

Methamphetamine, a growing concern for Canadian law enforcement

Written By Sam Odrowski

Methamphetamine use has been growing in the shadow of the opioid crisis, both locally and across Canada.

Const. Shannon Gordanier of the Dufferin OPP told the Citizen meth use is increasing in popularity locally due to its availability and pricing, while other drugs are becoming a bit more scarce.

“It appears availability and price is affecting use more so than user preference for the drug,” she noted.

In the late 90s and early 2000s methamphetamine use was a significant concern for police and now, throughout the country, there's been a re-emergence. In fact, the illicit drug is currently one of the most significant commodities within organized crime; entrenched from production, to importation and distribution, according to OPP.

“What we were finding was increased levels of seizures, clandestine laboratories, importation, and diversion of chemical precursors across the country,” said Bryan Mackillop, superintendent/director of the OPP's Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau.

“With methamphetamine being one of the most seized drugs in the country, and one of the most tested drugs by Health Canada, it certainly causes a grave concern.”

From 2017-2018 there was a 333 per cent increase in methamphetamine seizures according to the Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA) and it's not trending down. Drug seizures at the border that separates New York State and Canada actually saw a 1,000 per cent increase in drug seizures last year.

To combat methamphetamine use and help the public become better educated on the issue, a national public awareness campaign is being launched by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) and police services throughout Canada.

The campaign's launch is in support of the theme “Helping All Communities Stay Safe,” for Crime Stoppers Month, which runs through January.

The campaign will utilize a variety of communication strategies to provide information on indicators of methamphetamine production so the public can help police track down more clandestine labs.

It's important to note for every one kilogram of methamphetamine production, six kilograms of toxic waste is produced, which is almost always disposed of through illegal dumping, resulting in environmental contamination and health hazards to the public.

To help improve the safety of communities, police services across the country are asking for the public's help in eliminating methamphetamine production.

“OPP are always looking for the community to assist in tracking down those who are supplying or producing meth or any other illegal drugs in our community. There are many things to look out for to spot a possible meth lab,” said Const. Gordanier.

Some of the things to watch out for include suspicious or secretive behaviour, occupants attend for short periods at odd hours, chemical odours, location has excessive security, covered windows, and garbage contains chemical containers, glassware, bags of soil or the garbage is never put out.

Production is primarily taking place domestically in around the Toronto area and “lives are being lost,” said Mackillop.

“What you do have is organized crime, taking advantage of every opportunity to victimize our population,” he remarked. “They don’t usually just peddle in one particular commodity, they tend to focus on a variety of commodities, whether it’s gun trafficking, human trafficking? where there is a demand, they will make sure that the supply meets that demand.”

“They also they have a catalog of inventory to make sure that they’re maximizing their profits, because they don’t care about people, they care about money. And I think that’s the driving factor behind this ? organized crime, taking advantage of our vulnerable,” Mackillop added.

An unfortunate reality is that in Dufferin County, all too often, illicit drugs are getting into the hands of youth.

“When talking to the community street crime unit members, they mentioned that many people are trying these drugs when they are young and impressionable. By the time they are in their early 20’s, they are hooked,” said Const. Gordanier.

Both Mackillop and Gordanier encourage the public to become more informed on the telltale signs of meth production and report anything that’s suspicious.

“Working together with the community will generate far more success.

If you have any information regarding illegal drug production or supplying, contact local Crime Stoppers or OPP 1-888-310-1122,” Gordanier noted.