

ALERT



ALERT



**ALBERTA LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TEAMS
ANNUAL REPORT • 2018-2019**

ABOUT ALERT



ALERT WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT IN 2006 to bring together the province's most sophisticated law enforcement resources to combat organized and serious crime.

Nearly 300 municipal police and RCMP work together to investigate everything from drug trafficking to child exploitation to gang violence.

The strength of the ALERT model lies in the integration of members from various agencies who have expertise in intelligence, enforcement, and support services.

ALERT is the overarching umbrella organization of integrated, provincially focused law enforcement activities that promote safe and secure communities in Alberta.

ALERT BOARD

- **Chief Graham Abela**
Taber Police Service
- **Chief Keith Blake**
Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service
- **Chief Lorne Blumhagen**
Lacombe Police Service
- **Chief Dale Cox**
Lakeshore Regional Police Service
- **Chief Robert Davis**
Lethbridge Police Service
- **Chief Dean LaGrange**
Camrose Police Service
- **Chief Dale McFee**
Edmonton Police Service
- **Chief Andy McGrogan**
Medicine Hat Police Service
- **Chief Kyle Melting Tallow**
Blood Tribe Police Service
- **Chief Mark Neufeld**
Calgary Police Service
- **Chief Lee Newton**
Alberta Sheriffs
- **Deputy Commissioner Curtis Zablocki**
RCMP K Division
- **Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Bill Sweeney**
Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

PARTNERS



SUMMARY

ALERT BRINGS TOGETHER Alberta's most sophisticated law enforcement resources and is an overarching umbrella organization of integrated, provincially focused law enforcement activities that promote safe and secure communities in Alberta.

Through integration with ALERT's partner agencies, ALERT serves five distinct goals:

1. Promote intelligence-led policing
2. Disrupt and dismantle organized crime
3. Support safe communities
4. Reduce harm and help vulnerable victims
5. Enhance law enforcement capacity

In 2018-19, ALERT conducted more than 1,200 criminal investigations in communities big and small across Alberta. With its partner agencies, ALERT is keeping Alberta safe from serious and organized crime.

Here are some of the highlights from the past year:

- ALERT's integrated model facilitates the promotion of intelligence-led policing. Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta was able to assess 87 organized crime groups and 2,131 individuals for its 2019 Provincial Threat Assessment.
- ALERT operations put major dents in drug trafficking across the province. Project Maverick resulted in the seizure of roughly \$200,000 worth of cash and drugs in Medicine Hat. Meanwhile, Project Rails resulted in the seizure of more than \$250,000 worth of drugs and cash in Red Deer, along with five firearms.
- ALERT teams worked to keep communities safe from dangerous fentanyl processing labs in residential areas. One such lab in Edmonton, which was processing fentanyl to look like heroin, was dismantled in August 2018. Another lab where fentanyl was being pressed into pills was discovered and dismantled in Calgary in January 2019.
- ALERT's Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit continued to protect children across the province from exploitation over the Internet. ICE teams arrested 89 suspects and forensic technicians analyzed 212 terabytes of data.
- ALERT enhances the capacity of provincial law enforcement by providing specialized training to officers from across Alberta. Over 1,150 candidates received training in 2018-19.

The results achieved in 2018-19 were made possible by the support of the Alberta Government, specifically the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General; Public Safety Canada; and our partner agencies: Calgary Police Service; Edmonton Police Service; Lethbridge Police Service; Medicine Hat Police Service; and RCMP.

Since being formed in 2006, ALERT teams have made more than 10,000 arrests, seized \$600 million worth of dangerous drugs, and have taken 1,200 guns out of criminals' hands.



1,835
charges laid



\$11.93M
value of
seized drugs



24
child interventions



343
people charged



68,428
grams of
cocaine seized



774
agency assists



\$2.48M
proceeds of crime
seized



8,484
grams of fentanyl
powder seized



68
firearms seized

2018-2019 HIGHLIGHTS



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL 1: PROMOTE INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | 2018-19 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| CRIMINAL NETWORKS IDENTIFIED | - | 1 | - | 86 | 87 |
| ACIIS ENTRIES | 2,121 | 358 | 785 | 434 | 3,698 |
| INTELLIGENCE REPORTS DISSEMINATED | 523 | 453 | 451 | 507 | 1,934 |

GOAL 2: DISRUPT AND DISMANTLE ORGANIZED CRIME

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | 2018-19 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| CRIMINAL NETWORK INVESTIGATIONS | 202 | 338 | 312 | 359 | 1,211 |
| CHARGES LAID | 447 | 436 | 487 | 465 | 1,835 |
| PEOPLE CHARGED | 91 | 88 | 89 | 75 | 343 |
| PROCEEDS OF CRIME | \$716,521 | \$1,198,542 | \$536,553 | \$25,280 | \$2,476,896 |

GOAL 3: SUPPORTING SAFE COMMUNITIES

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | 2018-19 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| COMMUNITIES WORKED | 73 | 56 | 64 | 73 | 266 |
| FIREARMS SEIZED | 17 | 15 | 32 | 4 | 68 |
| VALUE OF DRUGS SEIZED | \$6,411,367 | \$2,583,825 | \$2,502,546 | \$432,186 | \$11,929,924 |

GOAL 4: REDUCE HARM AND HELP VULNERABLE VICTIMS

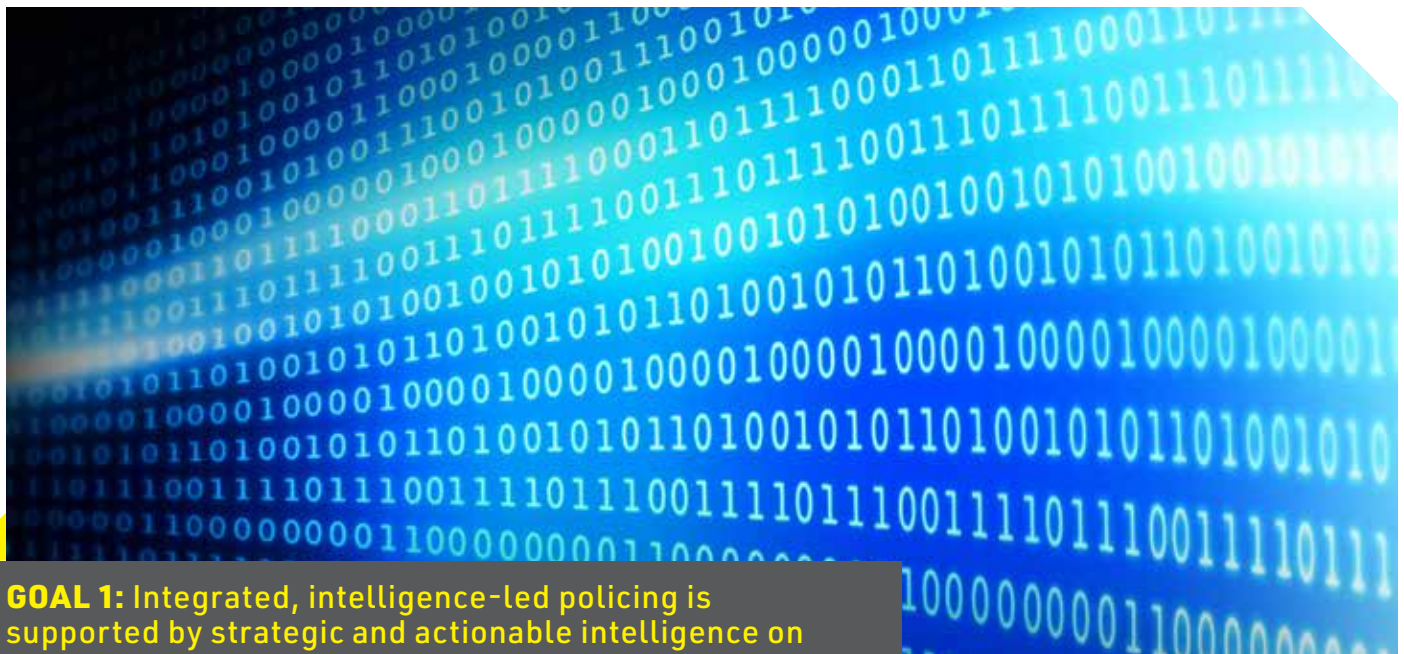
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | 2018-19 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| CHILD INTERVENTIONS | 4 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 24 |
| CHILD EXPLOITATION PHOTOS/VIDEOS ID'd | 163,199 | 17,504 | 90,012 | 109,636 | 380,351 |
| ITRAC THREAT ASSESSMENTS* | 60 | 42 | 50 | 57 | 209 |

