



Thursday » August
28 » 2008

Suspects' release frustrates police

Stephane Massinon, with files from Gwendolyn Richards, Calgary Herald

Calgary Herald

Thursday, August 28, 2008

Police say they're concerned only one of the 14 people charged in connection with the gang bust announced Wednesday is still in custody.

After announcing the results of operation Backlash, which produced its first charges a year ago, police said it falls to them to keep an eye on suspected gang members and associates to make sure they obey their court-ordered conditions.

"Any time a gang member or person associated with a violent criminal group is released into the community is obviously a great deal of concern to the police service. The onus is on us to suppress gang activities and keep Calgary safe," said Acting Staff Sgt. Martin Schiavetta.

Schiavetta said police do everything in their power to have suspected gang members kept in custody.

"Obviously, it's frustrating when people who have firearms and who are selling drugs are released into the community," Schiavetta said.

The extra strain that puts on police underscores the need for more officers on city streets, said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who sits on the police commission.

"(Wednesday's announcement) shows you the extent of the amount of the police work that it takes to bring down only one cell," she said.

She also spoke of the frustration of seeing courts release suspected gang members and associates so quickly.

However, a Mount Royal College criminologist explained that under only very limited circumstances can bail be denied.

Doug King said the public should not be surprised suspects are let out on bail in most cases.

Generally, bail is denied if the person is considered of significant risk to another person in the community, if the person would flee from justice and not show up in court, or if the police are unsure who they have in custody because the suspect gave no name or a false name and there is no identification on file, King said.

"Sometimes it's a hard reality for people to accept that the person who is charged with an offence is still considered innocent. When you deny them bail, you're putting them in jail," he said.

smassinon@theherald.canwest.com

© The Calgary Herald 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.