

Subject: [Fwd: Affordable Shelter for the Homeless]

Date: Tue, 03 May 2005 12:23:16 -0700

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: Affordable Shelter for the Homeless

Date: Tue, 03 May 2005 11:42:03 -0700 (PDT)

From: elix@vcn.bc.ca

To: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

CC: World_Urban_Forum_Vancouver@yahoogroups.com, bplatts@shaw.ca, fonvca@fonvca.org, Mayor and Council - DNV <council@dnv.org>, Senior Management Committee <managecomm@dnv.org>, James Ridge <james_ridge@dnv.org>, mayorandcouncil@city.vancouver.bc.ca, lorne.mayencourt.mla@leg.bc.ca, info@fraserinstitute.ca, provletters@png.canwest.com

Dear Clr. Crist:

This is such a well thought-out letter, I wanted to wait until I had done a little more research before commenting on its constructive points.

There are of course many categories of people who have difficulty finding affordable housing. Focusing on the most extreme circumstance of homelessness, though, yesterday's Province contained a timely editorial and I would also like to draw your attention to an important historical event in which a city councillor (alderman) had a key role.

At Oppenheimer Park, aka the "Powell Street Grounds", there is a historic "walking tour" sign. I am a history buff and I took some notes from it. City Alderman Pettipiece was arrested when he addressed a crowd at the Powell Street Grounds like the crowd shown in the picture. It seems this served as an incentive for the creation of "a system of relief camps" in 1931 which provided "bed, food, clothing, medical attention" and \$2/day. My guess is that \$2 in 1931 was worth at least \$20 today. Thus the relief camp workers got what welfare falls short on supplying today in quotes plus a reasonable wage. It looks to me like the poor and homeless got a better deal in the depression years than they get today in Vancouver. (BTW, the picture on the walking tour sign shows that three of the houses beside Oppenheimer are standing today).

I also understand that the Fraser Institute is in favour of "workfare" and I am not opposed as long as there is a reasonable choice built into it. I think poor folks should have a choice in pre-vocational and vocational circumstances just like everyone else. Workfare with choice would essentially be a system of relief camps updated to today. As an example, on the Chilliwack Lake Road, the corrections service has had a work camp for many years. I gather the prisoner-workers do forestry work and learn some new skills as training on the job. Workfare with choice could set up work camps for various public services such as mining, ecology, fisheries, logging etc. in more remote locations like the Cultus-Chilliwack Lake axis and "decant" homeless and poor folk to those locations to learn some new skills and enjoy a more healthy way of life.

As far as affordable, healthy housing which can be found with a welfare stipend of \$325/month, the answer is simple. There isn't any. That is one reason for Province to report that "...the number of homeless in the Lower Mainland has soared from just over 1,000 in 2002 to more than 2,100 this year". Some people think the street is a better choice than Cockroach Hotel, at least if they are young and healthy and it is summer. I have spoken to a young man who spent last summer in a tent under the Georgia Street Viaduct and moved to an indoor shelter for winter. He broke camp every morning to avoid arrest although even the nightly tenting was illegal. But \$325/month CAN provide a healthy and affordable camp site in the Cultus-Chilliwack lakes region. The tent site costs \$10/day; add \$25 for utilities (fuel for cooking, heating and light).

We need some political leadership and with that the safe streets problem CAN be solved to everyone's satisfaction. So far I have not seen it coming from Vancouver administration. They have done nothing significantly constructive that I can see while issuing an amazing series of platitudes and vacuous speeches expressing pseudo-compassion. And yesterday we also read in the Province Mayor Campbell's harangue against MLA Mayencourt for "doing nothing" toward safer streets. Mayencourt at least put forward something in the public arena to kick-start some constructive dialogue. Let's have it continued here, online.

EE

> Dear EE:

>
> I will not pursue this matter other than as part of the regular agenda
> issues coming before Council.

>
> I received complaints from the public that the Vancouver Police are
> dropping off homeless people and drug addicts in North Vancouver. Having
> no money they then become a nuisance and, in some cases, engage in
> criminal activities, so I was told. When I found out that there may be
> an element of truth in this I raised this matter with Council with the
> result that the press reported this.

>
> The upshot was that Jamie Graham of Vancouver came to North Vancouver to
> explain that as far as the Vancouver Police is concerned there is no
> policy which would allow for this and further that he had no knowledge
> of any such activity. He also explained the plight of homeless people,
> including the mentally ill.

>
> When Jamie Graham spoke, he came across as a person who knew what the
> problem really was and what would have to be done to address it. Among
> other things he pointed to the need to provide housing, facilities and
> programs for those in need as the only solution. He stated that this was
> first and foremost a social issue which would have to be addressed by
> government and not by the police per se. To this extent I agree with him
> wholeheartedly.

>
> The problem as I explained is that among other things homeless people
> need shelter at prices they can afford and this is only possible if it
> is provided by government with rents based on income. How, I asked can a
> person who makes \$ 8 per hour provided he/she has a job in the first
> place afford to live, never mind pay rent for an even modest shelter?
> Not to speak of the other necessities.

