



## **CAROLE TAYLOR TO LEAD PANEL ON ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH AT SOS FORUM JAN. 23**

Former addict and government official Marshall Smith to provide keynote  
Conservative Party of BC Leader John Rustad to speak at Forum

VANCOUVER, B.C (Jan. 6, 2025) – With addictions and mental illnesses fueling a significant portion of British Columbia's crime and street disorder, veteran journalist and politician Carole Taylor will explore the benefits and challenges of implementing a province-wide continuum of care with three leading addiction experts at the Save Our Streets Communities Driving Change Forum on January 23.

Joining Taylor on the ***Prescription for a Continuum of Care: Addictions and Mental Illnesses*** panel will be Dr. Pouya Azar, Addiction Physician, Dr. Nickie Mathew, an addiction and forensic psychiatrist, and Marshall Smith, the Vice President of Rubicon Strategy and former Chief of Staff to the Premier of Alberta.

Recent additions to the Forum agenda include a keynote address by Marshall Smith that will precede the addictions panel and an address by Conservative Party of BC Leader John Rustad that will kick-off the afternoon session. SOS has also invited a representative from the Province of BC to speak at the Forum.

To say Marshall Smith is uniquely qualified to speak to the issues of addictions and mental illnesses is a significant understatement. His journey has seen him serve as a senior staff member for a BC Cabinet Minister before sinking into the depths of addiction and living in and out of dumpsters in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. His obvious tenacity, and the encouragement of a kind VPD officer contributed to his detoxing and recovery and transition to advocating on behalf of others. Smith recently completed a meteoric rise through the government ranks in Alberta, where he served as Chief of Staff to Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and the architect of a new recovery-focussed system of responding to the issues of addictions and mental illnesses.

As the host of her television show, Carole Taylor's Journal, Taylor continues to cover major issues in Canadian society and examine the story behind the headlines with high-profile guests that includes retailers, mayors, judges and policy experts on issues such as public safety, safe supply, law and order, youth, housing and much more.

"I want to thank Carole Taylor and our addictions and mental health panelists for helping us explore these critical issues," says Jess Ketchum, Co-founder, SOS. "While a comprehensive continuum of care seems broadly supported, it is a practical commitment that is lacking as a standard across the province. This panel will explore the essential elements of a potential province-wide continuum of care, from assessment through treatment and recovery. As Marshall's life has clearly demonstrated, there's no question that the transition from suffering an addiction illness to a healthy and productive member of society is possible."

The day-long **Communities Driving Change Forum** at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver will feature four professionally moderated, non-partisan and future-focused panel discussions on the justice system, housing, policing and addictions and mental illnesses (See agenda below).

Recognizing the need for possible new approaches, greater collaboration and informed decision making when it comes to addressing these decades-old issues, SOS has assembled an extraordinary group of subject matter experts, each with extensive experience and expertise in their fields.

For more information about SOS and the Communities Driving Change Forum, please visit [SaveOurStreets.ca](http://SaveOurStreets.ca). To register, please visit the Forum [registration link](#).

**About Save Our Streets**

Save Our Streets is a coalition of 120-plus community and business organizations representing every corner of British Columbia. SOS members are committed to seeing governments bring order and public safety back to communities across British Columbia. Concerned citizen groups, and B.C. businesses interested in joining or supporting SOS are invited to submit online at [SaveOurStreets.ca](http://SaveOurStreets.ca) or contact [info@saveourstreets.ca](mailto:info@saveourstreets.ca).

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**AGENDA: SAVE OUR STREETS COMMUNITIES DRIVING CHANGE FORUM**

Thursday, January 23, 2025, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

8:00am **Registration Opens**

8:30am **Official Welcome** Clint Mahlman, SOS Co-founder and Chair  
**Program Overview** Jess Ketchum, SOS Co-founder

**Panel One: Justice for All: Challenges and Choices**

Public safety and crime are issues of crisis proportions for British Columbians, with individuals, businesses, and communities feeling the daily impact of crime and street disorder. Meanwhile, recent SOS polling highlights public concerns about the effectiveness and capacity of the judicial system, with an increasing disconnect between public expectations and courtroom realities. This panel will explore what resources, reforms and actions are required to rebuild public confidence that there can be justice for all, including offenders, victims, and communities.

