about changing behaviour at least 50% of the time"</i>	Assist in coping, reminders, finding alternatives, avoiding slips/relapses (as applies)

These methods are used to engage young people and other key stakeholders in a process of change that enables them to increase positive knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours over time and in stages, which allow youth and young adults to be self-sufficient and live out of harm’s way. The Roca process is built on a theory of change describe in Figure 3.

Roca's model works because it is not an 'out-of-box-the-solution' but is instead a process to build partnerships with clients and other agencies to help develop and implement local solutions to facilitate client's healing.

In 2008, Roca plans to serve 600 young people through transformational relationships, an additional 150 to 200 through other services and to reach 20,000 individuals through community-based outreach activities. The results of Roca's programming have been very encouraging. In a cohort of 108 young people who participated in Roca's Violence and Substance abuse prevention programming, use of marijuana dropped from 68.8% at program enrolment to 43.6% after one year. Similarly, use of alcoholic beverages dropped from 81.8% to 50.0%, cigarettes dropped from 81.5% to 46.2%, crack cocaine dropped from 49.3% to 3.3% and heroin dropped from 52.1% to 3.2%. Perhaps most significantly, all of the young people who reported using inhalants (52.2% of participants), LSD (56.5% of participants), and Amphetamines (50.7% of participants), reported that at the twelve month follow up assessment they were no longer using these substances.



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Roca's programs have also proven extremely cost-effective, investing an average of \$4,880 per young person. This compares favourably to the alternative costs to the community, estimated by the *Journal of Criminology* to be between \$250,000 and \$2,000,000 in social and incarceration support over his/her lifetime.

Communities ravaged by the epidemic of urban violence must be engaged in local solutions. **Canada can take a leadership role in helping to intervene in the lives of very high-risk youth who are engaged in urban violence, gang activities and the drug trade.** It is particularly important to engage youth who are unable to conform to the requirements of traditional education and human service programs, and those who need caring, creative and personalized attention.

To accomplish this, **Canada should build its own capacity to help disenfranchised youth break the cycle of violence and work in partnership with organizations like Roca to establish and support programs in the Americas.**

3. Reducing a key driver of urban violence: Stemming the flow of illegal narcotics

Revenues from drugs sold in Canada are an important source of money for gangs that fuel urban violence in the Americas. To stem the importation of drugs into Canada, the Canadian government should:

- Collaborate with local authorities to strengthen on-site passenger controls in airports, as well as to strengthen controls on luggage and cargo destined for Canada in order to stop importation attempts at the source to reduce the quantity of drugs smuggled into Canada.
- Create a special investigation team to study the growing flow of heroin into Canada from the Americas. A regional initiative between RCMP, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other relevant regional bodies as well as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should be undertaken to address this growing problem.

The RCMP is responsible for reducing drug importation to Canada from countries which produce these illicit substances. In particular, the main drugs imported to Canada from the Americas are marijuana, hashish oil, cocaine and heroin.

Almost all marijuana and hashish oil smuggled into Canada originated in Jamaica and these illicit substances are most often imported on commercial flights between Jamaica and Canada.³⁸

Therefore **we recommend that the RCMP should enhance collaboration with Jamaican authorities to strengthen on-site passenger controls in Jamaican airports, as well as to strengthen controls on luggage and cargo destined for Canada in order to stop importation attempts at the source to reduce the quantity of drugs smuggled into Canada.** In collaboration with local authorities, Canadian border controls could be deployed on-site in Jamaican airports for passengers and flights destined for Canada using the same technologies available in our ports of entry to detect marijuana and hashish oil drugs. If successful in Jamaica, a similar strategy could then be applied to

other drugs and their major source or transit countries.

Cocaine smuggling into Canada transits by many countries, including the United States, and uses many means of transportation. Many bilateral initiatives between the RCMP and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) such as the new Border Enforcement Security Task Forces are already in place to respond to this problem.³⁹

We recommend that the RCMP enhance measures to deal with this problem at its source;



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38 RCMP, The Drug Situation Report, supra note 24.

39 Public Safety Canada, supra note 27.

that is the Colombian producers of cocaine hydrochloride, the main product imported into Canada.⁴⁰ *Plan Colombia* includes programs to replace coca farmer fields with alternative crop growing activities.⁴¹ In theory, this initiative would contribute to reducing cocaine supplies available on the market but in practice the Colombian rebel group FARC continues to force rural farmers to grow drug crops.⁴² The Canadian government should support efforts to ensure that Colombian farmers are free to grow alternative crops.

Latin American criminal organizations have taken control of a significant portion of heroin on the Canadian market in recent years. These groups will increasingly supply Canada with heroin from Mexico and Colombia, and heroin smuggling into Canada through the United States is expected to increase.⁴³

We recommend that the RCMP should create a special investigation team to study this phenomenon to stop its growth. A new bilateral initiative between the RCMP and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) should be undertaken to fight against this emerging scourge.

To have a better understanding of the situation, joint operations should be extended to Mexico under the umbrella of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America and to Colombia working with the RCMP Foreign Drug Cooperation (FDC) Section, which is responsible for enhancing cooperation with developing countries.

Conclusion

Canada has an opportunity to redefine our international presence by taking a leadership role in addressing the crisis of urban violence. Our involvement can embrace a new model of Canadian foreign engagement, one that moves away from Ottawa-centric out-of-the-box programs to solutions that are sensitive to the realities on the ground.

This three-pronged approach to address urban violence can partner Canadian expertise with locally relevant programs. It encompasses both prevention and treatment strategies. By actively engaging in these partnerships, Canada can begin to re-define its role as a leader in the hemisphere.

40 RCMP, *The Drug Situation Report*, supra note 24.

41 Colombia, Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, Bogota, *Plan Colombia: Plan for Peace, Prosperity, and the Strengthening of the State (1999)*, online: The United States Institute of Peace http://www.usip.org/library/pa/colombia/adddoc/plan_colombia_101999.html.

42 S. Johnson, "Helping Colombia Fix its Plan to Curb Drug Trafficking, Violence, and Insurgency" *The Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies* (2007), online: The Heritage Foundation on Latin America Issues <http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/BG1435.cfm>.

43 Public Safety Canada, supra note 27.

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Photographs:

The photographs in this report are by Argentinean photographer Diego Levy. They are part of his award-winning photojournalistic exhibition entitled "Blood." This collection captures how images of urban violence "are part of a terrifying everyday reality" in Latin American cities. They have been reproduced with his permission. www.diegolevy.com

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