



House of Commons Standing Committee on Health: Impacts of Methamphetamine Abuse in Canada

The Ontario Provincial Police Submission

February 19, 2019

Introduction

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) is one of North America's largest deployed police services with more than 5,800 uniformed officers, 2,400 civilian employees and 830 Auxiliary officers. We provide essential services that ensure the safety and security of the people of the Province of Ontario.

The OPP is a division of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The largest operational ministry in the province with a presence in every community across Ontario. The OPP is the largest police service in Ontario and the second largest in Canada. As part of our provincial responsibility the OPP has a Bureau dedicated to organized crime enforcement.

In addition to its provincial responsibility and the support it provides for its municipal policing partners, the OPP provides policing services to over 320 municipalities in Ontario.

The OPP is, amongst others, involved with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Integrated Response to Organized Crime Committee (CIROC). These groups are dedicated to reducing the harmful impacts of organized crime and drugs. CIROC is currently exploring the impacts of meth on public safety and our communities, and how it is investigated. The OPP is also embedded on a CACP Special Purpose Committee researching the impacts of decriminalization on public safety.

Investigative Projects

Strategically the OPP has taken the position to focus on organized crime groups, rather than a specific illicit commodities. Organized Crime groups have the propensity to deal with a variety of commodities. These commodities range from human trafficking, firearms to a variety of drug types, such as meth.

Investigative projects can be international, national or community based. The OPP is engaged in ongoing projects with links to organized crime including Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs and Traditional Organized Crime groups. For example we are currently working with international partners to disrupt meth coming from organized crime groups in Mexico, being imported to Canada.

A recent example of a local based investigative project, closed earlier this month, focused on the relatively small community of Hawkesbury. 4,000 meth tablets, over half a kilogram of cocaine and 16 fentanyl patches along with various weapons and approximately \$250,000 cash were seized. This project resulted in 20 individuals being charged. This is one example of many similar projects taking place across Ontario. The impact and message this sends by removing these dangerous elements from within these communities is immeasurable. The OPP has successfully completed other projects which targeted the distribution of meth into our First Nation communities.



Examples of Investigative Projects Include:

TOWN OF HAWKESBURY

PROJECT AMBERJACK

COMPLETED FEBRUARY 2019

 20 People Charged	 14 Search Warrants Executed	 121 Charges
Amount of Drugs by type and quantity:		
 Over half a kilogram of cocaine	 4,000 meth tablets	 16 fentanyl patches
 3 firearms with ammunitions and prohibited weapons and devices	 \$189,010 CDN \$1,778 USD	
 Restraining a house for asset forfeiture	 4 vehicles seized	

MARATHON AND PIC RIVER

PROJECT REBOUND

COMPLETED FEBRUARY 2018

 9 People Charged	 6 Search Warrants Executed	 52 CDSA and Criminal Code Charges
Amount of Drugs by type and quantity:		
 83 grams cocaine powder 8 grams crack cocaine	 2,574 meth tablets 9 percocet/oxycodone tablets	 1 gram psilocybin



ONTARIO, QUEBEC AND US

PROJECT SILKSTONE

COMPLETED FEBRUARY 2017



18 People Charged



22 Search Warrants Executed



81 Charges

Amount of Drugs by type and quantity:



36,3 kilograms processed marihuana bud
8 kilograms cocaine

7.5 kilograms MDMA (ecstasy)
260 grams meth



11,500 pills containing fentanyl



7,200 marihuana plants from indoor grow operations



Cases of vapes containing THC



3 pistols
20 long guns



\$50,000 worth of casino chips



\$69,000 CDN
\$500 USD



Radio frequency (RF) detecting devices



\$5+ million in offence-related property



4 vehicles, 1 enclosed trailer and 1 snowmobile were seized as offence-related property



Equipment and supplies from an illegal identity card-making operation seized



"Colours" from an outlaw motorcycle gang

OTTAWA AND SURROUNDING AREA (ROCKLAND, ON AND GATINEAU, QC)

PROJECT LANDSLIDE

COMPLETED NOVEMBER 2017



7 People Charged



8 Search Warrants Executed



150+ Charges

Amount of Drugs by type and quantity:



2.7 kilogram of cocaine
31.5 pounds of cannabis marihuana

¼ pound of cannabis resin (hashish)



325,000 meth tablets
250 oxycodone tablets



6 handguns
Weapons: spiked "mace", switch blades, brass knuckles, asp baton, butterfly knife, bear spray

