



## **COMMENT**

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11 September 2008

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### **Letters: September 11**

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#### **Invest in our kids**

The mayor and police chief are right. We do need more police to deal with gang violence, but as a community, we also need to look at how we can prevent our kids from being lured into gang and criminal activity. As students return to school, we need to ask ourselves where our kids will be during critical out-of-school hours. These are the times when our children make decisive choices -- good and bad -- that can affect them for the rest of their lives and the community as a whole. Statistics on young offenders show they are disconnected from their families and communities. With few positive adult influences, these young people are least likely to participate in an organized after school sports or recreational opportunities. Not surprisingly, 24% of all youth crime happens on weekdays between 3-6 p.m. The province recently announced more funding for child-care spaces and after-school subsidies for children 12 and under. Although the city has been providing funding for after-school programming since 1983, with the advent of this provincial support, there is pressure for that funding to be allocated to other priorities. Given the huge numbers of children who are left to their own devices during critical hours, redirecting funding would seem short term and ill-conceived given the clear link between participation in after-school programming and future criminality. Investment in our children needs to be a priority for our whole community. Gang violence is not just the responsibility of the police.

Graham Clyne, Director

Calgary Children's Initiative

(That's a point the chief has been trying to make.)