*Q4 stats include up to March 4, 2019, on which date ITRAC officially transitioned from ALERT to the Government of Alberta

GOAL 5: ENHANCE LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | 2018-19 |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| AGENCY ASSISTS | 43 | 259 | 220 | 252 | 774 |
| COURSES OFFERED | 6 | 1 | 12 | 7 | 26 |
| CANDIDATES TRAINED | 146 | 12 | 845 | 151 | 1,154 |
| PREVENTION ACTIVITIES | 24 | 18 | 17 | 16 | 75 |

PROMOTE INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING



GOAL 1: Integrated, intelligence-led policing is supported by strategic and actionable intelligence on provincial and transnational organized and serious crime.

Strategic analysis and intelligence sharing are the cornerstones of success in fighting organized crime. ALERT promotes an integrated, intelligence-led approach to combating this issue by bringing together intelligence and enforcement teams to share information and work closely on serious and organized crime investigations around the province.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

PROVINCIAL THREAT ASSESSMENT

In its 2019 Provincial Threat Assessment (PTA), Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta (CISA) identified 87 criminal organizations to assess and rank them as low-, medium- or high-threat groups. CISA also collected information on 2,131 individuals.

With the help of the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., CISA incorporated Social Network Analysis (SNA) into the PTA for the second year in a row. The total network included 2,765 people and 4,705 dyads, or connections between two people.

INTELLIGENCE SHARING

- An arrest by the ALERT Medicine Hat organized crime team had a big ripple effect in November 2018, when they seized nearly half a kilogram of methamphetamine in the city. However, during the course of that investigation, they identified a suspected supplier in Calgary and passed along the information to the Calgary Police Service's Gang Enforcement Team (GET). In December, GET executed search warrants on two Calgary homes and seized 10 kilograms of methamphetamine, 2.4 kilograms of cocaine, 504 grams of fentanyl and \$75,000 in cash. Two people were arrested and charged with numerous drug-related offences.
- ALERT Lethbridge's organized crime team, Blood Tribe Police, Lethbridge



87

criminal networks identified



1,934

intelligence reports disseminated



3,698

ACIIS entries

ACIIS is the national database for sharing criminal information and intelligence on organized crime.

Police and Taber Police worked together in March 2019 to arrest two suspected drug dealers, including one with ties to the Manitoba-based Mad Cowz gang, and seized nearly 500 carfentanyl pills. It is alleged the two suspects were trafficking drugs across southern Alberta, including the Blood Tribe Reserve.

PROMOTE INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING

STRAW PURCHASING ON THE RISE

Guns & Gangs eager to see how system treats cases

When Justin Shipowich was sentenced on firearms trafficking charges in May 2018, Sgt. Eric Stewart was watching intently to see what kind of message would be sent.

Stewart heads up ALERT's Guns and Gangs team, based in Edmonton, which investigated Shipowich's straw purchasing case and arrested him in September 2018. Straw purchasing is the practice of buyers legally obtaining firearms and then reselling them to criminal markets.

Shipowich's case was the first one involving straw purchasing to make its way through Alberta courts. He eventually received an eight-year prison sentence – one Stewart says is a significant message to others contemplating doing the same thing.

"We want the sentences to be hefty and high," he said. "Once you've taken that step to purchase a gun and then sell it illegally, you've now put a gun on the street that could cause a lot of damage. You are responsible for that, and I think the sentences should be high to demonstrate that."

In October 2018, shortly after Shipowich's sentence was handed down, the Guns and Gangs team made an arrest in another straw purchasing case. Philip Edward Sarrasin, 26, was arrested in Calgary after handguns he allegedly bought in Calgary turned up in criminal cases as far away as Toronto.

"We've seen a trend lately of more straw purchasing investigations in Edmonton and northern Alberta," Stewart said. "Why that is, I don't know. I don't think it's any easier to purchase guns here than it is in B.C. or wherever. But, talking to outside agencies and other police officers, the trend has been that people come to Edmonton to purchase guns."

Straw purchasing has been around a long time in Alberta, but activity – and thus enforcement – has picked up over the past 10 to 15 years due to a few different factors, including the increased gap in values between the Canadian and the U.S. dollar, as well as greater awareness of the practice



Guns recovered during a straw purchasing case that concluded in October 2018.

among organized crime groups.

"From our experience, people who become straw purchasers are people that, at one point, had legitimate jobs and, in some cases, fell on hard times. They had a firearms license already, and they were exploited or identified – or maybe they reached out themselves," Stewart said.

The guns that Stewart and his team deal with are those defined as "restricted" or "prohibited" under the Criminal Code of Canada, including all handguns, automatic and semi-automatic weapons, sawed-off shotguns, and certain types of rifles. He says they see a wide variety of those guns in their investigations.

Being the only ALERT unit specifically addressing firearms in Alberta, the Guns and Gangs team typically only takes on one straw purchasing file at a time. Stewart said these investigations are complex – more complex than drug investigations he worked on earlier in his career – with multiple search warrants and judicial authorizations needed.

But that's where they can engage partners such as the Alberta Chief Firearms Officer's office, the RCMP's National

Weapons Enforcement Support Team, other ALERT teams and municipal police forces. And the team has a great relationship with the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service, with whom they work closely to ensure straw purchasers are brought to justice.

"Three years ago, when we rolled out the Guns and Gangs mandate, we identified that we had to establish a good relationship with the Crown prosecution," Stewart said. "Those guys work their tails off to push these through the courts and seek those high sentences for us."

There's no blueprint to these firearms investigations, Stewart said – some exist on their own, while others get tangled up in drug trafficking and other crimes. "We initiate the investigation on the firearms offences, but as it unravels and continues, you might identify other offences."

While Stewart doesn't think straw purchasing will be eradicated anytime soon, he says law enforcement agencies are willing to learn from each other to help curb the practice, and he hopes they'll be able to share data more efficiently in the future to work toward their goals. "It's a privilege to own a gun, not a right," he said.

DISRUPT & DISMANTLE ORGANIZED CRIME



GOAL 2: Organized and serious crime in Alberta is reduced.

Integrated policing is one of the most effective ways to battle organized crime because it encourages and fosters collaboration between investigators, intelligence analysts and experts. ALERT can then expertly perform dedicated investigations that span multiple jurisdictions and target the highest threat groups and individuals. Historically, organized crime has been synonymous with drug trafficking; however, organized crime is becoming increasingly complex, is multi-faceted, and is always evolving.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

PROJECT MAVERICK

In one of the largest files ALERT's Medicine Hat organized crime team has ever handled, Project Maverick concluded in November 2018, dismantling a cocaine trafficking network based in the city. Nearly \$200,000 worth of drugs, cash, stolen property and property obtained by crime was seized, along with 14 firearms. Ten people were arrested and face a total of 60 criminal charges.

PROJECT ENTRY

Project Entry was a joint investigation involving ALERT and the RCMP's Federal Serious and Organized Crime into a cocaine

trafficking ring operating in Edmonton, Spruce Grove, Cold Lake, Whitecourt and Grande Prairie. It concluded in July 2018 with the arrest of 10 people, who face a total of 45 charges. Among the seizures were five kilograms of cocaine, 500 grams of the buffing agent phenacetin, cannabis resin and a handgun.

Among the people arrested were a member of the Hells Angels Westridge chapter and two members of the Dirty Few Lakeland chapter, a support club of the Hells Angels.

