

STREET CRIME FORUM - JUNE 23, 2004

SESSION 2 - DISCUSSION GROUP G

DRUG COURTS – FEDERAL VS. PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

PARTICIPANTS

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DRUG COURTS – BARRIERS TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN B.C. AND FEDS: \$\$ - WHO WILL PAY?

- Currently a pilot project – only for Federal offences
- Lack of community knowledge
- Negative public perceptions – more harm than good?
- Are we aiming for expedience vs. good solutions?
- Original argument FOR was the old model wasn't working for people
- If Drug Courts aren't properly resourced then they don't work
- Resources needed include
 - Treatment
 - Housing
 - Adequate income assistance
 - Help finding employment
- Problem – lack of harm-reduction facilities
- Abstinence based programs are problematic
- Pro-Drug Court - has potential to address underlying problems
- Program should be aimed at improving situation – not abstinence
- Problem: participants must plead guilty to take part – if they “fail” they are then sent to jail, but Judges would likely look at that plea as “coerced”
- We need harm reduction in prisons
- Barrier – 2 week jail sentence vs 2 year program – province doesn't want to buy in
- Pro Drug Courts acknowledge that drug users will “fail” a number of times
Fail = option for trial
- More information on how system works
- Costs money. Province disinclined to participate