
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2004AG0014-000147
March 8, 2004

Ministry of Attorney General

TASK FORCE TACKLES VANCOUVER STREET CRIME

VANCOUVER – Stopping street crime by addressing its root causes is the focus of a new criminal justice working group created by the Justice Review Task Force, Attorney General Geoff Plant announced today.

“A significant amount of street crime is committed by repeat offenders who are suffering from addiction, mental illness or other social problems,” Plant said. “While most criminals face the full legal consequences of their actions, this working group recognizes that the courts may not be effective in finding long-term solutions for the problems that lead to criminal behaviour. In many cases, the best way to improve public safety is by developing additional tools and alternatives to court.”

The 12-member Street Crime Working Group represents a cross-section of all levels of government, the judiciary, lawyers, police, corrections and social service providers. The group will recommend a new criminal justice response to street crime. The working group is targeting Vancouver’s downtown eastside, where street crime – including drug use and dealing, auto and other theft, break and entering and public mischief – is an ongoing problem. Strategies developed for the downtown eastside will serve as a model for other communities.

“The cycle of street crime cannot be completely solved by the courts,” said Carol Baird Ellan, Chief Judge of the Provincial Court and working-group member. “The courts are seeing the same offenders over and over again, which creates backlogs and undermines public confidence in the system. The working group will develop a model for identifying those offenders who will benefit most from treatment or other intervention, establish a co-ordinated approach for delivering these services and develop long-term solutions for repeat offenders.”

The working group was initiated by the Justice Review Task Force, an ongoing collaboration between government, the judiciary and lawyers, working together to help make the justice system more responsive, accessible and cost-effective.

The Street Crime Working Group will present its findings to the task force in March 2005. For further information on the task force, visit the website at <http://www.bcjusticereview.org/>. (See attached backgrounder for complete lists of task force and working group members.)

–30–

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media Cindy Rose
contact: Ministry of Attorney General
 250 356-6961

Visit the province's Web site at www.gov.bc.ca for online information and services.