PROJECT RAILS

In June 2018, ALERT Red Deer's organized crime team announced the results of Project Rails, a year-long investigation into drug trafficking in central Alberta.



343

people charged



1,835

charges laid



\$2.48M

value of proceeds of crime seized

Investigators were able to seize more than \$250,000 worth of drugs and cash – including 1.2 kilograms of cocaine, 2.3 kilograms of cannabis, another 2.3 kilograms of cannabis resin, and \$39,000 cash – along

DISRUPT & DISMANTLE ORGANIZED CRIME

with five firearms. Two men were arrested after search warrants were executed in Red Deer and Sylvan Lake, and a total of 57 criminal charges were laid.

PROJECT FORTUNE

More than \$1 million worth of cocaine and cash were seized by ALERT's Fort McMurray organized crime team during Project Fortune, which concluded in July 2018. Seven people were arrested and 49 charges were laid.

The investigation began after Strathcona County RCMP shared information with ALERT about possible drug trafficking out of a barber shop in Sherwood Park. The investigation later determined that the trafficking network stretched to Fort McMurray and to a home in Edmonton, where it is alleged cocaine was pressed and packaged for street-level sales.

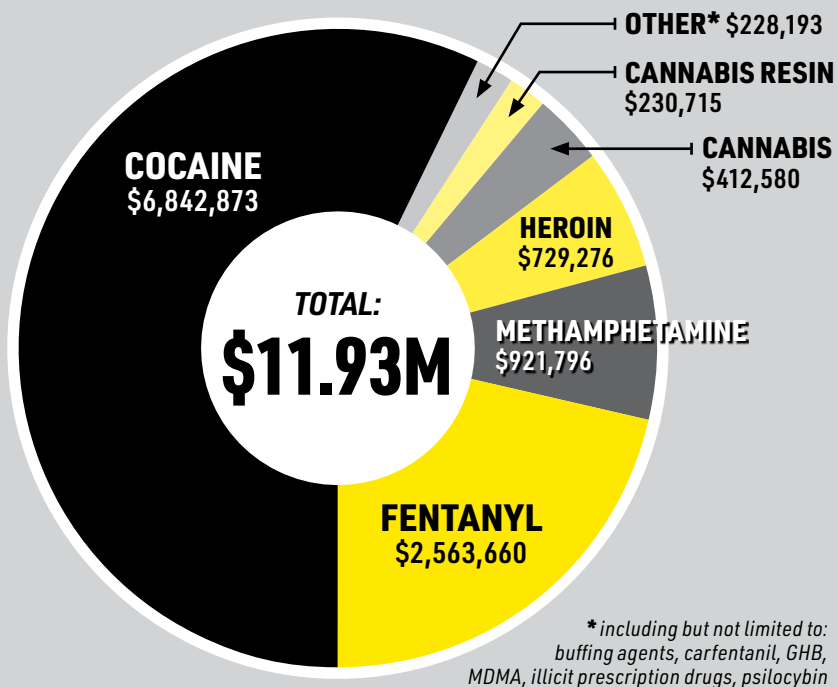
ONLINE DISPENSARY SHUT DOWN

An illegal online drug dispensary was shut down by ALERT Edmonton's organized crime team in June 2018. The website was allegedly operating out of a home in west Edmonton and was selling cannabis along with other drugs.

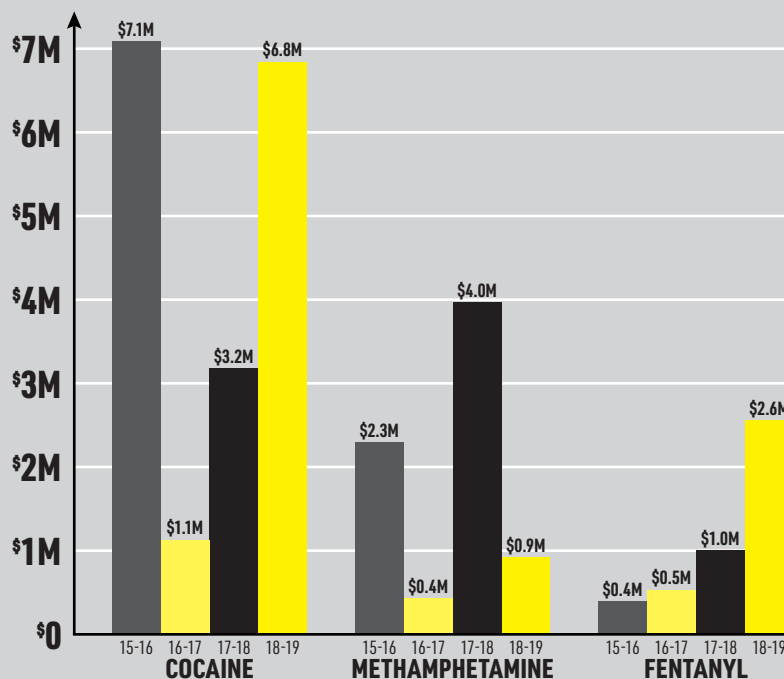
As a result of the investigation, \$618,000 worth of drugs were seized, including: 34 kilograms of dried, packaged cannabis; 2.73 kilograms of cannabis resin; 1.7 kilograms of cocaine; 1.1 kilograms of psilocybin mushrooms; and various cannabis oils, powders, and cannabis-infused candies.

Three men were arrested and charged with multiple counts each of possession of a controlled substance for the purpose of trafficking and possession of proceeds of crime.

DRUGS SEIZED - 2018-19



DRUGS SEIZED - 2015-19



DISRUPT & DISMANTLE ORGANIZED CRIME



PATIENCE PAYS OFF IN MEDICINE HAT

Project Maverick was one of the biggest files that ALERT's Medicine Hat organized crime and gang team has ever handled. But it was almost over before it really began.

Investigator Sgt. Adam Gregory says that, when the file started in December 2017, it only targeted lower-level cocaine dealers in Medicine Hat. "Taking just a quick look at it, it looked like it would just be the one guy who was selling up to the ounce level of cocaine," he said. "It nearly got concluded with a search warrant until surveillance started observing the target interacting with people we knew were higher-level drug traffickers."

Those connections with bigger players kept the case open and, eventually, the team was able to arrest 10 people on 60 charges and seize nearly \$200,000 in drugs, cash, stolen property and property obtained by crime, along with 14 firearms.

"Once we made those connections, we knew it was going to require patience, because the likelihood that it was going to grow as an investigation was obvious to us," Gregory said.

However, the investigation was complicated by the fact that the suspects were well-educated on police techniques and were tough to catch off guard. "Every step we took, there was a lot of extra preparation and planning to make sure we didn't get compromised early on in the file," Gregory said.

But the Medicine Hat team was able to call on other police agencies – including those from Medicine Hat, Taber, Edmonton and Calgary – to help out and come up with some outside-the-box solutions.

"Without these relationships, Project Maverick would not have proceeded the way it did. We would not have been able to achieve the same level of success without them," Gregory said.

"On a day-to-day basis, we rely on our partnerships, and we are continually rewarded by having these positive contacts. These are things that I know are built over time and need to be sustained and worked on, and they can also deteriorate if they're not worked on. We're very lucky down here to have these relationships."

While Gregory had worked on many

drug investigations in the past, one of the magnitude of Project Maverick was a new experience for him and for many on the ALERT Medicine Hat team. He estimated it had been probably a decade since a similar investigation had been undertaken in the city.

"It was a big thing for our team to not only keep the patience to continue on, but accept the learning curve and know we're going to be super-adaptable and willing to ride out the complete investigation," Gregory said.

"This isn't the type of work we do on a regular basis. Everybody really had to work hard every single day and put the time into this file to achieve success," he added.

A major part of that success was being able to lay charges of instructing a criminal organization in this case. It's a high bar to clear with prosecutors to lay those charges, but Gregory is proud of the work his team put in to meet that standard.

"It was very rewarding to us as a team; we don't want that operating within our community. I know it was rewarding for the guys, and what they learned throughout the investigation was immense," he said.