4 long guns



\$100,000 CDN



4 vehicles seized



TIMMINS, CHAPLEAU, OTTAWA, BRUNSWICK HOUSE FNT, MOOSONEE, MOOSE FACTORY ISLAND

PROJECT COAST

COMPLETED MAY 2016



57 People Charged



20 Search Warrants Executed



360 Charges

Amount of Drugs by type and quantity:



706 grams of cocaine



58,000 meth tablets
2,229 oxycodone tablets
5,000 fentanyl tablets



170 fentanyl patches



Numerous long guns

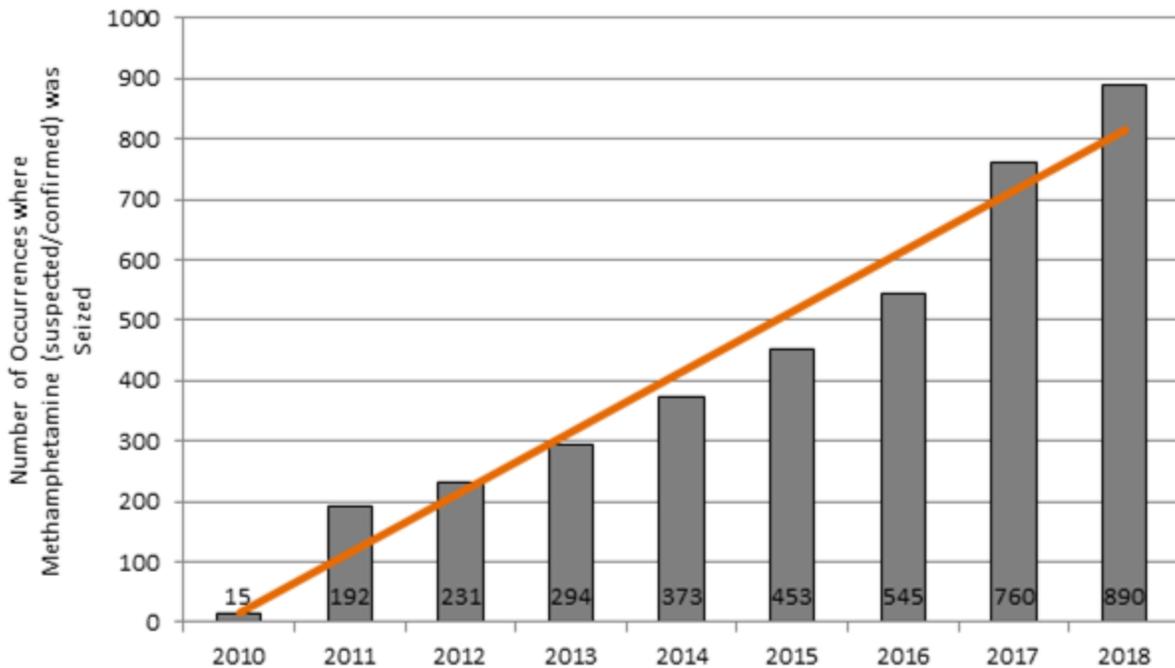


3 vehicles seized



\$252,000 CDN

Regardless of the investigation, meth is the one consistent commodity found. It has permeated into every one of our communities. Seizures of meth have been on the incline since 2010. In 2010, there were only 15 occurrences where meth was seized, followed by 453 occurrences in 2015, rising to 890 in 2018.



All drug investigations require Health Canada drug analysis to identify and confirm the types of drugs being trafficked. Mid and high level undercover purchases require rush analysis in order for the undercover officer to provide feedback to the trafficker. For example, in project Anarchy a significant amount of drugs were purchased, the delay in determining the purity or concentration of the drugs threatened to compromise the investigation. Further, if there is an attempt to purchase pure cocaine



and it is reduced in concentration due to being mixed with a filler, our street credibility becomes compromised, as we are seen as not knowing what we are purchasing or selling. Traffickers test their product themselves, where police rely on drug analysis. In addition to the need for expedited analysis of drugs seized operationally, there is also an urgent need to obtain analysis results for drugs seized at the scene of overdoses. This ability can quickly identify deadly substances and alert the public.

