

ADVERTISEMENT

THE VANCOUVER SUN_{mobile}

Opinion: Political correctness obfuscates truth in housing dilemma

Friday, February 12, 2016

By Michael McCarthy, Special to the Sun



You hear a lot these days about “offshore money” jacking up the price of housing here in Vancouver. Offshore? Gosh, that must mean Nanaimo. I wonder how the folks over on the island got so rich when no one was looking. Maybe it was Russian oligarchs looking for a safe haven to place their ill-gotten loot. These days the issue of housing in Vancouver is rather sensitive, so certain topics regarding housing cannot be discussed thanks to political correctness. Heck, let’s do so anyway.

You hear a lot these days about “offshore money” jacking up the price of housing here in Vancouver. Offshore? Gosh, that must mean Nanaimo. I wonder how the folks over on the island got so rich when no one was looking. Maybe it was Russian oligarchs looking for a safe haven to place their ill-gotten loot. These days the issue of housing in Vancouver is rather sensitive, so certain topics regarding housing cannot be discussed thanks to political correctness. Heck, let’s do so anyway.

Vancouver has been heavily touted by our own provincial government as “the best place in the world.” It’s also been named in several global surveys as the “second least affordable city in the world” (relative to per capita income) after Hong Kong. If you already own a home here in Lotusland, lucky you. That Vancouver Special for which you paid \$50,000 a generation ago is now worth \$1.8 million. On the other hand, if you and your spouse (both young professionals) would like to buy a home some time here in Vancouver, ha. Best bet is to buy a lottery ticket and cross your fingers. We don’t really need doctors, nurses, teachers and other riff raff in Vancouver anyway. Let them commute from Abbotsford.

Many people in the local political arena don’t like the topic of housing to be discussed whatsoever. For instance, you are not allowed to question from where all this hidden wealth has suddenly emerged. It’s merely “offshore,” information redacted, classified topic. Not only that, but your unwanted query carries the highly charged and dangerous accusation of being politically incorrect. If you imply in any way, shape or form that all this new money comes from

a certain country or specific culture where ethics and laws are somewhat ephemeral, you run the serious risk of being labelled a “racist.” Which these days is tantamount to being a hate crime, with serious repercussions.

The phrase political correctness itself is puzzling. What does it actually mean? Years ago pop musician Randy Newman was nearly roasted alive for his hit satire Short People (“have no reason to live.”) His tongue-in-cheek explanation was that he wrote the song about his own little kids. He laughed all the way to the bank. These days the song would never get played and Newman might get arrested for child abuse.

You might want to google “political correctness” yourself. Definitions vary. Here’s one: “The avoidance, often taken to extremes, of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.” Sounds good. Or: “A method of controlling and dictating public speech and thought.” Wow, that reeks of totalitarian leftist Newspeak like George Orwell’s 1984. Here’s a third: “Conforming to a particular socio-political ideology or point of view, especially to a liberal point of view concerned with promoting tolerance and avoiding offense in matters of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.” Fair enough.

The first definition goes back to 1793, from the pen of Justice James Wilson in the case of *Chisholm v. Georgia*. His decision was meant to distinguish between the phrase “United States” versus “the people of the United States.” Justice Wilson believed the latter to be politically correct. Perhaps the meaning of the word political has changed? What does being politically correct mean these days, exactly? Is it about politics, or the law, or popularity, or does it simply mean to be “fair, neutral, and unprejudiced”?

A more recent interpretation of the term politically correct appears in the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1993): “Conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend the political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated.” Some sources say the first modern use of politically correct was uttered by members of the Communist Party of the United States during the 1930s. For some reason, the U.S. radical left of the 1960s and 1970s, though generally contemptuous of the Communist Party, latched onto politically correct as a suitable term to describe views of society and culture that everyone within their own particular collective should embrace. In 2016, the newest development of politically correct may actually mean “politically expedient,” implying that the path of popular orthodoxy within whatever group you find yourself is the path of least political risk.

Or perhaps the mighty rise of social media has turned us all into political pundits, all aspiring to acquire some source of power but thinking carefully about what we say and to whom we say it. Whatever, political correctness forbids me to tell you what “offshore money” really means, or where it really comes from. You’ll just have to go look at the “for sale” yard signs by yourself.

Michael McCarthy is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor to Postmedia publications.

© Copyright (c) The Vancouver Sun

[Top Page](#)

[National](#) | [World](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Health](#) | [Travel](#) | [Technology](#)

2016 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized distribution, transmission or