



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: September 15, 2004  
Author: Wendy Au/  
Lindsey Richardson  
Phone No.: 604.871-6639  
RTS No.: 04517  
CC File No.: 4657  
Meeting Date: October 19, 2004

TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: City Manager  
SUBJECT: City of Vancouver initiatives related to the recommendations in *Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project*

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for INFORMATION.

#### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager submits this report for Council's INFORMATION.

#### COUNCIL POLICY

There is no applicable Council Policy directly related to *Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project*.

#### SUMMARY

City Council and the City of Vancouver are actively engaged in many of the issues mentioned in the *Practicing Democracy* report. The report contains a multitude of recommendations that make reference to a number of different policy areas. For those that refer to issues that fall within the mandate of the municipal government, the City's ongoing efforts are widespread and are regular components of departments' day-to-day programming. Further, City Council has previously embraced motions advocating positive solutions to many of the

issues raised by the *Practicing Democracy* project. This report briefly outlines the City's activities in the five subject areas of housing, support, money, food and safety. It also outlines a number of new initiatives, including City's Homelessness Action Plan, the Food Policy Task Force, the Women's Task Force, the NAOMI project and the Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Use. More information about the specific outcomes of these initiatives will be available in future reports.

## PURPOSE

This report intends to give Council a brief accounting of current and ongoing City initiatives related to the recommendations contained in the report *Practicing Democracy - a Legislative Theatre Project* dated April 21, 2004, from Headlines Theatre.

## BACKGROUND

On February 27, 2003, Council voted to endorse the Headlines Theatre "Practicing Democracy" Project. Practicing Democracy is a legislative theatre project designed to create a forum for public dialogue and participation in the creation of public policy and law. Performances were held in March 2004 that explored the question "How can the City of Vancouver respond to the results of the cuts to welfare?"

Audience members were invited to participate if they had an idea to change the action or outcome by intervening in the second performance each night, and replacing a character engaged in a struggle to try out their idea. These interventions, and further ideas that arose during discussion, were recorded and assembled by a legal consultant into a report to Vancouver City Council.

This report was presented to the Standing committee on Planning and Environment on May 6, 2004. The Committee recommended to Council

THAT the report *Practicing Democracy - A Legislative Theatre Project*, dated April 21, 2004, be referred to the City Manager for follow up; and

FURTHER THAT Headlines Theatre be informed when staff reports reflect recommendations from the report *Practicing Democracy - A Legislative Theatre Project*", dated April 21, 2004; and

FURTHER THAT a separate report be prepared by staff relating specifically to fire and safety issues for SROs city-wide; and

FURTHER THAT a brief accounting of all the recommendations and their status within the City be prepared and submitted to Council; and

FURTHER THAT reports be brought back to Council as they occur and a full accounting be completed within one year.

The City Manager's office subsequently convened several meetings of City officials whose area of responsibility was mentioned in the recommendations of *Practicing Democracy - A*

*Legislative Theatre Project.* Departments were asked to review the recommendations in *Practicing Democracy* and provide details on relevant activities and initiatives. This report outlines their input as it pertains to the *Practicing Democracy* recommendations. It was written with contributions from the following City departments: The Housing Centre, Social Planning, Current Planning, Engineering, Legal Services, the City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, the Chief Building Officials' Office, The Drug Policy Office, Community Services, the Vancouver Agreement, and the Vancouver Police Department.

The separate report on fire and safety issues for SRO's requested by City Council was submitted as a memo in June and is attached to this report as Appendix A.

## DISCUSSION

The City of Vancouver works extensively to address many of the issues raised in the *Practicing Democracy* report. It also supports numerous organizations and service delivery agencies that have been affected by recent cuts to social services.

Many of the recommendations fall outside the jurisdiction of the municipal government. In many instances, the City partners with community organizations and other levels of government to address social service issues. Recommendations that advocate measures outside the power and purview of the City are not contained in this report. A complete list of the *Practicing Democracy* recommendations is attached to this report as Appendix B.

The recommendations contained in *Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project* are organized into five key subject areas, which are:

- I. Housing
- II. Support
- III. Money
- IV. Food
- V. Safety

### I. Housing

#### *Practicing Democracy* Recommendations

The *Practicing Democracy* Report divides their recommendations related to housing into five sections: Target Groups, Improve Accessibility, Increase Availability, Improve Management of Shelters and Housing, and Improve Public Service Treatment of Homeless. These recommendations included:

#### Target Groups

- Provide shelter options for those who need to be housed separately and for those who would benefit from mixed housing;
- Community housing; and
- Provide housing specifically for pregnant women and low-income single mothers and children, including job training and transition to independent housing.

#### Improve Accessibility

- Have shelters offer more flexible hours of operation;

- Create and maintain a housing registry; and
- Up-to-date information on shelters and services should be available 24 hours per day.

