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E-Street: What do you think of the Canadian justice system?

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What do you think of the Canadian justice system?

The Canadian justice system is not as lenient as people think. It's become far more punitive under the Harper Conservatives. However, more punishment does not mean less crime; the US justice system proves that tougher laws and sentences contribute to a higher crime rate at an unaffordable cost. Violent, dangerous people get proper sentences in Canada. We do not need to follow the failed US example of imprisoning non-violent people on a large scale.

--Jodie Emery, Vancouver

Every time I mention the words justice and court in the same sentence to a lawyer I get the same response: laughter. Over the past 20 years I've had the opportunity 4 or 5 times to do this, and it's always the same. Two years ago in a telephone real estate conversation to our lawyer, we got on the subject of civil law and the courts. One sentence summarized his feeling, which was obviously deep and poignant: "The system is broken." I rest my case.

--Jonathan B. "Jack" Sevy, Penticton

It's a joke. The Charter of Rights has given criminals unassailable rights, police mountains of paperwork and victims the shaft. Lawyers get rich, turnstile judges become social workers, and politicians can't walk their talk. Would you like double-time for your time served on your life sentence of 12 years Mr. Criminal? No worries, with good behaviour and overcrowding we'll have you out in less than two-thirds of that.

--Stephen Gammer, Surrey

I have the utmost respect for the Canadian justice system, essentially complex and fair, especially after having lived in the US where long sentences have become big business, meted out by gutless elected judges and pandering to an ignorant public duped by simplistic sensationalist media reports of leniency. 95% of material and financial crime is committed by working stiffs who never get charged so drop the hypocritical mantra about getting tough on the disenfranchised.

--Dana Rodden, Vancouver

Recent media reports indicate that the Canadian justice system has become too expensive, cumbersome and complex. Even the Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlan, has stated that our justice system has gone beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. Now only the rich can afford the exorbitant legal fees. Furthermore, long delays and legal technicalities have made our once-proud justice system almost dysfunctional and inaccessible for the poor. Drastic measures are needed to swing the pendulum back and make the justice system easily accessible for ordinary Canadians.

--Balwant Sanghera, Richmond

Canada's justice system is an ineffectual as it is inaccessible. The vast majority of Canadians do not have the financial resources to hire legal counsel. Meanwhile, even the simplest of legal proceedings that used to take days or weeks now take months or even years. Canada's justice system is broken. It needs to be overhauled from stem to stern so proceedings happen in a timely manner and average Canadians are not forced to represent themselves in court.

--Michael Geoghegan, Victoria

The Canadian justice system needs an immediate overhaul. The common man cannot afford it, the rich and famous abuse (buy) it, and criminals (and their lawyers) know how to beat it. No wonder this great country is fast becoming the best place on earth for career criminals, gangsters, drug peddlers, young offenders, human smugglers, white collar criminals ... the list goes on. The outdated young offenders act has, by default, converted our school system into a perfect breeding ground for drug and gang recruiting. It is ironic that because of some spineless politicians and headline-grabbing human rights activists, these laws never get changed. We need to change this now, before it is too late.

--Satbir Cheema, Surrey

We don't have a justice system in Canada. We have a court system that occasionally dispenses justice.

--Anthony Buckland, North Vancouver

I believe the Canadian justice system in its never-ending attempts to uphold the rights of those charged with a crime has almost abandoned the rights of the victims of crime. When a gang member caught with a gun is set free because his privacy

was invaded, we have a very sad state of affairs.

--Lawrence Musser, Sechelt

I feel our justice system is ridiculously lenient on violent criminals. We constantly read about convicted criminals getting sentenced for minimal jail time. Meanwhile, the victims and their families are left to deal with the carnage for the rest of their lives. I support capital punishment for

the most notorious of crimes. On another subject, I walked down to the Supreme Court yesterday afternoon shortly after 2:00 pm and was quite appalled that pretty much every court room was empty and I found only one case still running. All the other cases were already finished by only 2:00 pm? This seems like a total waste of valuable courtroom time doesn't it? Can't these high-paid lawyers and judges work a semi-full day? I mean they don't start court until 9:30 am and then take 1 1/2 hour lunches. Ridiculous ... considering who's paying the wages ... US!

--Ken Read, Vancouver

Our justice system almost works -- if you have significant amounts of money. Otherwise, it locks you out. The system is out of date and requires courageous leadership from our elected politicians. Unfortunately they are focused on re-election rather than demonstrating dynamic leadership. On the plus side, at least we do not elect judges, allow juries to talk publicly about deliberations, nor do we kill people -- all hallmarks of the American model of justice.

