

## **Probe into roots of youth violence under way today**

### **McMurtry and Curling want to hear from those prone to trouble during closed-door meetings**

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**KERRY GILLESPIE**

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Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling aren't the first people to probe why young men are shooting their rivals and anyone else who happens to be in the way.

But this duo, asked by the premier to find out what the province can do to combat youth violence, hopes to do things differently.

Instead of focusing on experts and academics who will tell them why youth turn to violence, they want to hear from the kids in trouble, and prone to trouble, first hand.

"Young people, we have certainly learned, want to be heard and not just be heard through adult voices," McMurtry, former Ontario chief justice and cabinet minister, said yesterday in an interview.

Starting today, he and Curling will be holding closed-door meetings in eight communities across Ontario, chosen as representative of the youth violence problem.

In Toronto, they'll be holding meetings in the neighbourhoods of Kingston-Galloway, Jamestown, Jane-Finch and L'Amoureux. Meetings will also be held in Thunder Bay, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa.

At least half the participants at each meeting will be young people, McMurtry said.

"Over the years, it seems to me, it's been a top down situation where government and ministers and the bureaucracy have been saying: 'We know what's right and what should be done.' I think some more listening can be done," said Curling, a former Liberal MPP.

Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed the two as co-chairs of a review on the roots of youth violence in June after 15-year-old Jordan Manners was shot and killed in the hallway of his Toronto school, C. W. Jefferys Collegiate.

They expect to submit their report to McGuinty in about six months, McMurtry said.

But their determination to make a real difference won't end once they turn over the report.

"We realize that important aspects of this issue have been studied and not a whole lot has happened ... . (Previous reports) have faded into the mists of time without anybody really knowing what happened," McMurtry said.

"We're very committed to doing something meaningful. The last thing we want to do ... is create a report that is just going to gather dust."

To that end, they're engaging local community members, grassroots organizations, social service agencies like the United Way and police departments to get them on board with the process so they'll want to be part of the solution.

And they're not assuming the problems are the same across the province.

"We're not bringing the Toronto brand in there," Curling said, referring to the other four cities they're focusing on.

McMurtry, who isn't new to the issue, having led Toronto Mayor David Miller's advisory panel on community safety for four years, already has ideas of where change needs to happen.

"A very significant priority (is) increasing the level of trust that exists between many of our young people and law enforcement," McMurtry said.

For Curling, first impressions centre on how informed and engaged many young people are and the need to turn their ideas into solutions.

"The young people involved in programs out there are extremely committed and want to do better (in) their lives and for their community," Curling said.