#### Increase Availability

##### (1) Emergency shelters

- Use community centers and neighbourhood houses as emergency shelter in the evening and night-time hours; and
- Collaborate with churches that offer emergency shelter and support to synchronize efforts across the city.

##### (2) Temporary Shelters

- Create time limits on building vacancies;
- Complete Woodward's plan with MORE affordable housing included;
- Enable community members to safely offer short-term accommodation to homeless; and
- Relax zoning regulations to permit secondary suites in single family homes.

##### (3) Transitional Housing

- Create phased housing plan for individuals who need support in basic living skills as well as shelter.

##### (4) Long-term Housing

- Create more affordable housing units;
- Relax zoning by-laws to permit secondary suites in single-family homes;
- Relax zoning regulations to allow non-related tenants to share studio and one-bedroom apartments;
- Develop community housing options, where it is possible for singles and small families to live together;
- Lobby BC government to amend welfare regulations; and
- Require landlords [developers] to provide a percentage of non-market rental units.

##### (5) Financing creation of more shelters

- Impose a development tax on builders; and
- Increase development tax on condominium builders.

#### Improve Management of Shelters and Housing

- Involve homeless, former homeless in operation, design and development of shelters; and
- Improve management of SRAs through SRA by-law; ensure residents can not be evicted for occasional overnight guests.

#### Improve Public Service Treatment of Homeless

- Parks staff and Police should assist homeless in finding safe and appropriate accommodation, and treat individuals respectfully and humanely. Training in communications and respectful intervention should be provided and mandatory.
- The homeless have a right to vote, but no address to enable enumeration. In order to facilitate their participation in the democratic process, establish a city address (e.g. a box office number) that homeless individuals can use to become enumerated.

#### **City Mandate**

*The City has several housing functions:*

- *To create opportunities for social housing, mainly in partnership with senior governments;*
- *To provide relocation and housing referral assistance to displaced tenants;*
- *To encourage development and retention of affordable housing; and*
- *The City owns and operates seven projects providing housing for singles and families living on low incomes.*

## Current Initiatives

### Target Groups

- There are a number of shelters and housing that provide housing to specific clientele, including women, youth and aboriginals in Vancouver. In general, the City has favoured integrated housing that mixes incomes and avoids segregating one group from another while recognizing that some segregation is appropriate e.g. family housing may include some non-family households but families need to dominate if a family environment is to be sustained. There are 300 non-market housing projects in the City (21,000 units) that include integrated housing as well as housing restricted to specific groups.
- In terms of community housing, the City has been a strong supporter of co-operative housing and 100 of the 300 non-market housing projects in the City are co-operatives.
- A draft Homelessness Action Plan will be coming to Council with a recommendation that it be circulated for public input. It will address the role and need for shelters in the City, including identifying gaps.

#### 1) Women

- The City has supported increasing the supply of shelter services for women, e.g. providing a capital grant to the Salvation Army's Belkin House, and making available a City building for a temporary winter shelter for women. No shelters have been closed due to provincial funding cut-backs, but if they were, the City would probably not be able to replace the funding as shelters are very expensive to operate.
- Some non-market housing e.g. Crabtree Corner has been developed for pregnant women, and more has been built for low income families, many of which are single parent/women led families. The focus of the social housing developed in the City has been on economic need and equity, and specific groups, such as low income families and women which experience higher incidences of economic need than other groups, tend to be the beneficiaries of investments in social housing. The issue of housing for women is currently being worked on by the Women's Task Force.

#### 2) Seniors

- Most co-op housing in the city has been built for families. There has been some discussion of the co-operative housing sector sponsoring the development of seniors housing for their members. Allowing welfare recipients to use the shelter component of welfare to buy housing needs falls within the Province's jurisdiction. It would need some broad public discussion around issues of equity e.g. different treatment for low-income households some of whom collect welfare and others who work, and the use of tax payer subsidies to build individual equity.
- Regarding changes to the Residential Tenancy Act, City Council decided to give the Province recommendations on the new act at its June 24, 2003 meeting.

### Improve Accessibility

- Shelter funding and operations are the responsibility of the Province. The City supports full service 24 hour/day shelters.

- The City has provided funding for the housing registry that BC Housing and the BC Non-Profit Housing Assn. recently established. The City also funded the former YWCA registry that was shut down because of funding cut backs in 1996. That registry provided a broader range of services than the current registry and we hope the new registry will expand over time to provide a full range of registry services to private as well as non-profit landlords and their prospective tenants.
- Ensuring easy access to information regarding services, shelter and housing is important. The shelter providers currently work together and co-ordinate their activities so they can respond to severe weather conditions and ensure that if one shelter is full someone in need is referred to a shelter that has a vacancy. The proposed Homelessness Action Plan will include actions related to the expansion of the housing registry to improve access to information and coordination of services.

