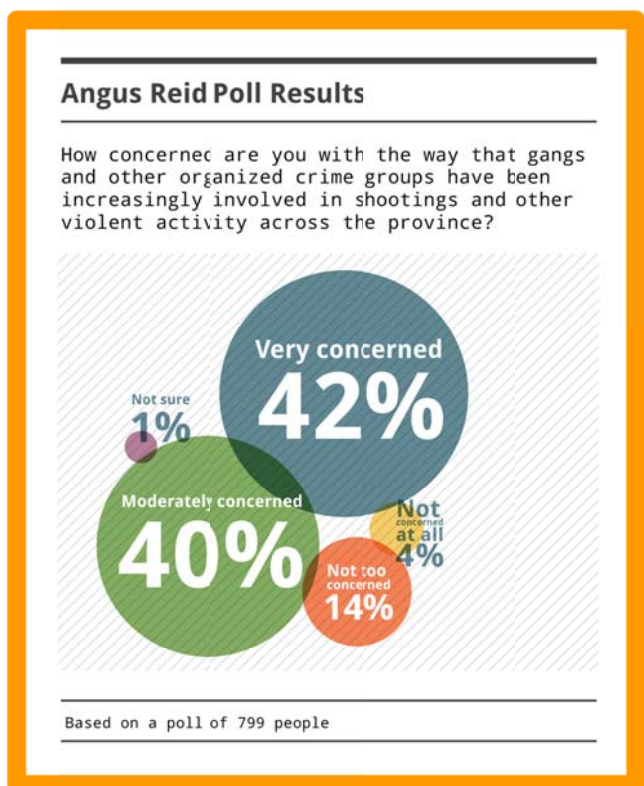


## About the Stop the Violence Coalition

Stop the Violence BC is a coalition of law enforcement officials, legal experts, public health officials and academic experts from the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, and the University of Northern BC. Coalition members have come together to engage all British Columbians in a discussion aimed at developing and implementing cannabis-related policies that improve public health while reducing social harms, including violent crime and gang activity.



### Driving discussion

Over the coming months, Stop the Violence BC will encourage the public, media, politicians, academics and law enforcement to begin an open dialogue about this pressing public safety issue. Public forums with academic and law enforcement experts will be held and a prominent British Columbian – including politicians – will be asked to support the call to effectively end the cannabis cash cow for organized crime, employ a public health approach for the legal regulation of cannabis, and reduce gang-related violence in BC communities.

To facilitate the discussion and support their efforts, the Violence BC will release a series of fact-based reports with the latest in scientific research, crime statistics and poll data.

### Call for regulation of cannabis

Stop the Violence BC has launched an education and discussion campaign seeking to improve community safety by broadening the public's understanding of the

link between cannabis prohibition and gang violence. Guided by the best available scientific evidence, Stop the Violence BC is calling for cannabis to be governed by a strict regulatory framework aimed at limiting use while also starving organized crime of the profits they currently reap as a result of cannabis prohibition.

Political leaders have been largely silent on this urgent public health and safety issue. Ongoing gang violence and other organized crime concerns associated with the cannabis trade in B.C. must be addressed by getting to the roots of the gang violence. B.C. needs to be a leader in starting a conversation on cannabis regulation that will lead to action.

### Involving the community

The public can get involved by attending the public forums and making their voices heard, including writing to media and their mayors, councilors, MLAs and MPs to let them know that they support the coalition and its efforts.

To join the conversation, people can visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/StoptheViolenceBC](http://www.facebook.com/StoptheViolenceBC) or follow the campaign on twitter at [www.twitter.com/stvbc](http://www.twitter.com/stvbc). Updates will be posted regularly on our website at: [www.stoptheviolence.org](http://www.stoptheviolence.org).

# Breaking the Silence: A report on cannabis prohibition, organized crime and gang violence in British Columbia



This detailed report, the first in a series from the Stop the Violence BC Coalition, outlines the links between cannabis prohibition in BC, the growth of organized crime and the expansion of related violence in the province. The report also defines the public health concept known as “regulation” and sets the stage for a much-needed public conversation around alternatives to cannabis prohibition.

