

# **Stelmach unveils new crime prevention plan**

## **Strategy puts more money into youth programs**

By Darcy Henton, Calgary Herald  
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## **Premier Ed Stelmach unveiled a new crime prevention strategy Tuesday while announcing more funding for street level organizations that deal with at-risk youth.**

### **Photograph by: Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald**

Premier Ed Stelmach unveiled a new crime prevention strategy Tuesday while announcing more funding for street level organizations that deal with at-risk youth.

Stelmach pumped another \$2.4 million into community organizations, including \$300,000 into the Calgary Music Factory, while releasing a "strategic roadmap for crime prevention."

"It represents a shift in government policy from enforcement to a more balanced approach that supports an increased emphasis on crime prevention," he told an audience of police officers and community group leaders in Edmonton Tuesday.

"We used to just arrest people. Then they would just cycle through the system again and again, sometimes throughout their lives. Now we're taking action before crime starts."

Youth outreach workers say that funnelling money into programs for at-risk youth works and some of the best methods of preventing crime are basic.

"The best way to stop a bullet is to give a kid a job," said Kyle Dube, executive director of a street level organization called Youcan Edmonton. "A job gives them legitimacy in their lives."

Dube said schooling, a job and a spot on a minor hockey team reformed a street gang member who was released from prison after serving a sentence for manslaughter.

His organization plans to use its \$1.4 million grant on a Relentless Outreach Worker project that sends workers onto the streets after office hours when youths need positive intervention in their lives.

"It's about building a longterm relationship with them," he said.

"It's a model we saw in Boston and their success rates are phenomenally high."

Melissa Bigstone, a 19-yearold mother of two and rap singer with a history of crime, said that intervention has changed her life.

"Where I have come from and where I am now gives me hope for tomorrow," she said after presenting a rap song about her own reformation. "I am starting to give back to my community by these kind of programs and I just want to say "Thank You."

Calgary Deputy Police Chief Murray Stooke said the programs fill a gap that can't be filled through enforcement alone.

"The key is prevention," he said. "It's too late when you get to enforcement, where you investigate, lay charges and put people into the system."

He said the government funding provides useful programs that prevent youths from getting into gangs or help them get out. Stooke credited anti-gang community programs in Calgary for a drop in gang violence.

"Some of it is due to enforcement, but I think other aspects of it are due to the crime prevention activities that we're involved in and the community partners that we have that are assisting us in helping keep kids out of the gang life."

Stelmach said the crime prevention framework carries on from his other initiatives that included funding for more police officers, prosecutors and probation officers, as well as introducing new laws to crack down on gangs.

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