### Increase Availability

#### 1) Emergency Shelters:

- Emergency shelters are the responsibility of the Province. The Homelessness Action Plan will address the role of 'tent cities', outdoor homeless campgrounds, expansion of emergency shelters.
- The City makes the Gathering Place in Downtown South and the Evelyn Saller available for emergency shelters during severe weather conditions. Funding is provided by the Ministry of Human Resources. Expanding into community centres and neighbourhood houses is possible if MHR or other funding is available and the need is there, noting that community centres and neighbourhood houses have evening and early morning programming so it may not be possible to use those facilities for shelters without disruption.
- There is a co-ordinated response to severe weather conditions across the region and in the city. In addition to the City opening up the Gathering Place and Evelyn Saller Centre, churches and community services provide shelter. As well, the existing year round shelters expand their capacity during the cold/wet seasons and during severe weather conditions. To date, the community's response to severe weather has been adequate to accommodate the shelterless needing to come in from the cold. Expanding the capacity to neighbourhoods outside the downtown is being pursued.
- MHR through their emergency response program is responsible for providing emergency accommodation e.g. in hotels. MHR's program is targeted to those displaced by emergencies such as fires and not to the homeless, except for families who are provided with vouchers. Many of the homeless aren't eligible for welfare. City Council has called on the Province to reform the welfare system so that those at risk of homelessness can get welfare and not end up on the street.
- The City has very few vacant buildings and even fewer might work for shelters because of state of repair or location (shelters need to be well served by transit and close to services including inexpensive food). We are using one building on a site reserved for social housing for a women's cold/wet weather shelter funded through the Federal Government and would consider similar arrangements if Federal or Provincial funding were available. Even temporary shelters require capital funding and funding for operations.

#### 2) Temporary Shelters:

- As discussed above, the location of shelters and the suitability of buildings needs to be considered, as well as the question of the capital and operating costs. Many of the buildings suggested aren't owned by the City and the permission of the owner would be required. The fundamental question, given limited resources, is how much to invest in shelters, temporary or permanent, as opposed to investing in permanent housing.

- The City discourages buildings sitting vacant by requiring that all permits for a new development be in place before a demolition permit can be granted.
- The City is not in a position to legalize squatting. Squatting raises issues of life safety and liability; the provision of heat, light and water; what happens to the squatters when redevelopment proceeds; the ability of the owner to deal with property issues e.g. maintenance; etc.
- The City is actively pursuing additional Federal and Provincial funding to increase the number of affordable housing units in Woodwards.
- The City currently allows homeowners to take in boarders, and citizens or the community could 'foster' the homeless if they wish. A fostering or billeting model, with subsidies provided to homeowners, would be an issue for the Ministries of Human Resources and Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

Earlier this year, the City rezoned all single family districts in Vancouver to allow for a secondary suite in all one-family dwellings. The Province currently funds limited rent supplement programs (Supported Independent Living for the disabled and mentally ill), and Shelter Assistance for Elderly Renters - SAFER).

### 3) Transitional Housing:

- The draft Homelessness Action Plan will address the role of transitional housing in the context of the supportive housing continuum. The issue, highlighted by the difficulties experienced by VanCity Place for Youth, is the importance of funding for the operations of transitional and all other supportive housing. Staffing 24 hours a day and 7 days a week is required along with specialized support services such as counselling, job training, life skills, etc. The successful transition of VanCity Place for Youth to Covenant House's Rites of Passage program was only possible through the infusion of substantial operating dollars, and even so the program has yet to achieve full capacity because of the limited operating funding available. Senior government funding to cover the operational costs of staffing and support services is essential to the success of supportive housing.

### 4) Long-term Housing:

- Vancouver's success in developing over 21,000 units of social housing in the past 50 years is due to its commitment to partnering with the Federal and Provincial government social housing programs. By selling or leasing sites to non-profit sponsors of social housing, the City has facilitated the development of 300 non-profit rental and co-operative housing projects. The City's primary role has been to make sites available to non-profit sponsors and the City continues to hold sites for social housing should Federal or Provincial funding be made available. A component of this program is to require developers of new neighbourhoods to make sites available for social housing. Earlier this year the City amended the zoning by-laws to allow secondary suites in all single family areas of Vancouver.
- The City currently allows up to 5 unrelated persons to occupy a dwelling unit. There are no zoning requirements that limit occupancy. Overcrowding is not a solution to Vancouver's housing problems but shared living has long been part of Vancouver's housing environment, whether students sharing a house or a condominium owner renting out a bedroom to assist in paying the mortgage.
- Housing that mixes household types (singles and families) or generations (young families and seniors) has been developed successfully in Vancouver, for example Four Sisters Co-operative and more recently Mole Hill. The key is to provide choice so that those that want to live in housing that mixes household types and generations can, and those that don't