--Bruce Holvick, Delta

Our justice system gets weaker by the year. More and more, the focus is on the poor, misunderstood, unfortunate offender. Never mind the victim who quite often is left to his own efforts to make up for any losses or damages to goods and chattels or even their own person. We need to toughen up on sentencing and consequences and close those revolving doors.

--Gerry Burtenshaw, Chilliwack

First, it is not a 'justice system' if you are the victim, it is a legal system. Second, emphasis should be on striking a balance between punishment and reintegration with society. Third, how many of the people reading this know that all of us are officially known (by the Federal Corrections Dept) as 'non-convicted felons'? I think the definition speaks volumes.

--Ted Shandro, North Vancouver

The Canadian justice system is an injustice system. It rewards criminals for their crimes and punishes their victims. Murderers get off with leniency. It protects law breaking policemen at public expense and overlooks the rights of those abused. The worst is, no one does anything about this prevailing stupidity. I don't expect this to change.

--Les Braden, Vancouver

It's not a justice system, it's a legal system. Either way, it's one big fat industry where those who can afford the top lawyers are guaranteed their success and freedom in the system. The rest of us ... not so much. And, people, please stop bashing the lawyers -- they're simply doing their job as best they can, playing by the rules they're allowed. The fault is with the process (including the laws), not the players.

--Myrtle Winchester, Pender Harbour

Our justice system is a joke. The punishments definitely do not fit the crime.

--Madelaine Lawson, Salmon Arm

The Canadian justice system still has integrity despite plans by Stephen Harper to make us a penal state, with new prisons, minimum sentences and a law-and-order mentality in a benign and peaceful land. Our biggest failure is with the First Nations. The courts are only part of a system of colonial oppression which hems them in and makes their lives unfulfilled.

--Alastair Haythornthwaite, Duncan

Do you mean the INjustice system?? No one wants to hold anyone accountable any more, and that seems to hold especially true for high end criminals. Bacon comes to mind, (as an example) pewling about how he's treated behind bars, and the

system holds in his favour. Everyone whines about gangs and drugs, but no one wants to actually DO something....

--Robert Bernath, Agassiz

A massive overhaul to the criminal code is long overdue. The code needs to be amended to reflect the current times. Punishment and protection of the public must be at the top of the agenda. The parole system should be abolished. Life in prison should be precisely that. The election of judges is necessary to reflect the will of the majority, as the current system, regrettably, is not accountable for its actions.

--Don MacKay, Burnaby

Without regard to the costs, I note many would like to ape the U.S. system with its harsh sentences. While better, Canada's system needs improvement. We need to attack what appears to be a make-work, merry-go-round. Helping, not hounding, is key to ex-convicts become contributing members to society.

--Philip Hebbard, Delta

Justice System: 3 things we can do: 1. Build more jails. One of the main reasons BC is so lax in consequences is that we lack jail space, so judges give ridiculously light sentences. 2. Elect judges. If we have judges who let people off easily, we could vote them out of office. 3. Open Riverview. Most criminals/homeless/addicts are mentally ill who should be in residential treatment. Instead they are homeless, addicted and—scariest of all—parents.

--Laurel Ennis, Surrey

The Canadian justice system is a joke! We are entirely too soft on criminals and a lot of changes need to be made to put more teeth into our legal system so that people will think twice before committing a crime in Canada ... and life should mean LIFE, not 25 years! There are way too many loopholes in our system for crafty lawyers to find so they can either get reduced sentences for their clients or simply probation. When we toughen up our laws and show that there are indeed consequences for criminal activity, only then will we be on a par with other countries where it has been demonstrated that crime DOES NOT PAY!

--Sandy Wittrin, Mesachie Lake

I'm satisfied with the fact that we do not elect Judges. I'm concerned about apparent inconsistencies in judgment. I sometimes question sentencing decisions. I believe bias, on the part of judges, not the law, affects some decisions and sentencing.

--Gordi Moore, West Vancouver

Canadian justice has become nothing but one big joke, its inconsistency a cash cow for lawyers, who drag out cases with continued appeals until they are milked dry. If anything needs a big shake up in this country, it is the justice system and those that administer it.

--Dennis Mills, Princeton

The Canadian justice system seems to care more for the perpetrator than it does for the victim.

--Ed Braun, Vancouver

Our Canadian justice system is a joke! As a minor example, showing how judges are incompetent in this country, we were taken to small claims court after someone bought our home, with a pool, and decided they wanted the pool to be "refurbished". The judge that took care of the case stated that "he had bought a home once and had to put money into it as well" and thought we should pay, which we did – over \$5000. Great judge!

--Jeanne Fairweather, Chilliwack

I think "Canadian justice system" is an oxymoron.

--Tony McBride, Richmond