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Guardian Angels coming in spring Street-patrol group to bring security to ETS

By AJAY BHARDWAJ, Sun Media

Expect the red berets of the Guardian Angels to hit gritty Edmonton streets this spring, says the organization's founding member.

"It seems the problems are still there," said Curtis Sliwa from New York City Sunday, referring to e-mails he's received that inform him about beatings and homicides so far this year.

Sliwa visited Edmonton in May, 2006 and called parts of the city a "cesspool."

As soon as members graduate from the Calgary chapter's training course in mid-March, the Guardian Angels will turn their attention to training their Edmonton contingent, said Sliwa.

After meeting with city police and other crime-fighting groups in Edmonton, the Angels say they want to provide a security presence on the transit system first, with an eye to hitting downtown streets, Sliwa said.

About two-dozen Edmontonians volunteered for the Angels' training, which includes general physical fitness and conditioning to prepare the recruits for four-hour patrols.

Edmontonian Lance Lamond has been spear-heading the Angels' efforts here.

Police Chief Mike Boyd has said he's open to working with the Guardian Angels. He's suggested they can work with existing community patrols.

Mayor Stephen Mandel recently proclaimed Edmonton as being safe, despite a recent spate of violent incidents ranging from daily stabbings and muggings to deadly gang shootings.

The Guardian Angels launched a Toronto chapter last year and went on a cross-country tour to set up chapters elsewhere, including Edmonton and Calgary.

The Angels gained notoriety after the group was launched by Curtis Sliwa in New York City in 1979.

The controversial volunteer street-patrol group, which has morphed into one that also provides anti-bullying and safe Internet use, patrols streets and tries to catch criminals in the act.

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