A regulated market for cannabis specifically refers to a legal market for adult recreational cannabis use, with strict regulatory controls placed upon it. These controls could include prohibitions on advertisement and public promotion as well as age restrictions and restrictions on where cannabis could be consumed. These regulatory tools have proven effective at reducing rates of tobacco use. Taxation allows for proceeds from the cannabis market to be used for programs that benefit society.

## Highlights of Report #1:

### Cannabis prohibition, organized crime and violence

- More than \$2.5 trillion has been spent on the “war on drugs” in North America over the last 40 years, yet government surveillance data shows that drug law enforcement has been ineffective in reducing drug market violence.
- In 1997 there were 25 gang related deaths in B.C., a number that increased to 43 in 2009. During this same time period, the proportion of all homicides attributable to gangs increased from 21% in 1997 to 34% in 2009. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) there were no less than 276 incidents of drive-by shootings in 2009, many without regard for public safety.
- Cannabis-related arrests in Canada have risen from approximately 39,000 in 1990 to 65,000 in 2009. The costs to the law enforcement and judicial systems, as well as the costs of incarceration, are a heavy and growing burden on the taxpayer.

### Benefits of Regulation

- Regulating cannabis in B.C. has the potential to reduce lethal drug-related violence, raise tax revenue, and allow policy makers to reallocate law enforcement expenditures away from ineffective cannabis prohibition and towards other community policing priorities.
- Reducing consumption: In the U.S., where the possession and use of cannabis is criminalized, the lifetime use of cannabis is *more than double* that in the Netherlands, where the drug is de facto legalized.

- Controlled access to cannabis, particularly through restrictions on hours of sale, and the use of age and place restrictions.

## A partial listing of Stop the Violence Coalition members

### Law enforcement and legal experts

#### **John Anderson, PhD**

Former Correctional Officer  
Chair, Dept. of Criminology, VIU  
Vice President, Law Enforcement Against  
Prohibition (Canada)

#### **David Bratzer**

Police Officer  
Board of Directors, Law Enforcement Against  
Prohibition

#### **Vince Cain**

Former Chief Coroner  
Former RCMP Chief Superintendent

#### **Ross Lander**

Retired Justice, Supreme Court of British  
Columbia

#### **Walter McKay**

Former Police Officer  
Consultant, WM Consulting  
Founder/Director of International Affairs,  
Asociación Mexicana de Reducción de  
Riesgos y Daños

### Academics

#### **Neil Boyd, PhD**

Professor and Associate Director, School of  
Criminology, SFU

#### **Susan Boyd, PhD**

Professor, Studies in Policy and Practice  
Program, UVic

#### **Benedikt Fischer, PhD**

Professor & CIHR/PHAC Applied Public Health  
Chair, Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU  
Director, Centre for Applied Research in  
Mental Health and Addiction

**Thomas Kerr, PhD**  
Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, UBC  
Director, Urban Health Research Initiative,  
BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

**Josée Lavoie, PhD**  
Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences, UNBC  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Community Health Sciences, UBC  
Research Affiliate, Manitoba First Nations Centre for  
Aboriginal Health Research

**Cornelia Zeisser, PhD**  
Post-doctoral fellow, Centre for Addictions Research BC

### **Health professionals**

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**Jane Buxton, MBBS, MRCP, MHSc, FRCPC**

Associate Professor, School of Population and Public Health,  
UBC

**John Carsley, MD MSc FRCPC**  
Medical Health Officer

**Paul Hasselback, MD MSc FRCPC**  
Medical Health Officer  
Clinical Associate Professor,  
School of Population and Public Health, UBC

**Julio Montaner, MD, FRCPC, FCCP, FACP, FRSC**  
Director, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS  
Immediate Past President, International AIDS Society

**Evan Wood, MD, PhD, ABIM, FRCPC**  
Professor, Dept. of Medicine, UBC  
Director, Urban Health Research Initiative,  
BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

For a full list of coalition members, please visit: [www.stoptheviolence.org/about-us](http://www.stoptheviolence.org/about-us)

For a copy of the media release, poll data and to arrange interviews, contact:  
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