We recommend increasing Health Canada’s capacity to conduct timely drug analysis and, given their unique role, provide more comprehensive, overarching drug trend reports. It is difficult for police to unequivocally know what is on the streets of our communities and rapidly respond to public safety issues, when analytical results are not provided for 45 to 60 days.

The uptake in meth use can be partially attributed from a decrease in price. In 2016, a kilogram was approximately \$34,000, in 2018 it was \$25,000. We are already seeing a further decrease in 2019 to levels as low as \$15,000 for a kilogram. Depending on your location in Ontario the cost for a meth tablet can range from \$1.50 to \$10. Geographic location also determines the form of meth, from powder to pills.

In our communities, the OPP are in frequent contact with substance users on a 24/7, 365 basis. From our preliminary observations of overdose calls for service, it is not unusual for individuals to be using multiple drugs, including meth, cocaine and fentanyl. From our review of our data there have been 59 suspected drug overdose fatalities during the last third of 2018 alone (Sept-Dec); 9 occurrences (or 15%) are suspected to have been linked to methamphetamine.

Prevention, Education and Harm Reduction

Our work is not only focused on investigations. At a more local level, the OPP adopted a model of collaboration, the Community Mobilization and Engagement Model, which brings a variety of community services together to support the needs of vulnerable persons including those addicted to substances. We are also focussed on highlighting the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act (GSA)* and embedding its spirit into our culture. We need to break the stigma associated to substance use disorder and mental health. We know addictions and mental health know no bounds and are non-discriminatory.

Often those with lived experiences have a perception of law enforcement, which is not always favourable. We need to expand the public trust in policing to all communities, and educate the public on the *Good Samaritan and Drug Overdose Act*, so individuals who experience a potential overdose do not hesitate to call for help. Within the last six months we have developed communications to our front line members articulating the importance of the GSA, including finding examples where it has been successfully used and celebrating those good news stories within.

“In a choice between saving a life and laying a charge, we will always save a life” – *The OPP Review* (November 2018)





Law enforcement is often criticized for criminalizing individuals suffering from substance use disorder which further stigmatizes them and marginalizes vulnerable populations. The OPP strongly advocates for increased efforts centred on prevention and education, and increased access to treatment. Our communities are unique. Enforcement, prevention, treatment and harm reduction resources vary from community to community. Increased access to social and health services must be available for all Ontarians, regardless of their location. The OPP would welcome additional pre-charge diversion opportunities and partnerships to defer those dealing with substance abuse issues to health-care professionals.

Situation tables are designed to mitigate acutely elevated risk by collaborating in multi-sector partnerships to address risks before they become crisis situations requiring emergency responses. These partnerships are essential in addressing a multitude of risk factors, which may include inadequate housing, mental health issues, truancy and addictions. By being proactive and working together with community partners, the OPP is able to assist in getting those in need the right response, at the right time, by the right agencies. There are currently 70 situation tables operating across Ontario. The OPP participates in 54 of the 70 tables. Police bring approximately 70% of referrals to situation tables and leave with, or lead, approximately 13% of the related initiatives. Increasing the ability for police, in all communities, to refer individuals to appropriate resources is welcome and will positively impact public safety.

Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs

Let's explore the topic of decriminalization from a public safety perspective. It is important for policing organizations, including the OPP, to be engaged in discussions on legislative amendments to illicit drugs and their use. Legislation must not remove the police's ability to investigate street-level crime, which provides the required intelligence to target those who traffic, produce and import harmful substances. In addition, any legislated reforms being considered will need to prevent criminal organizations from being able to manipulate the law to continue to further victimize substance users.

Like many complex societal issues, no single group or organization has the expertise to provide the solution alone. We must work collaboratively to address the availability of these deadly drugs through enforcement, while our health partners focus on providing harm reduction and treatment for individuals suffering from addiction.

Production & Synthetic Clandestine Drug Lab Investigations

(A synthetic clandestine drug lab is an illicit chemical lab designed for secretly making illegal drugs)



Our projects have revealed that the primary sources of meth is both from Mexico and domestically produced. The OPP has invested significant resources to effectively investigate and dismantle the domestic production of meth.



The OPP has an internationally recognized Clandestine Laboratory Investigative Response Team (CLIRT), which has been in existence since 2001. The team is supported with mobile response vehicles that can quickly respond to dismantle synthetic clandestine drug lab anywhere in the province. In addition, they provide training to emergency services personnel on how to respond to the toxic and other dangerous hazards usually found at clandestine laboratory sites.

