

LETTER OF THE DAY

Managing homelessness

Federal, provincial inaction at root of the problem

Re: Cities must provide shelter, or give up public spaces to homeless, Editorial, Oct. 28

The Sun is correct that last week's B.C. Supreme Court decision establishes a precedent for how municipalities should manage the crisis of people living on the street.

The court ruled that cities must do their best to keep people safe, not use the law to make the lives of their most vulnerable citizens more dangerous. That means ending the criminalization of homelessness — which has proven to be a human rights disaster in Abbotsford and countless other municipalities — and looking at creative solutions to increase shelter and housing options.

Cities alone cannot solve homelessness, however. They should be looking to senior levels of government for support and collaboration.

In its decision, the court found that homelessness has many root causes and that characterizing it as a "choice" is overly simplistic, ignoring factors such as: the decline in public assistance; the structure and administration of government support; and the lack of affordable housing. The jurisdictional responsibility for these all fall to higher levels of government.

Many of our citizens find themselves in the streets due to the failures of our provincial and federal governments. It is their inaction that has caused this crisis, and it's now on them — alongside every municipality — to fix it.

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