WHERE'S THE LEADERSHIP?

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Given all this, it shouldn't be too much to expect that our political leaders could get together and agree on a must-do list that includes both immediate and longer term actions to target this brazen gun violence. Yet, about all that emerged from a high-level meeting on Monday was an agreement to continue provincial funding for existing anti-gang police squads and carry out a 30-day review of existing violence prevention programs.

Premier Dalton McGuinty did put $1 million of new money on the table, to be split equally between the police and community programs. Still, on the very day that 700 people filled a church for Joshua Yasay's funeral — one of the two innocent people killed by stray bullets at a party eight days ago – it just doesn't seem like much.

Worse still, there is no indication that McGuinty and Toronto Mayor Rob Ford are actually working together on the problem of guns and gang violence. Ford left the meeting at Queen's Park claiming that he was "happy how the meeting went" and that he and the premier were "on the same page."

Clearly, though, they are not. It is pretty easy to see why they did not come out together and issue a joint statement after the meeting.

Ford did not get the $5 million to $10 million that he wanted to hire more police. And there's no evidence that McGuinty persuaded Ford of the merits of a balanced approach to tackling gun crime that includes prevention programs to help keep young people from joining gangs and picking up guns in the first place. The best Ford could manage was to say nothing at all about the social programs, which he has foolishly dismissed as "hug-a-thug" initiatives.

McGuinty, on the other hand, made a point of speaking about the need to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime." He also took the opportunity to take a swipe at Ford for demanding that the province and Ottawa provide funding to tackle guns and gang violence in the city while refusing to do anything himself. It's true, of course, but hardly a sign that McGuinty found the meeting as "productive" and "cordial" as he claimed.

"It seems to me, the mayor of the city of Toronto and the council itself, in fairness, should dig a little deeper and bring something to the table," McGuinty said. "We're always at our best when we work together." That's probably true. It's too bad for Torontonians that they aren't doing it.

Five years ago, a provincial report on the roots of youth violence warned that Ontario was at a "crossroads" and that beneath a steadily declining crime rate was a disturbing trend of youth violence. As the shootings of this past week have shown us – again – violence is more public than ever, it is more likely to involve young black men who carry guns and have no concern whatsoever for the innocent bystanders they catch in the crossfire.

It will take ongoing and coordinated political leadership, the likes of which we haven't seen yet, to have any hope of turning this around.