**Honourable Wally Oppal**, K.C., Senior Counsel, Boughton Law, former judge and B.C. Attorney General

**Christina J. Cook**, Senior Policy Lawyer, BC First Nations Justice Council

**Leonard Krog**, Mayor, City of Nanaimo, and former MLA

**Adam Dalrymple**, President, BC Crown Counsel Association

**Jas Johal**, CKNW (Moderator)

**Speaker: Honourable Terry Yung**, Minister of State for Community Safety and Integrated Services, Province of British Columbia

**Panel Two: Policing and Public Safety: Options and Opportunities in Changing Times**

Businesses feel under siege because of the extent of retail crime and public disorder and British Columbians are feeling unsafe in their communities. At the same time, modern-day policing has become more complicated with the growing issues of the illicit drug trade, addiction and mental illnesses, and homelessness. In the face of changing times, this panel will explore what resources or reforms are needed to support our police in protecting British Columbians.

**Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald**, Commanding Officer, BC RCMP

**Chief Adam Palmer**, Chief Constable, Vancouver Police Department

**Kash Heed**, Councillor, City of Richmond, former West Vancouver Police Chief, and former Solicitor General

**Chief Norm Lipinski**, Chief Constable, Surrey Police Service

**Simi Sara**, CKNW (Moderator)

**Keynote Speaker: Marshall Smith**, Vice President, Rubicon Strategy and former Chief of Staff to the Premier of Alberta

### **Panel Three: Prescription for a Continuum of Care: Addictions and Mental Illnesses**

Addictions and mental illnesses are fueling a significant segment of British Columbia's crime and street disorder. No community in BC is immune from these underlying health related pressures. While a comprehensive continuum of care seems broadly supported, it is a practical commitment that is lacking as a standard across the province. This panel will explore what the essential elements are of a province-wide continuum of care from assessment through treatment and recovery.

**Dr. Pouya Azar**, Addiction Physician

**Dr. Nickie Mathew**, Addiction and Forensic Psychiatrist

**Marshall Smith**, Vice President, Rubicon Strategy and former Chief of Staff to the Premier of Alberta

**Carole Taylor**, Carole Taylor's Journal (Moderator)

12:20pm-1:30pm      **Lunch Break**

**Speaker:**      **Ken Sim**, Mayor, City of Vancouver

**Speaker:**      **John Rustad**, Leader, Conservative Party of BC

### **Panel Four: A Place to Call Home: The Role of Housing in Combatting Crime, Violence and Public Disorder**

In a comprehensive continuum of care, a place to call home, located strategically and providing access to required care is key. Stable and safe housing translates into public safety as individuals become less vulnerable and prone to crimes of survival and have a much better chance to recover. Across British Columbia, in communities of every shape and size, the daily public cost and impact of homelessness makes housing a local priority. This panel will explore successful housing models, and what the challenges are to defining and delivering housing along with services that make life better for individuals, and safer for the community.

**Heidi Hartman**, Associate Vice President, B.C. Housing

**Deb Lester**, CEO, Covenant House Vancouver

**Sam Sullivan**, Founder, Global Civic Policy Society, former BC Cabinet Minister and Mayor of Vancouver

**Richard Zussman**, Global (Moderator)

### **Panel Five: Now what?: What have we learned?**

As the Save Our Streets forum wraps up, what stood out from the panel sessions, and what are the recommended corrective measures we hope to see implemented by our governments? For the more than 120-member community and business organizations of SOS who are facing crime and street disorder every day across British Columbia, today provides a critical but only potential turning point. The entire Province, including governments, community and business groups need to put the collective shoulder to the wheel and bring about immediate action and change.

### **Members of Save Our Streets Oversight Council**

**Jess Ketchum**, Co-founder, Save Our Streets (Moderator)

### **Closing Remarks and Thanks**

Clint Mahlman, Chair and Co-founder, Save Our Streets