

The Guardian Angels officially hit the streets and their leader has a simple request to police boss: Let us do our jobs

By [RICK BELL](#)

Maybe, just maybe, the gutless cop brass and thumb-sucking Silly Hall politicians will wake up and take notice.

The red berets hit city streets today. After more than three months of training we have eight brand-new Guardian Angels and one who was with the citizen crime-fighting patrol back in the '80s.

Their beat will initially be the east side of downtown, including C-Train platforms.

Brooklyn-born Curtis Sliwa, who began the Guardian Angels in '79 in the Big Apple, is in town. He was here last year at the request of concerned locals the same day the mayor was on the Sun front page holding a broom and vowing a crime sweep.

"How's the broom doing?" asks Curtis, as zombie-like crackheads stagger by.

Like those of us who live here, he isn't impressed by those in power who do not want to step up the policing as the idiots continue to arrive.

"Enough of the impact statements, enough of the studies. The area needs a colonic and if the government is not going to do it, then the people themselves are just going to have to make sure there's a quality of life existing in the area," says Curtis.

"All you have to do is walk around. Unless they have window shades on their eyes, cotton balls in their ears and a zipper in their mouth, it's obvious what needs to be done.

"The problems need to be dealt with and they should just let the police do their job. In everything I've seen in discussions with cops, officials here handcuff the police, they're not allowed to do their job. If they were allowed to be cops and do everything cops can do in some other cities you wouldn't have this problem.

"To have to sit there and not do anything when people are openly shooting up drugs, smoking crack, fighting, carousing, acting disorderly and ruining the quality of life, it's the most emasculating feeling in the world."

Curtis says what many who know the score would like to say. As for the city police bigwigs? "They act like they're lecturing at Mount Royal College to a criminal justice course. They have to get down out of the suites and bring it down into the streets."

But they won't. Instead of aggressively attacking the street criminals, the cops at the top talk egghead gibberish. Perhaps the appearance of the Guardian Angels will goad them or shame them into action.

Or maybe not. City cop HQ has been cordial and nothing more. They want the Guardian Angels to submit a business plan thicker than that of many Fortune 500 companies.

"Our relationship is like when you're dating a girl. We've been able to hold hands briefly, no kisses and we haven't met the parents." Yesterday, the group of nine, eight men and one woman, from age 22 to 59, have one last training patrol.

"A lot of people promised change and nothing changed," says Curtis.

It is no surprise to Curtis lowlife criminals come here.

"There's handouts galore and then you make excuses for anti-social behaviour.

"We don't have time to put the person on the couch and figure out why all the furniture upstairs is rearranged in the wrong rooms. Leave that to the shrinks and social workers."

The nine have been trained in the proper use of force, citizen arrest, self-defence, cooling confrontations. They aim to be a presence and are not looking for fights. Remember who the bad guys are?

On this day, many horns honk, thumbs go up and the law-abiding street people are friendly since they're the ones who get what Curtis calls "a concrete facial" when being pushed around by pukes.

The patrol finally arrives at the Cecil Hotel parking lot and it is the first time negative comments can be heard.

The Cecil is the first place many visitors see of the city.

"This is the wasteland. This area is under occupation by dope fiends, misfits, hookers, pimps and wannabe gangbangers who've declared war on our society," says Curtis.

The Guardian Angels founder is eyeballed by a skinhead with red-laced combat boots and a scar on his face.

"He thinks Kool-Aid will flow through my veins and I'll fold like a cheap camera."

He doesn't. Of course, there are the questions. Even when the Guardian Angels, who also have patrols in Toronto and Vancouver, are doing a public service, there are those who whine about vigilantes.

These are the same people who also don't want to give the cops any authority. Help.

"If people are concerned, guess what, I've returned after last year and the problems are worse than they were before," says Curtis.

"Look at us as chicken soup. It may not cure the cold but it certainly won't hurt."

The locals are certainly committed. Greg Martin, the patrol leader, talks about being the eyes and ears for all of us. Steven Saretsky says being a volunteer is a good thing and public safety is a big concern.

Scott Sonne came here years ago from Toronto because of its decline and now sees it worse here.

And the mess won't go away by looking the other way.

"You don't think they disappear and get 9-to-5 jobs?" asks Curtis, of the creeps.

"One day, mark my words, they'll be in your backyard and you'll curse yourself for not dealing with the problem when it was downtown."

Guardian Angel Steven Saretsky holds up a needle found under the 4th St. bridge. After months of training, the Angels officially hit Calgary streets today.