There is a risk of toxic exposure, environmental damage, and chemical explosions associated to the public and first responders, including firefighters, police and other emergency services personnel, who must respond to these scenes.

Precursors

Pseudoephedrine and lithium are used, as in the Birch Reduction method. In the One Pot method, discussed below, the only modification is with the source of ammonia. Liquid fertilizer (anhydrous ammonia) is replaced with ammonia nitrate found in Cold Packs and recently it has been reported that Miracle Gro Fertilizer Sticks can also be used as the ammonia source.



Pseudoephedrine continues to be sourced from cold tablet medications and lithium from batteries, usually AA's. The yield from a recipe using 200 – 60mg tablets (12 grams) should produce 50% (6 grams) to 80% (9.6 grams) worth \$600-960 at \$100 per gram.

The tablets are ground up and placed in the plastic bottle. Ether or Camp Fuel is added. Lithium strips from deconstructed batteries are then added. Each battery contains approximately 1 gram of lithium. Sodium hydroxide (lye) is then added. To initiate the process a small amount of water is added. Once the process starts there is no going back. Water is produced as a direct result of the reaction so it continues the reaction. The best yield is produced if about ¼ cup of sodium hydroxide is added to the reaction every 20 minutes. Most illicit drug producers only add it once and hope that the plastic bottle holds up under pressure, thereby obtaining a lesser yield.

The “One Pot” method



The “One Pot” method of meth production is seen throughout Ontario. The entire reaction is done in one container, with recipes available on the Internet, taking 1-2 hours. All the precursors, chemicals and reagents are commercially available in pharmacies and hardware stores. The method is efficient, producing very pure methamphetamine. Since December of 2012 a number of incidents involving this process have been discovered inadvertently by police or through investigative means. The method



poses a significant increased risk to the public and law enforcement due to the extreme fire hazard associated to this process.

Significant and coordinated police and emergency personnel resources are required to carry out the complex, meticulous and hazardous job of investigating and safely dismantling clan labs. On average, a small synthetic clandestine drug lab that produces less than one ounce per cook cycle can require one full day to safely dismantle and require in excess of 20 emergency services personnel. Whereas an Economic Based lab (profit-driven lab) can produce upwards of five kilograms of illegal drugs per cook cycle and requires on average three full days to dismantle. Due to the size of these toxic sites, emergency services personnel required for the duration of the cleanup can exceed 45 police/fire and ambulance staff.

Greater intelligence related to incoming shipments and purchases of precursors and laboratory equipment is required. We applaud the work of the RCMP's chemical diversion program to identify precursors, but we call for increased notifications from them. Enhanced collaboration, particularly in Ontario where the RCMP does not have provincial jurisdiction, will aid in disrupting the production and distribution of these deadly substances.

Environmental damage

The production of one pound of methamphetamine produces about six pounds of toxic waste. This waste is usually disposed of through careless dumping resulting in environmental contamination and health hazards for the public.

There have been several incidents of chemical waste and precursor chemicals found abandoned along roadside ditches. At some locations the area was littered with empty containers of iodine; acetone; isopropyl alcohol; caustic soda and ephedrine. There is significant public safety issues related to these dump sites due to the nature of the debris that is left exposed to humans and wildlife. The OPP engages the Ministry of Environment (MOE) in investigations when it appears there is evidence of chemical/toxic waste contaminating the environment.

A speciality team entitled UCRT accompanies the CLIRT to all synthetic clandestine drug lab investigations. UCRT members are highly trained specialists who provide the following: CBRNE Response/Substance Analysis, Air Monitoring, Decontamination, Technical Search, High Angle Rescue/Recovery, and Confined Space Operations.

For example, over the winter of 2018 alone, Caledon OPP detachment received calls regarding 8 dump sites within their jurisdiction. They appeared to contain the waste from suspected economic-based drug labs.



Project BAIRNSDALE



This is not the first time a dumping sites have been located within Caledon. There were a number of dump sites reported in 2016. The projected calculations from the first incident of the waste recovered indicate that it is possible that over 15 million ephedrine pills were extracted for the suspected clan lab production.

In closing, the OPP is well positioned to proactively investigate organized crime and to respond to clandestine labs. To further enhance our impact and promote public safety, a formal collaboration between public safety partners domestically is required to ensure critical information sharing related to precursors and lab equipment occurs in a timely fashion