DISRUPT & DISMANTLE ORGANIZED CRIME

EARNING A REPUTATION

Major projects have ripple effect in outlaw biker clubs

Thanks to large-scale, successful operations like Project Entry, ALERT is gaining a reputation among outlaw motorcycle groups (OMGs) in Alberta – in the best possible way.

Project Entry – a joint investigation between ALERT and RCMP Federal Serious and Organized Crime (FSOC) – wrapped up in July 2018 and resulted in the seizure of five kilograms of cocaine, half a kilogram of the buffing agent phenacetin, cannabis resin, a handgun, multiple vehicles and motorcycles, and \$13,000 in cash proceeds of crime.

Eleven people were arrested and charged with a total of 48 criminal offences. That includes one member of the Hells Angels, who was charged with instructing a criminal organization, and two members of the Dirty Few Lakeland chapter, a Hells Angels support club.

Cpl. Kevin Misiwich is a member of one of ALERT's Organized Crime and Gang Enforcement (OCGE) teams, and served as the primary investigator on the file. He says that projects like Entry and the results they produce are getting noticed.

"It sends ripples throughout. During the investigation, we'd get information that these guys were wondering if it was local police or ALERT keeping tabs on them. Because the prevailing thought seemed to be, if it's ALERT, they're going to get you," he said. "That's the reputation ALERT is starting to get – you don't want to come onto the radar here."

While combatting OMGs across the province, ALERT teams are always looking out for information on their criminal activity. When such information emerged about drug trafficking that spanned from Edmonton and Spruce Grove to Cold Lake, Camrose and Grande



Prairie, they knew they had something big on their hands.

But they knew from the get-go that the Hells Angels were involved, a group whose notoriety sets up its own challenges. "With that obviously comes some understanding that you're not going at lower-tier criminals," Misiwich said. "By virtue of knowing who they are, they know they're on the radar for pretty much every law enforcement agency in the area, and they take steps to prevent being caught. That includes using technology; that includes isolating themselves or putting people in front of their criminal activity to insulate them from being caught."

With a little bit of luck and a lot of patience, the team managed to build up a relationship with the main players in the case. That paid off later on with more serious charges that will hopefully translate to longer sentences.

"It was looking to be maybe a quick-hit kind of file if we weren't given the opportunity to get the relationships going," Misiwich said. "This was a good file that shows, if we're given a little bit of rope, the resources to go behind a plan, things can be developed. Had we been constrained to doing only a small number of buys, we would have never gotten to

where we did."

A big feather in ALERT's cap for Project Entry was the fact that charges of instructing a criminal organization were laid against a member of the Hells Angels, though Misiwich expects the group to fight that tooth-and-nail. "Just by virtue of them not wanting that conviction, I think it shows they take it very seriously," he said.

The Hells Angels are the predominant OMG in Canada, and they have support clubs working throughout Alberta. There have been some skirmishes when other groups try to move in, most notably attempts by the Warlocks MC to stake a claim in Fort McMurray. One of the biggest challenges in combatting OMGs, Misiwich said, is keeping up with technology and counter tactics utilized by these groups.

But results like ALERT saw with Project Entry make it worthwhile to face those challenges head-on and motivate investigators for the next big case.

"At the end of the day, we're here to do a job, and that job is to try and catch these guys," Misiwich said. "I think there's a sense of pride in that, at ALERT, we're going after those higher-tier criminals whose jobs are to sell drugs or do criminal activity, and not be caught by the police. If we can jam them on that, that's a win."



SUPPORT SAFE COMMUNITIES



GOAL 3: Alberta communities big and small are made even safer by targeting organized and serious crime offenders.

Specialized investigative support means ALERT has the capacity to target the gangs, drugs, organized crime groups, child sex predators, and highest-risk domestic abusers who seek to undermine the safety of our neighbourhoods. Organized crime is directly tied to much of Alberta's serious and violent crime. By targeting organized crime groups, ALERT can significantly lower rates of victimization related to drugs, weapons, and fraud offences.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

FENTANYL LABS SHUT DOWN

ALERT teams in both Edmonton and Calgary had their hands full during the 2018-2019 fiscal year dealing with fentanyl processing labs that cropped up in residential neighbourhoods.

In August 2018, with the help of the Edmonton Police Service's Clandestine Lab Team, ALERT's Edmonton organized crime team executed a search warrant on a home in the Silverberry neighbourhood. There, they found a lab where fentanyl was being processed to look like and be sold on the streets as heroin. More than two kilograms of processed fentanyl was seized, along with

500 grams of fentanyl powder, five kilograms of buffing agent and \$900 cash.

Then, in January 2019, ALERT's Calgary organized crime team dismantled a suspected fentanyl lab in the Forest Lawn neighbourhood with the aid of the RCMP Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement and Response (CLEAR) team. They seized 902 fentanyl pills, 178 grams of fentanyl powder, morphine pills, a handgun, a pill press, dies, chemicals, mixing containers and packaging materials. Four people were arrested.

WEAPONS SEIZED

ALERT investigators in Edmonton and Fort McMurray concluded a major firearms investigation in May



266

communities where investigations took place



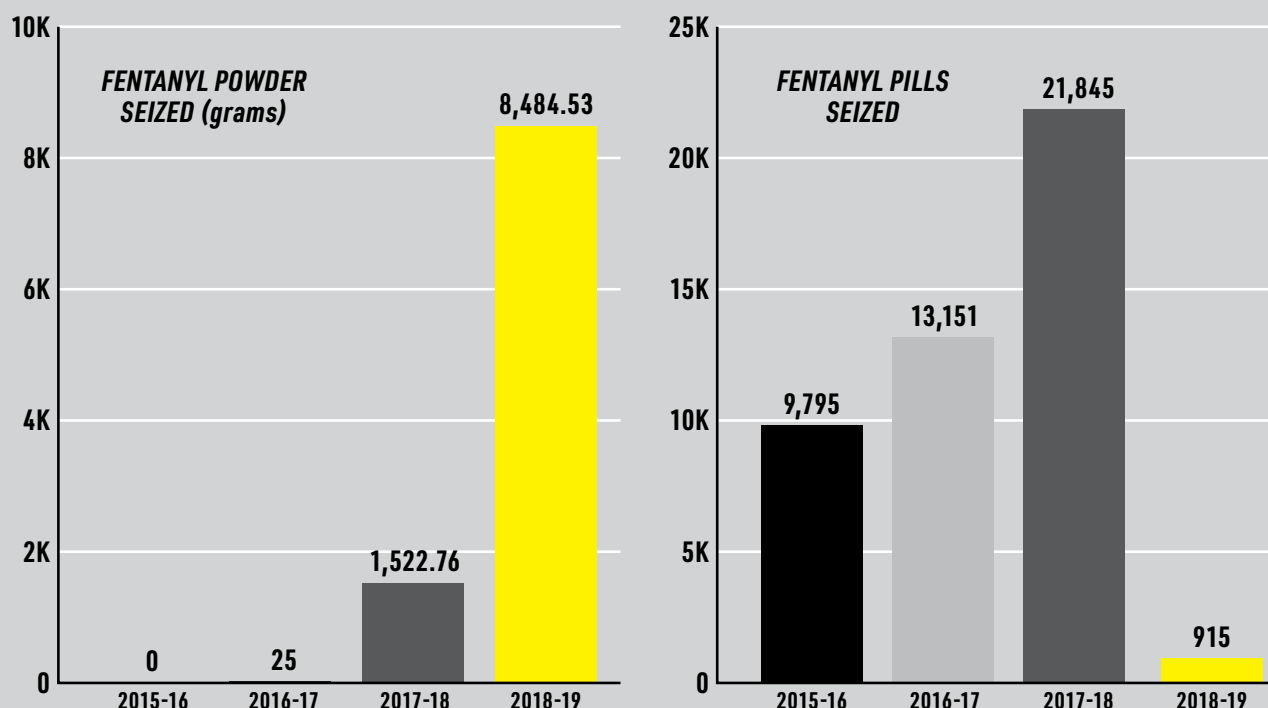
68

firearms seized

2018, seizing eight high-powered firearms and arresting two twin brothers and an associate. The firearms seized included assault rifles, suppressors and over-capacity magazines. The three accused were charged with a total of 61 offences.