>
> But this is the society we live in or I should say this is the society
> we have inherited from the old line parties who in my opinion have
> ruined this country at the behest of global corporations whose social
> consciousness and responsibility is equal to that of a barracuda.

>
> I have done the best I can at the local level to address these issues
> but it was largely an exercise in futility since the public simply does
> not understand while politicians, by and large, are even more backward.
> Also, in fairness, the senior levels of government have dumped most of
> the responsibilities into our lap at the municipal level without the
> resources to deal with them. The upshot is that the contradictions will
> increase with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Crime
> too will increase and so will social problems, including homelessness.
> There is no need for this to happen of course at least not to the extent
> that it is happening all around us.

>
> However, ONE CANNOT MAKE A SILK PURSE OUT OF A SOW'S EAR or as the Roman
> Cethegus stated, even genius cannot force a people to be anything but
> mediocre if they don't want to be more than mediocre.

>
> In the meantime if any social organization in North Vancouver comes

> forward with a specific proposal for any social action or with a request
> other than lament the plight of homeless people over tea and crumpets at
> a Sunday afternoon get together or protest against violence in our
> society by having a nose bleed over a painting depicting a half nude
> woman on the wall of the Municipal Hall, I will be happy to endorse and
> support any and all such efforts.

>
> Yours truly,

> Ernie Crist

> -----Original Message-----

> From: elix@vcn.bc.ca [<mailto:elix@vcn.bc.ca>]

> Sent: Friday, April 22, 2005 12:26 PM

> To: Ernie Crist

> Cc: bplatts@shaw.ca

> Subject: [Fwd: Re: [WORLD_URBAN_FORUM_VANCOUVER] Public Education:

> Homelessness used in Public Administration]

> Dear Clr. Crist:

> I was wondering if you plan to go any further with your concerns about
> the inappropriate use of the street in public administration, eg
> policing?

> The complaint at <<http://www.geocities.com/hrtcomplaint>> has been filed
> with the BC Human Rights Tribunal and assigned a case manager. I don't
> know how long they take to proceed with such a case. The next step will
> be to file with the BC Supreme Court irrespective of how BCHRT rules
> because there are issues of Charter rights which are beyond the mandate
> of BCHRT.

> I would like to collaborate with a lawyer at some point as there will be
> a lot of procedures with which I am unfamiliar. My doctorate is in
> phil-psych and not law. The lawyer would do this work pro bono and would
> therefore need a dedication to the cause. Are you such a lawyer or do
> you know one?

> EE

> ----- Original Message

> Subject: Re: [WORLD_URBAN_FORUM_VANCOUVER] Public Education:

> Homelessness

> used in Public Administration From: elix@vcn.bc.ca

> Date: Thu, April 21, 2005 10:13 am

> To: streetcrime@bcjusticereview.org

> Cc: mhr.minister@gems7.gov.bc.ca

> jamie_graham@city.vancouver.bc.ca

> "Brian Platts" <bplatts@shaw.ca>

> ernie_crist@dnv.org

> geoff.plant.mla@leg.bc.ca

> world_urban_forum_vancouver@yahoogroups.com

> --

> Dear Chief Judge Ellan et al:

> I note from your web site that the Street Crime Working Group has a
> mandate which includes "Defining the nature and magnitude of street
> crime and disorderly behaviour in Vancouver...."

> Could you please include some work on how the street is used as an
> instrument of public administration including policing? Clr. Crist's
> concern is not the same as mine as he has seen a different aspect of the
> problem and I am sure there are other ways in which public
> administrators use the street in their practices. I would expect street
> crime and disorderly behaviour on the streets to increase as a result of
> MHR and others forcing indigents to sleep on streets or keeping them
> there by having police transfer them from street to street.

>
> Since it is illegal to sleep on the streets of GVRD (minimally a by-law
> violation) when public administrators in MHR, VPD etc. force people to
> do so, they bring sound laws into disrepute. There are also some aspects
> of public health (physical and mental) which I expect the public health
> authorities like Dr. Blatherwick would like to address.

>
> Sincerely-EE

>
>> Dear Chief Cstl. Graham:

>>
>> If I see a person smashing in a house window, I do what Mr. Plant said
> to do. I report it to police. You may say I was mistaken, eg it was not
> a crime but rather the owner locked his keys inside and breaking the
> window was the easiest way to gain entry.

>>
>> I see what I see when it comes to throwing those with mental
> disabilities into the street from Lookout. Just ask Lookout. They will
> tell you by email that they throw such people into the street. It looks
> to me like Lookout Society and MHR (through related procedures like
> HR2863) are systematically administering criminal abuse which imperils
> the health and lives of the mentally ill.

>>
>> All you have to do is say yes or no with a few words of explanation.
>> If
> I am mistaken as in the home invasion example above, that ends the
> matter and many thousands of dollars in tax payer money will be saved as
> nobody has to read these postings further.

>>
>> The longer you delay responding, the more evasive you are, the more
> people are likely to believe that I have witnessed a crime and that you
> are covering it up for political purposes.

