

# Community Dispatch

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## Canada Votes! – Crime & Public Safety

canada  
VOTES!

“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

### Crime & Public Safety

Canadians express concern about public safety. They demand that crime in their communities be prevented or at least reduced. They want vigorous enforcement, meaningful sentences, and criminals off their streets. But all the time and extra resources spent on policing, courts, and correctional officers have not significantly decreased crime rates or fear of crime. In 2004, there were almost 500,000 sexual assaults.

In 2006, youth crime rose 3%, with more violent crimes being committed. Canada is falling behind other western nations in ensuring safe communities. The federal government can choose to invest more in solving social problems that often become the root causes of crime. A four-pronged approach using prevention, policing, courts, and corrections would be an effective way to tackle crime.

The root causes of crime and victimization are not hard to identify; they include poverty, lack of affordable housing, unfinished education, low literacy, unemployment, family violence, and substance abuse. Everyone benefits when governments invest in improving community well-being. Police alone cannot prevent crime and victimization: law enforcement has to be balanced with strong social programs. The most effective crime prevention strategies to meet a community's needs are those developed by the community members themselves. Community cohesion and collaboration is key. In 2004, Regina Police reported a 28% drop in car theft in two years by bringing together all stakeholders to develop a community strategy.

Academic research and the experience of Canadian communities prove that it is more efficient and cost effective to prevent crime than respond to it. How to prevent crime is well known. Solving social problems makes communities safer places to live, work, and raise families. Providing social infrastructure, such as education, parent support services, and youth centres, in addition to eradicating poverty and housing insecurity is important. Correctional Services Canada reported, in 2003, that inmates who completed Grade 10

had a 21% decrease in re-admission to prison.

What is needed is the four-pronged approach of prevention, then policing, courts and corrections. Governments should not only pass legislation to tackle crime, but also show leadership in attacking the multiple causes of crime. We can choose a government that will lead a balanced approach to crime reduction and use resources wisely to alleviate the systemic social problems that impact the health and safety of Canadians.

For More Information:

Canadian Council on Social Development  
[www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd](http://www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd)

Institute for the Prevention of Crime  
[www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng)

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police  
[www.cacp.ca](http://www.cacp.ca)

Sources

Correctional Service of Canada. 2005 April. The safe return of offenders to the community statistical overview April 2005. [http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/safe\\_return2005/sr2005-eng.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/safe_return2005/sr2005-eng.shtml) (1 Sept. 2008).

Canadian Council on Social Development. (2008). Preventing crime through social development website. <http://www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd/index.htm> (1 Sept. 2008).

## Crime & Public Safety: Key Points & Questions

Canada is falling behind other western nations in ensuring safe communities.

Law enforcement needs to be balanced with strong social programs in order to effectively reduce crime.

The multiple causes of crime need to be tackled with prevention strategies that meet a community's needs.

What kind of change would you bring to the federal law enforcement departments?

How would you support the creation of community-based partnerships to combat crime and victimization?

What would you do to prevent kids from getting involved in crime?

*Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development. Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.*

*Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.*

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