



SAVE OUR STREETS CONFIRMS JUSTICE, HOUSING, ADDICTIONS, MENTAL ILLNESSES AND POLICING LEADERS FOR COMMUNITIES DRIVING CHANGE FORUM (JAN. 23)

VANCOUVER, B.C (Dec. 20, 2024) – Some of British Columbia’s foremost leaders in the areas of policing, the justice system, addictions and mental illnesses, and housing will gather in Vancouver on January 23rd to explore evidence-based solutions to the crisis level of crime, violence and public disorder being experienced in communities throughout B.C.

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.

Joining the panelists at the Forum will be community and business representatives from throughout B.C., as well as government officials. Premier David Eby and Leader of the Opposition John Rustad have also been invited to speak at the Forum. The Forum’s confirmed panelists to date include:

Panel One: Justice for All: Challenges and Choices

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)

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

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

Chief Norm Lipinski, Chief Constable, Surrey Police Service

Simi Sara, CKNW (Moderator)

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

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

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

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

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

Members of Save Our Streets Oversight Council

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

“I want to thank all of our panelists for joining us and for their commitment to bringing about meaningful change in how we address these issues,” said Jess Ketchum, Co-founder, SOS. “The time is now for British Columbians to re-evaluate where we are on these critical issues and develop collaborative, evidence-based approaches that can serve as a new model for addressing these issues in B.C. and beyond. We’re confident the Communities Driving Change Forum will be an important step in that process.”

The Communities Driving Change Forum is the latest high-profile initiative by the 120-member coalition, which includes community and business organizations from across B.C. In the fall, SOS helped ensure crime and public safety was a key election issue through a province-wide survey and press conference which demonstrated widespread public dissatisfaction with how governments are addressing public safety, justice, repeat offenders, retail crime, and addictions and mental illnesses treatment.

Following the provincial election, SOS delivered to Premier David Eby a letter with 25 priority actions items aimed at making communities safer, restoring confidence in the justice system, better addressing addictions and mental health issues, and improving the quality of life of all British Columbians.

For more information about SOS and the Communities Driving Change Forum, please visit 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 or contact info@saveourstreets.ca.

-30-

Media contact:

Greg Descantes

gdescantes@pacegroup.com

604-417-1379



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