SUPPORT SAFE COMMUNITIES

ALERT FENTANYL SEIZURES 2015-19



\$700K IN DRUGS, CASH SEIZED

A search of two homes – one in the Douglasdale neighbourhood and one in Copperfield – and two vehicles by ALERT's Calgary organized crime team in July 2018 led to the arrest of two men and the seizure of more than \$700,000 worth of drugs and cash proceeds of crime.

Investigators alleged that the homes were being used to package and press cocaine for street-level sales in Calgary and surrounding communities. In total, they seized 4.5 kilograms of cocaine, 549 grams of heroin, 360 grams of cannabis, a 2013 BMW sedan, more than \$30,000 cash, and a handgun with ammunition and two prohibited magazines. The two suspects face a total of 23 criminal charges.

MILLION-DOLLAR BUST

ALERT's Edmonton organized crime team turned up more than \$1 million worth of drugs in November 2018 after executing search warrants on homes in the neighbourhoods of Hodgson, Terwillegar and Mill Woods. Three people were arrested and charged with multiple drug- and firearms-related offences each.

In total, investigators seized: 8.7 kilograms of cocaine; 216 grams of methamphetamine; 8.6 kilograms of a cocaine buffing agent; 1,000 packages of cannabis resin; two prohibited handguns with their serial numbers removed; ammunition; and \$44,800 in cash proceeds of crime.

RCMP ASSISTS

ALERT teams often travel to rural Alberta communities to assist all law enforcement and local police services with their own drug investigations.

In November, members of ALERT's Edmonton organized crime team travelled to Wainwright to help arrest five suspects there and seize cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis and cash proceeds of crime from three homes.

In December, ALERT Edmonton teams concluded a joint investigation with Westlock RCMP with the search of a rural property. There, they seized 824 grams of methamphetamine along with cocaine, GHB, and suspected fentanyl powder.

SUPPORT SAFE COMMUNITIES



FINDING FENTANYL

Processing labs make their way into residential areas

Seeing fire trucks and police officers in protective suits on a quiet residential street is a big surprise for homeowners. Unfortunately, for ALERT investigators, such precautions are becoming more and more routine as fentanyl processing labs continue to encroach on residential neighbourhoods.

In August 2018, ALERT's Edmonton organized crime team seized more than \$1 million in drugs as they shut down a lab operating in a garage in the Silverberry neighbourhood, where it's alleged fentanyl was being processed to look like heroin. And in January 2019, ALERT investigators in Calgary dismantled a garage lab in the Forest Lawn neighbourhood where fentanyl was being pressed into pills.

"It wasn't a huge surprise," said Staff Sgt. Carson Creaser, ALERT Edmonton. "A lot of our illicit drug targets go to places where they

can hide in plain sight, and residential neighbourhoods provide a lot of anonymity. There are plenty of houses for rent, and landlords often require little backstory, or backstopping of a story."

"I think what they look for is somewhere they can have a property where they trust the ownership, whether it's their own or it's rented," added Staff Sgt. Shawn Wallace, ALERT Calgary. "They're looking

for the safety and security of their illegal operation."

While these criminals may be looking for safety and security, their labs put the rest of the neighbourhood at risk. Not only are there the dangers of violence that accompany most drug operations, but there is also the chance that fine fentanyl powders could become airborne.

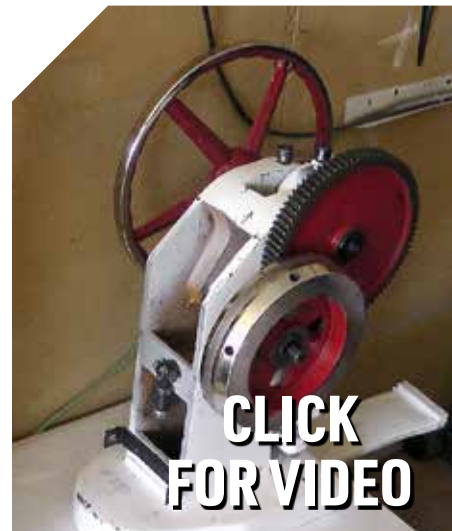
"Any time you're starting to work with precursors, when you're looking at manufacturing or synthesizing drugs, looking at the combination of any of the filler materials, you can have aerosolized powders or some splash – you're looking at any sort of contamination or absorption as a danger to any of the subjects who are knowingly or unknowingly associated to the drug lab," Wallace said.

"Our illicit drug targets go to places where they can hide in plain sight."

That's why ALERT investigators work closely with clandestine lab teams operated by municipal police forces or the RCMP to carefully plan out and execute search warrants.

In Edmonton, the processing of fentanyl to be sold as heroin posed an additional danger to the community, specifically to drug users. "Your average heroin user will understand their tolerances and have some experience with it," Creaser said. "When you have fentanyl, because of the mixing procedure, it's like Russian roulette. You don't know how much each dose really contains."

Fentanyl labs may have fewer giveaways than other drug operations,



CLICK FOR VIDEO

Top left: Drugs seized from a processing lab in Edmonton in August 2018.
Above: A pill press seized from a Calgary lab in January 2019.

like the stains and seepage from a large-scale cannabis grow-op, so Wallace says the best way to stay safe is to know your neighbours. "You live in a community, so know what people do and be social," he said.

In the Edmonton case, the home was rented, and the homeowners will have to pay for remediation out of their own pockets, though they may be able to recoup some costs through civil court.

"Get multiple references, job histories, multiple pieces of government-issued ID," Creaser advised landlords. "These are the things people can do to protect themselves. Just do everything possible to verify the person is who they say they are, that the work they say they do is actually legitimate."

Neither officer expects criminals to pack up and move out any time soon.

"It's been uncommon up until now – in my 22 years in policing, I've only witnessed four true pill presses – but I can see that may increase over time," Wallace said.

"Criminals, drug dealers and drug wholesalers will continue to look for the easiest, safest places to base their operations out of," added Creaser. "And unfortunately for our communities, often where people can disappear in plain sight is residential neighbourhoods."

SUPPORT SAFE COMMUNITIES

PROJECT RAILS STAYS ON TRACK

Year-long investigation nets \$250K in drugs, cash

A little bit of perseverance paid off in a big way for ALERT's organized crime and gang team in Red Deer.

In July 2018, ALERT announced the results of Project Rails, a year-long investigation into suspected drug trafficking activity in Central Alberta. More than \$250,000 worth of drugs and cash were seized, along with five firearms, from homes in Red Deer and Sylvan Lake, making this one of the largest files the Red Deer ALERT team has ever handled. Two people were arrested and charged with a total of 57 criminal offences.

"Red Deer's kind of unique, because a lot of the groups working here, trafficking drugs here, they don't typically sit on a lot of product. We're so close to Edmonton and Calgary, which are major centres for drug distribution," said Cpl. Mike Purse, who was part of the team working the case. "A lot of the groups we target here, they're not sitting on large amounts. So the amount of cash and drugs and guns we seized [as part of Rails] is significant for Red Deer, especially. You don't typically see that much cash around here. You don't typically seize large amounts of drugs in Red Deer all the time."

With the one case occupying most of the team's time for an entire year, there were some challenges around staying focused on the tasks at hand. But Purse and his team were able to keep those challenges to a minimum.

"We were lucky with Rails because the techniques we were using allowed us to really control the investigation," he said. "There weren't hundreds of hours of surveillance put into it or things like that; those are the ones where the attention can wander. During this time, we had other investigations come along that we were able to do at the same time,



because we did have that level of control over the direction of Project Rails."