>>
>> Sincerely-EE

>>
>>> Thank you for your reply, Mr. Platts. Yes, maybe when DNV gives
>>> funding to Lookout Society, it simply isn't aware that they are
>>> operating this
> way. Thus more public EDUCATION on the subject of homelessness might be
> called
>>> for and posting this to your board could be a good start. I confess I
>
>>> was not aware of the problem Clr. Crist mentioned. I did not know
>>> police were relocating offenders from Street A to Street B knowing
>>> that they could or should have been charged and jailed instead. Also
>>> I hadn't heard the
> expression "breaching" until BCTV presented it.

>>>
>>> The bigger picture seems to be that of HOMELESSNESS BEING USED IN
> PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION for a variety of questionable reasons. Maybe Clr.
> Crist is
>>> the elected person we the public of GVRD need to ask those questions.

>
>>> I
> can only offer my services as a program evaluator, a job I did full time

>>> for two years in Alberta (Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
>>> Commission)
> and for part of my time at MHR-Woodlands.
>>>
>>> When trusted personnel providing public services from police to
> counsellors as at Lookout Society flaunt sound laws like those which
> proscribe sleeping on the street or park benches, we have a serious
> problem. At the very least, disrespect for law is fostered. Then we must
> ask which laws are being held up to contempt and why the public
> administration does not have the integrity to put this process forward
> for
>>> debate in law-making bodies like city councils.
>>>
>>> When times change, laws change. Laws may fall into disuse. For
>>> example,
> the laws against marijuana use and street prostitution are not enforced
> as
>>> vigorously as once was the case. But at least law makers now debate
> whether the old laws should be rescinded.
>>>
>>> Lookout Society DOES throw people out onto the street. They have
>>> admitted it in email and it is a continuing practice which is
>>> recorded on their log and done in full view of many witnesses. Should
>
>>> this practice not be
> discussed in as public a manner as changing the laws on marijuana use
> and
>>> prostitution is discussed?
>>>
>>> My question to Chief Constable Graham is whether use of the street in
>
>>> this manner may even be criminal. Please have a look at the cases in
>>> my
> complaint to BCHRT below. When those suffering from severe mental
> disabilities are thrown out on the street I have to say IT LOOKS TO ME
> LIKE CRIMINAL ASSAULT.
>>>
>>> Mr. Plant's recent email tells us the proper thing for a citizen to
>>> do
> under these circumstances is to take the matter to police. Is it
> criminal
>>> assault, Constable Graham, to throw a person suffering from a serious
> mental disability out onto the street knowing that not only is this
> practice illegal as a by-law violation but also that it imperils the
> life
>>> of the victim?
>>>
>>> Sincerely-EE
>>>
>>>
>>>
>>>> I wish I could answer your question. Perhaps Councillor Crist can
>>>> find
> out. You could well be correct that tacit approval has been given, but
> maybe it's more likely that there is simply a lack of detailed scrutiny
> of the DNV of the Society's operations. After all, the municipality has
> a lot of problems of its own to worry about. Anyway, we can post your
> e-mails on the subject and hopefully stimulate some discussion.
>>>>
>>>> Sincerely,
>>>> Brian Platts
>>>> Federation of NV Community Associations www.fonvca.org
>>>>
>>>> elix@vcn.bc.ca wrote:
>>>>

>>>>>Dear Eliot Esti:

>>>>>

>>>>>In response to your e-mail, Councillor Ernie Crist copied the
>>>>>Federation of NV Community Associations for publication in the
>>>>>correspondence
> section of our web site at www.fonvca.org I thought I should first
>>>>> seek

>>>>>your consent before the exchange is posted.

>>>>>

>>>>>Sincerely,

>>>>>Brian Platts/*

>>>>>Federation of NV Community Associations*/

>>>>>

>>>>>

>>>>>

>>>>><<http://www.fonvca.org>>

>>>>>

>>>>>Dear Mr. Platts and Clr. Crist:

>>>>>

>>>>>We have a common interest in homelessness as a community problem.

>>>>>That is also a common interest of the ad hoc list which I cc as

>>>>>this

> discussion proceeds.

>>>>>

>>>>>I am a reluctant litigant. I would much prefer that the complaint

>>>>>which I have filed with BCHRT at

>>>>><<http://www.geocities.com/hrtcomplaint>> be

> resolved without involving the judicial system further and I think that

> could be done through online discussion.

>>>>>

>>>>>DNV is named as a respondent because it is one of a dozen entities

>>>>>which fund Lookout Society. I don't think Lookout Society uses a

>>>>>procedure

> as overt and as consequential as expulsion onto the street without at

>>>>> least

>>>>>the tacit approval of those who are funding it.

>>>>>

>>>>>Could either of you answer this question for me?

>>>>>

>>>>>Why does DNV not send Lookout Society a note of protest against

>>>>>their use of this procedure which is illegal (at the very least a

>>>>>by-law

>>>>>violation)

>>>>>and hazardous to public health (Dr. Blatherwick's email of Nov.

> 10/04)?

>>>>>

>>>>>Sincerely-EE

>>>>>

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>>> Yahoo! Groups Links

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