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Top cops gather to fight violence

'We're going to do whatever it takes to make sure public safety is protected'

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A crime fighters' summit is being arranged by Attorney General Chris Bentley in the wake of a series of murders that have shocked violence-hardened Torontonians.

"We're taking a look at what further action we can take to make sure that tragedies don't occur, to make sure our position is as strong as it can be for the dangerous, the violent and the out-of-control," Bentley said.

"We're going to do whatever it takes to make sure the public safety is protected."

The Attorney General said he spoke last week with Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair trying to set up a meeting as soon as possible.

Also attending will be Sudbury Chief Ian Davidson, who is president of the Association of Chiefs of Police of Ontario, and Community Safety and Corrections Minister Rick Bartolucci.

"How is what we've already started working and how and can it work better?" would be the focus of the meeting, Bentley said.

Bentley has been in the Opposition's spotlight at Queen's Park as the violence on the streets has led to questions about problems within the justice system.

On Oct. 13, Susan John, 43, and her mother Sarumma Varughese, 65, were murdered in their home on Rotary Dr. in Scarborough.

The man charged in the case, Nathaniel O'Brien, was on bail at the time for two sex assaults, ordered to live with his parents -- next door to the victims -- while he awaited trial.

Then, on Oct. 25, Bailey Zaveda, 23, a bystander, was hit by a stray bullet outside the Duke of York tavern in Leslieville.

The man arrested in the case, Kyle Weese, had previously cut a plea bargain on earlier gun charges in January 2006.

New Democrat Leader Howard Hampton said the fact Bentley has called the summit meeting shows he's scrambling to come up with answers on the criminal justice file.

"It's an admission that what they have been doing, first of all, is not working," Hampton said.

"But it's also an attempt by the attorney general to put the focus on something else." The reality is, Crown attorneys are making plea deals and sentence bargains that would not hold up under public scrutiny, Hampton said.