The Red Deer team was also able to call on other police agencies for assistance thanks to ALERT's integrated policing model. "We're kind of unique here, because we don't have the same level of integration as somewhere like Edmonton ALERT does, where they have two different police agencies – sometimes three – working together," Purse said. "For us, we're all Mounties here. But with the ALERT model, I can pick up my phone and, in seconds, have a contact in Edmonton or Calgary, or within the Alberta Sheriffs, or wherever we need help."

"There's constant crossover on our files with Calgary and Edmonton; I think we have yet to work on a file where the target, or someone associated to the target, hasn't gone to the city. When we see that happening, we have an hour to get to Calgary or an hour to get to Edmonton, and we can easily pick up the phone and have resources from the city willing and able to assist us, just like that."

While it was important to get the drugs off the streets of Red Deer through

Project Rails, perhaps the bigger impact came with the seizure of five firearms, including two handguns, two shotguns and an SKS rifle with a high-capacity drum magazine.

"When I started [in police work] 18 years ago, it was more of a rarity to see a firearm during a drug investigation," Purse said. "Unfortunately, now it's very common; it's almost the norm. You expect it now."

Those firearms, and the drug traffickers who carry them, have the potential to seriously threaten the safety of communities across Alberta. Therefore, investigators are keen to corral those traffickers before they can truly establish themselves and situations have the chance to escalate.

"If these groups are allowed to proliferate here, to stay and operate and grow in Red Deer, then the competition starts. That's when you start to see violence between different drug trafficking groups, when they start to step on each other's toes and take away business from one another," Purse said. "If we're able to catch them, stop them, as they're growing and getting established, I think it prevents some of that inter-group violence."



SUPPORT SAFE COMMUNITIES

NETWORK BUST MORE THAN LUCK

Information sharing, diligent police work take down cocaine ring in Project Fortune

At first glance, it would seem that a barbershop in Sherwood Park would have little to do with a drug investigation in Fort McMurray, nearly a four-and-a-half-hour drive north. But the two became linked in an unlikely way for ALERT's organized crime and gang team in Fort McMurray during the summer of 2018.

In August, ALERT announced the results of Project Fortune, a 16-month-long investigation that shut down a drug trafficking network that stretched from Fort McMurray to Sherwood Park. When all was said and done, investigators had arrested seven people and laid 49 criminal charges, and had seized eight kilograms of cocaine along with \$215,000 in cash proceeds of crime.

Because of that massive haul, Project Fortune was called "Christmas in August" for the Fort McMurray team at a news conference held at ALERT headquarters in Edmonton. But primary investigator Const. Kevin Browne says that, while it's important to get those drugs off the streets, maybe the bigger feather in the team's cap was being able to lay charges of conspiracy to traffic cocaine, committing an indictable offence for the benefit of a criminal organization, and instructing a person to commit an indictable offence for the benefit of a criminal organization.

"They're difficult; they have to be approved by the federal Crown prosecutor before they're laid. And if they sign off on it, that means we've done a thorough job and we've been able to meet that high standard," Browne said.

"To get that, I think that's a big feather in our cap up here, especially to do it as a relatively small team."

After receiving information from Strathcona County RCMP about drug trafficking activity that possibly traced back to Fort McMurray, Browne and the rest of the ALERT team got to work. Thankfully, the RCMP information gave them a nice head start.

"We were ready to go into buying wholesale, and we had that foothold there. We were already five steps ahead," he said. "We knew immediately that we were going to be in a long-term operation; we saw the potential for it."

But they still didn't know a whole lot about the network in Fort McMurray and just how big it was. Browne and his team came up

"If you're really objective-focused and you get them to buy into the process, they'll stay focused."



with different scenarios and strategies to find out how deep the network ran in their community.

It was a project that took up most of the team's time and resources over those 16 months, but Browne worked hard to keep everyone involved in making decisions giving input on next steps.

"I'm very much objective-focused. A lot of times on files like this, guys are chasing the shiny objects and it gets really expansive. It's hard to keep people buying in if you keep moving the goalposts," he said. "If you're really objective-focused and you get them to buy into the process, they'll stay focused."

That kind of focus on the bigger picture also requires quite a bit of patience. "Evidence gathered in our investigation led us to believe that a conspiracy and criminal organization existed, and we went about gathering further evidence to support that," Browne said.

"If we just get one guy for drug trafficking, that's easy; we could just stop them on the highway. But our goal was to dismantle the network and go for that criminal organization. Those are harder charges to prove, but they also carry bigger penalties. That's what we were looking for."

REDUCE HARM & HELP VICTIMS



GOAL 4: Law enforcement activities reduce harm and provide necessary supports to vulnerable victims, including the drug-addicted, sexually exploited children, and victims of domestic abuse.

ALERT teams work to protect Albertans, reducing harm and taking measures to better ensure the safety of our province. They get harmful drugs off the street, intervene in the lives of children being abused or drug-endangered, and protect children from online sexual exploitation offences.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

FAMILY DOCTOR ARRESTED

ALERT's Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit arrested a family doctor practicing in Sylvan Lake, Alta., in June 2018 after getting information that he had allegedly attempted to arrange to have sex with a child.

Information about the 62-year-old man was relayed to ICE from the Victoria Police Department, as he had allegedly been involved in sexually explicit conversations with one of VicPD's undercover investigators.

INTERNATIONAL ARRESTS

Tips and information are frequently shared between child exploitation

investigators around the world, including the ICE Unit.

Information from an investigation that started in Lethbridge was used to arrest a man in Rotterdam, Netherlands, in July 2018.

And, in January 2019, ICE arrested a man from Eckville, Alta., after information about his online activity was shared by members of the Queensland Police in Australia.

GROUP HOME WORKER ARRESTED

The ICE Unit arrested an Edmonton man in November 2018 after he allegedly sexually assaulted an 11-year-old youth in his care at a group home in the city. The 40-year-old man was arrested and charged with several child pornography- and sexual exploitation-related



24

child interventions



380,351

child exploitation photos/videos ID'd



209

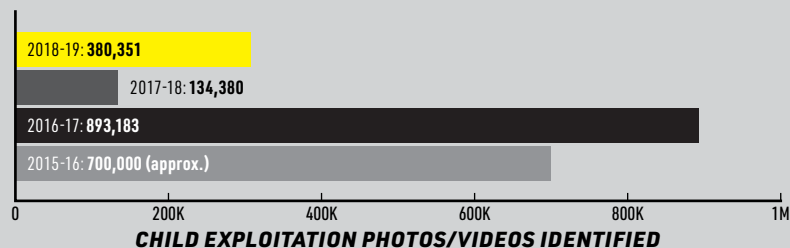
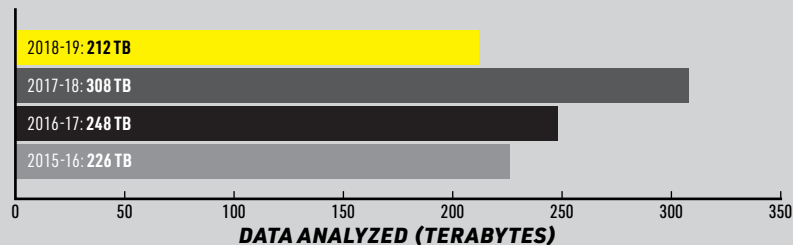
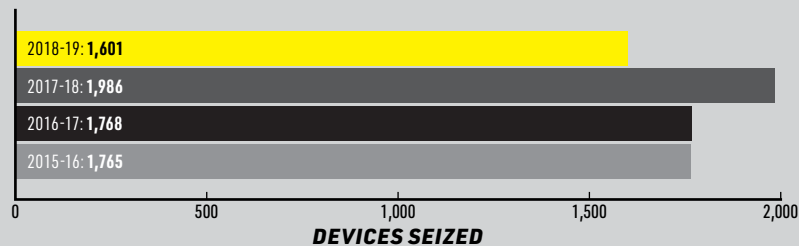
ITRAC threat assessments

ITRAC provides specialized threat assessments for high-risk domestic violence cases.

offences. The Edmonton Police Service, the Zebra Child Protection Centre and Alberta Children's Services assisted with the investigation and with support for the victim. Investigators also contacted and interviewed other youth who had previously been in contact with the suspect.

