International Crime and Drug Issues

One of the main themes of the Birmingham G-8 Summit is international crime, including the production and consumption of illicit drugs. The work to be carried out at the summit reflects Canada's domestic agenda in combating organized crime, be it trafficking in drugs, people or firearms. Organized criminals take advantage of new and emerging technologies to improve their communications and find new opportunities for fraud and theft. Like its G-8 partners, Canada is concerned about the laundering of illicit profits from these activities.

Lyon Group

At the 1995 Halifax Summit, a senior experts' group on international organized crime was established with representatives from law enforcement, justice, immigration, customs and other agencies. As chair of the Halifax Summit, Canada was responsible for launching the experts' group and developing the 40 recommendations on specific actions approved by the 1996 Lyon Summit (where the experts' group was renamed the Lyon Group). The 40 recommendations were endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1997 following deliberations at the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Lyon Group has continued developing international procedures and achieving co-operation among the G-8 and with other countries.

Domestic Initiatives

Canada has focused considerable effort on providing law enforcement bodies with the tools they need to combat organized crime. New legislation came into force last year making participation in a criminal organization a criminal offence. Related provisions in the Criminal Code provide police, prosecutors and the courts with a range of new powers to deal with gangs and organized criminals. Authority for special police undercover operations was also established in 1997 with the new Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Criminal Law Improvements Act.

Canada has taken many steps domestically to deal with organized crime, including international criminal activities and money laundering. The Anti-Smuggling Initiative was recently renewed to support and focus the efforts of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Revenue Canada and the Department of Justice Canada on contraband trafficking. Over the past year, 13 Integrated Proceeds of Crime units were established across the country to combat money laundering, bringing together the RCMP, local and provincial police, Revenue Canada, Justice Canada, Crown counsel and forensic accountants. In addition, a