

Gang Wars: Justice in Our Times

Solutions proposed by the panel

- BC's justice system should improve how it deals with mid-level gang members. Many of these gang members are the highest risk to public safety, yet have very little or no past criminal record.
- Publication bans should be lifted more often so the public can learn more about the rationale behind decisions made in courtrooms.
- Legislation should be implemented against fringe businesses that benefit from organized crime. There should be peer pressure placed on businesses to not accept "dirty money."
- People should not be able to buy pre-paid cell phones and provide fake names and addresses. Nor should they be able to buy as many as 100 phones at one time.
- The laws on wiretaps should be reformed. Currently, affidavit requirements are too time-consuming and the result is that dozens of trained officers are sitting behind computers when they could be on the streets.
- We need to take a very close look at the licensing of body armour. Currently, people can walk around wearing body armour, which can make it difficult for police officers to take them down or safely arrest them.
- There needs to be a presumption that the driver of a vehicle has knowledge of what is in his vehicle. There should also be a serious look at how we tackle firearms when they are found in vehicles.
- Hidden compartments in vehicles are a hazard to police safety because an officer is not allowed to take a car apart. That's a practical problem that we all have to tackle.
- We need to control the licensing of armoured cars.
- We need to eliminate the perception that reporting a crime or suspicious activity to police is "ratting." It is standing up for your community and standing up for the justice system.
- Programs currently available in schools should be available in communities too. There is a gap for families that don't have kids in the school systems.
- We should embrace young people that demonstrate high-risk behaviour instead of thinking that we need to get those kids out of school.
- We need to take a hard look at prevention. Currently, the area of prevention is not well-funded, not well-understood and under-utilized.

Formerly the Law Courts Education Society of BC

- We should stigmatize gangs as much as possible in order to de-glamourize the lifestyle. Too many youth view gang-life as desirable, when the opposite is the reality.
- Too often we talk about the gang problem like “them and us.” It can’t be a “them and us” mentality. Gang members are in our schools and our communities.
- Citizens, police, parents and education or government agencies are not used to working together; therefore they do not work with each other very well. We have to find a way to break some of those barriers.