REDUCE HARM & HELP VICTIMS

ICE UNIT STATISTICS 2015-19

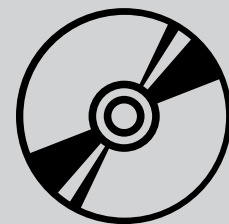


1,601
exhibits and
devices seized



212
terabytes of
data analyzed

That's roughly equal to:



*a stack
of CDs*

**1,192
FEET
TALL**

or 45,107 DVDs

60.57 MILLION
MP3 song files



*which could play non-stop
with no repeats for almost*

461 YEARS



REDUCE HARM & HELP VICTIMS

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

Technology as useful a tool for investigators as it is for child exploitation perpetrators

In the fight against child exploitation on the internet, offenders may think that technology gives them the upper hand. But investigators with ALERT's Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit have their own technological tools that help them be proactive and take the fight to perpetrators.

"We've had certain suspects who think they're afforded some anonymity on the Internet. But as much as there's technology they think they might be able to take advantage of, technology also allows us to be a lot more driven in terms of where to look for people and how to action those files," said ICE Staff Sgt. Dominic Mayhew. "It's as much of a tool for us as it is for them."

While the bulk of ICE files begin with tips from social media platforms, service providers, and national and international agencies, Mayhew says investigators also have the technology to actively search out those who possess, access and distribute child sexual abuse material.

"We don't have a problem making arrests. I don't think there's a single town in Alberta where we could not make an arrest," he said.

The majority of ICE cases start as tips about files being uploaded or downloaded, but investigators know that, with a bit of digging, any one of those could turn into something far more



serious, including luring or contact offences. Those files immediately go to the top of the pile, Mayhew said.

"I don't think there's a single town in Alberta where we could not make an arrest."

"Young children don't have the experience, the brain development, to know necessarily that what is happening at that time is wrong or inappropriate. So when we see there's an active attempt to engage with a child, that is our highest priority file."

Child luring is defined in the Criminal Code of Canada as communicating via the

Internet with minors for any one of a number of sexually exploitative purposes.

Mayhew said that offenders will use just about any software platform imaginable to try and make contact with children. "You used to be able to come home and, when the lights went on, you were safe in your house. Now we've moved into an era where children in their bedrooms, with a piece of technology, literally cannot be safe in their own homes."

But the people behind the platforms running on those pieces of technology are also very co-operative in reporting violators to either the RCMP's National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre or the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in the United States, who then pass the information on to ICE.

"I think we're all on the same page when it comes to child exploitation crimes,"

Mayhew said. "Everybody takes it extremely seriously. We're in an age of technology now where companies are stepping up and taking responsibility for content, whether it's something that resides within their platform, or something crossing their platform."

Meanwhile, Mayhew says that more victims are coming forward to report these types of crimes, helping to lessen the stigma around them. And that allows police not only to catch the perpetrators, but also to guide the victims and their families.

"That is where we want to make sure we're doing our best work," he said, "to make sure those children receive the best we can provide for them in terms of an investigation, but also offer them a path of hope of healing, and transition them onto the best resources that we can."

ENHANCE LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY



GOAL 5: Law enforcement officers possess an advanced level of expertise, skills, and knowledge to effectively and efficiently target gang, organized crime and serious crime in Alberta.

ALERT intelligence and enforcement officers conduct sophisticated, long-term criminal investigations that require advanced training and knowledge. ALERT supports police by providing elite training to enhance the ability of officers to detect and disrupt organized crime in Alberta.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

STRAW PURCHASING

One of ALERT's specialized units, the Guns and Gangs Unit, saw success over the 2018-19 year in making headway on the issue of firearms trafficking and straw purchasing.

In October 2018, the Guns and Gangs Unit arrested a 26-year-old Calgary man and charged him with firearms trafficking, possession of a firearm at an unauthorized place, and failing to report a lost firearm. It is alleged that the man bought seven handguns over a nine-month period, beginning in February 2016, and then resold those guns to the criminal market. Three of the guns later turned up in police

investigations, including two in Calgary (April and December 2017) and one in Toronto (October 2018).

Meanwhile, in May 2018, Justin Shipowich was sentenced to eight years in prison on firearms trafficking charges. Shipowich was arrested by the Guns and Gangs Unit in September 2016, and his was the first straw purchasing case to make its way through the Alberta courts.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Alberta Specialized Law Enforcement Training (ASLET) continued its work in 2018-19, with more than 1,150 candidates graduated from almost 120 courses offered throughout the year.

ASLET also helped put on an annual homicide conference in Red Deer



774
agency assists

ALERT provides assistance to policing partners, corrections, government, schools, and NGOs.



26
courses offered



1,154
candidates trained

in November 2018, with nearly 180 people attending from across Western Canada. They also hosted symposiums exploring issues around fentanyl and cannabis legalization for law enforcement professionals in both Calgary and Edmonton in October 2018.

ENHANCE LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY

DUST CLEANING UP ALBERTA

Undercover unit's presence felt all across the province

In its fight against serious and organized crime in Alberta, ALERT prides itself on employing some of the most sophisticated law enforcement resources. But one of those resources is one that the public doesn't often hear about.

Members of ALERT's Drug Undercover Street Team (DUST) regularly work in cities and towns all across Alberta to assist local authorities in gathering intelligence on drug trafficking investigations that contribute to overall safer communities. The scale of these investigations may be large or small, but many of them would not be possible without the work DUST does behind the scenes.

"They [DUST] are by far the best resource we've ever had. In the general investigation section here, we have nothing but good to say about them," said Staff Sgt. Brad Lazicki with the Lloydminster RCMP, a detachment whose files DUST has assisted with on numerous occasions. "We've always had fantastic results ... they're very valuable to us."

"By nature of the work the DUST team conduct, they remain out of the limelight. They continue to do their hard and often dangerous work, remaining unsung heroes in the large-scale takedowns involving organized crime that are prosecuted before courts in Alberta on a regular basis," added Insp. Marc Cochlin, ALERT. "Internally, within the law enforcement community, we understand the value the DUST teams bring to the overall safety to the communities. We thank them and acknowledge their positive impact on

behalf of the community as they remain purposely hidden from public praise."

According to Cochlin, the demand for DUST's expertise and specialized skills is high and comes from communities across Alberta, big and small, urban and rural.

"The provincial footprint the team services requires substantial logistical planning and a lot of travel hours," he said. "In the interim, the prioritization of their assist files and investigations becomes more and more important as rural Alberta continues to fight the same crime trends as Alberta's major urban centres."

But those long travel hours and plans are worth it to build relationships between local law enforcement agencies and ALERT, which benefit both sides.

"Overall, it has definitely been

a positive experience for us here," said Staff Sgt. Sarah Parke, commander of the RCMP detachment in Bonnyville, one of many communities where DUST has worked over the years.

"Simply put, the detachment on its own doesn't have the resources or expertise to undertake projects like these, so it means a lot," she adds.

St. Albert RCMP detachment commander Insp. Pamela Robinson agrees, saying that DUST allows her team to work much more efficiently and not

fall behind on other tasks.

"It creates efficiency in our ability to conduct these complex investigations, and decreases our fiscal footprint; we're not having to spend more manpower trying to conduct these investigations when we can utilize these specialized techniques to identify targets, locations and vehicles," she said.

ALERT



DUST STATS 2018-19

| | |
|-----|--|
| 533 | total undercover buys |
| 30 | agency assists initiated |
| 2.4 | litres of gamma-hydroxybutyrate seized |
| 410 | grams of cocaine seized |
| 367 | grams of methamphetamine seized |

The ultimate goal, though – for both local agencies and ALERT – is to enhance the overall safety of the communities they serve. Part of that is the longer sentences that come when drug traffickers are caught in the act.

"Persons charged as a result of DUST projects have been getting significant sentences, ranging from two to four years in custody for the last batch that went through the courts," Parke said. "We're really seeing a positive outcome and, as a result, the community is safer."

Lazicki added that it's noticeable when DUST teams have paid a visit to Lloydminster.

"When they come down and we end up doing multiple arrests, every time that happens, the watch notices. There's a significant impact – whether it's general calls, whether it's thefts, whether it's violent crimes, everything seems to bottom out for a while," he said. "The impact they have is awesome. We love having them here; they're great people to work with."

KEEPING ALBERTA SAFE

AGENCIES ASSISTED

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Behavioral Sciences Unit
- Blood Tribe Police Services
- Calgary Police Service
- Camrose Police Service
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Crime Stoppers
- Criminal Intelligence Service Canada
- Cybertip
- Edmonton Police Service
- Lethbridge Police Service
- Medicine Hat Police Service
- National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre (NCECC)
- National Weapons Enforcement Support Team (NWEST)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- RCMP Central Alberta Crime Reduction Unit
- RCMP Historical Homicide Unit
- Saskatchewan Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit
- Taber Police Service

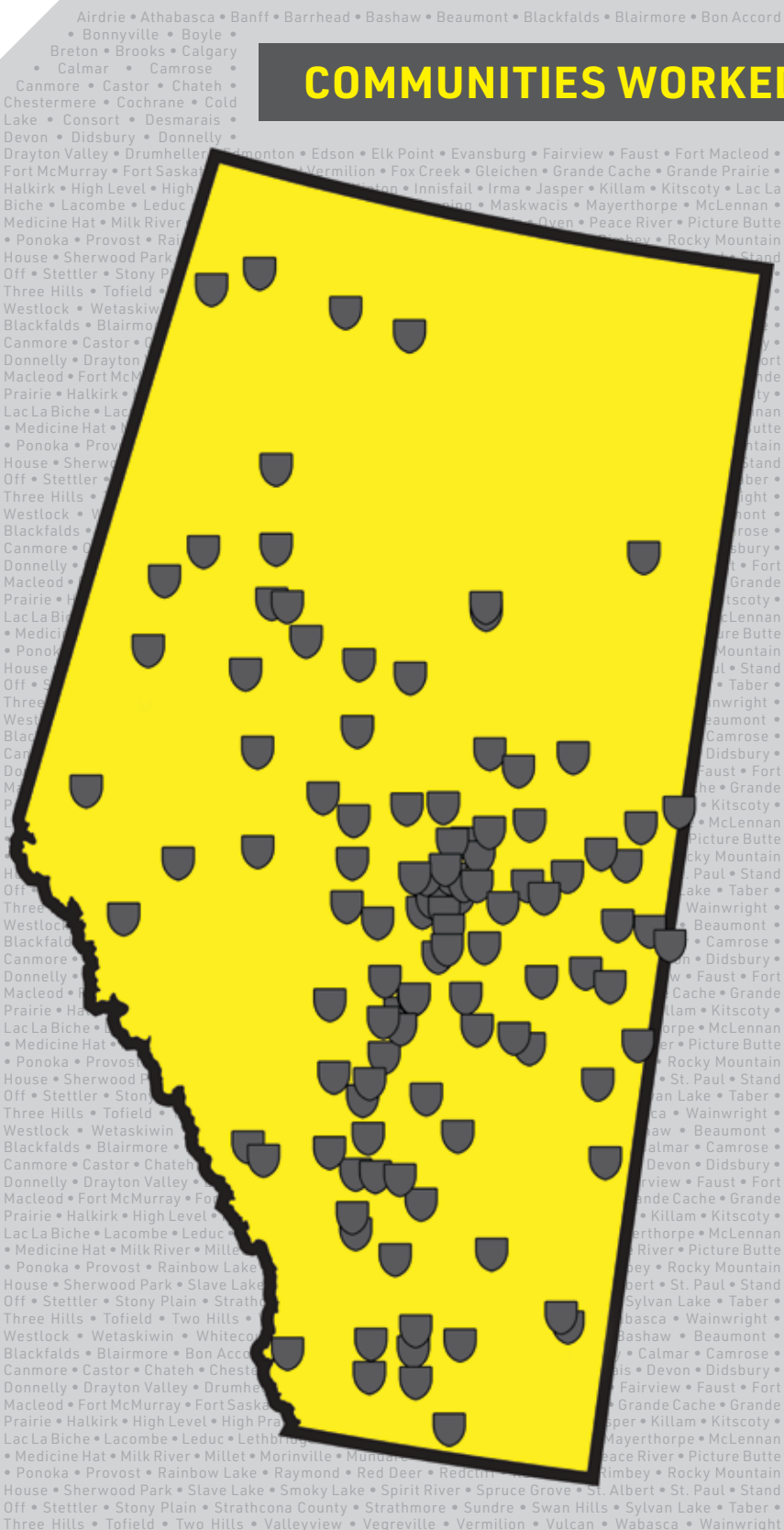
INTERNATIONAL

- Federal Bureau of Investigation (United States)
- Interpol
- National Police Corps (Netherlands)
- National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (United States)
- Queensland Police (Australia)

GOVERNMENT

- Alberta Justice and Solicitor General
- Alberta Sheriffs
- Corrections Service Canada
- Environment Canada

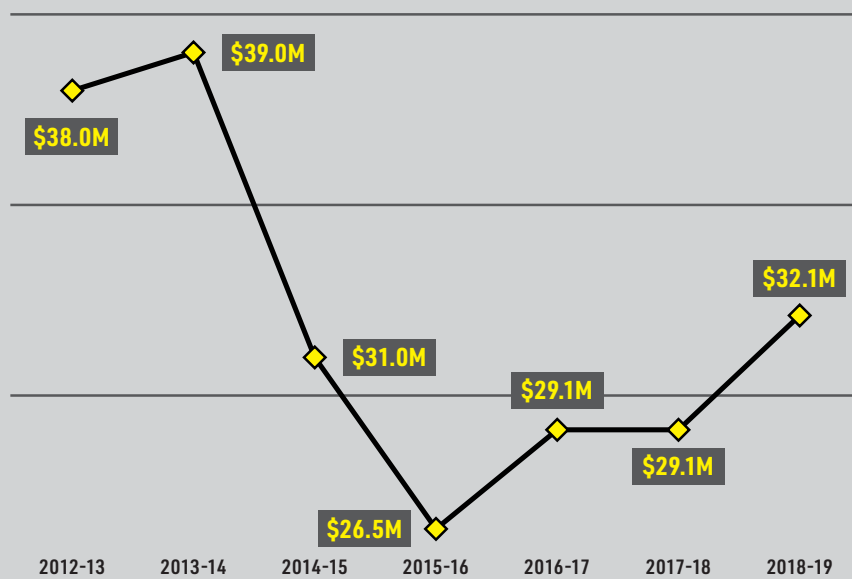
COMMUNITIES WORKED



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

ALERT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2006 AND IS FUNDED BY THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT. ALERT'S FUNDING INCREASED ABOUT 10 PERCENT IN THE 2018-2019 PROVINCIAL BUDGET, WITH \$32.1 MILLION GRANTED TO THE AGENCY. GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS FUNDED 234 POSITIONS.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING



POSITIONS

GOVERNMENT FUNDED

2018-19: **234**

2017-18: **245**

2016-17: **226**

2015-16: **268**

2014-15: **268**

2013-14: **307**

2012-13: **324**

TOTAL POSITIONS BY AGENCY

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| RCMP Provincial | 106 |
| RCMP Federal | 12 |
| RCMP Municipal | 18 |
| RCMP FSOC | 4 |
| Lethbridge Police | 8 |
| Edmonton Police | 58 |
| Medicine Hat Police | 15 |
| Calgary Police | 40 |
| ALERT Corporate | 26 |
| PPSC | 2 |
| TOTAL | 289 |



\$47.3M

ALERT 2018-19
budget



234

government-funded
positions at ALERT

Alberta

\$32.1 million

amount ALERT received
from the Alberta government
in the 2018-19 budget



ALERT



www.ALERT-AB.ca