- want to can live in housing that doesn't. The City's primary focus has been on creating housing that mixes incomes and which requires Federal and Provincial funding.
- We have recently seen a substantial movement of renters into ownership due to low interest rates and minimal down payment requirements. These are the two most crucial factors affecting the ability of renters to buy their own home. In the current circumstances, a rent-to-own program may not add much capacity as rents are not much lower than mortgage payments for many older condominiums.
  - The Province has a major role to play in providing affordable housing and solving homelessness.
    - The proposed Homelessness Action Plan will address the reforms needed to the Province's welfare system so that the risk of homelessness is minimized.
    - The City has the Vancouver Housing Corporation as a vehicle for developing or operating housing, and the City can buy and sell land or buildings as Council may choose. The City's primary role has not been to develop and operate housing on its own but through partnerships with non-profit housing societies and co-operatives which create diversity and choice as well as supporting community initiative.
    - SAFER is a provincially administered shelter allowance program for seniors which has eligibility criteria based on maximum rent and income.
    - Some of the City's zoning schedules, e.g. Downtown Eastside ODP, require that non-market housing is provided, as a condition of extra density.

#### 5) Financing Creation of More Shelters:

- The City currently levies a City-wide fee (Development Cost Levy or DCL) of \$6/sq. ft. on all new development. Of this, 32% goes to affordable housing to replace housing that may be lost to redevelopment. In addition, as a condition of rezonings the City requires that developers make a Community Amenity Contribution of which affordable housing is often one of the beneficiaries.
- In 2004, the City doubled the City-wide DCL and increased the oldest DCL in the City by 50%.
- The non-profit societies that provide shelters, such as Lookout Emergency Aid Society, Triage Emergency Services and the Salvation Army have well established fund raising and donation programs.
- Currently the hotel tax in Vancouver funds the tourist promotion and services for the City. The City, through its DCLs etc., uses other vehicles for raising funds for affordable housing and shelters.

#### Improve Management of Shelters and Housing

- A number of shelter providers, e.g. Lookout, Triage and Bridge had input from shelter users and the homeless in the design and operation of their facilities. The draft Homelessness Action Plan was developed with input from the homeless as well as from providers of shelter and services to the homeless. The City's Tenant Assistance Co-ordinator periodically visits the homeless between midnight and dawn to get a better understanding of their issues and needs, and providers of shelter and services interact with the homeless on a regular basis as well to learn what works and what doesn't.
- In late 2003, Council approved the Single Room Accommodation By-law to control the conversion or demolition of the residential hotels and rooming houses in the downtown. The Residential Tenancy Act requires that landlords allow guests.
- There are 200 SRA buildings with 7,000 units in Vancouver. The City does support the acquisition of SRA buildings by non-profit societies, and supports private landlords entering

into operating agreements with non-profit societies whereby the non-profit society manages the building on behalf of the owner.

### Improve Public Service Treatment of Homeless

- The Police, Park Bd. and Engineering staff work closely with the City's Tenant Assistance Program to address the needs of the homeless as well as their impact on neighbouring communities. The Tenant Assistance Program provides training to staff departments as to who the homeless are and how best to deal with them.
- The City's Tenant Assistance Program works with Elections Canada and others to ensure that the homeless have an opportunity to vote. The homeless can use facilities like shelters, community centres, public libraries, etc as an address to vote.

## II. Support

### *Practicing Democracy* Recommendations

The *Practicing Democracy* report organizes its recommendations on the theme of support around four different demographic groups - seniors, women, sex trade workers, urban bush dwellers - and two themes - health issues, and drug addictions. These recommendations include:

#### Seniors

- Improve visiting and outreach services for seniors who are isolated, living alone, and/or with mobility issues;
- Support creation of a volunteer organization with a mandate to visit and connect with isolated seniors, particularly those with mobility issues;
- Create a "Buddy System Check-In" within communities;
- Support development of Network to connect seniors;
- Provide a place for seniors to get together, build friendships; create a destination seniors' center, adult day centres, with activities and opportunities to develop friendships and community supports;
- Provide funding for peer support outreach and mentoring programs for seniors;
- Community building initiatives that include seniors; and
- Promote community building initiatives that create trust and safety, integrate seniors in planning.

#### Women

- To provide support for single mothers and childcare.

#### Sex Trade Workers

- Fund PACE Society, help get women off the street and raise awareness; and
- Provide empowerment and life skills training at shelters for women, assistance in planning for transition to independent living.

#### Urban Bush Dwellers

- Vancouver City Council to make provincial and federal governments aware of these issues - the extent of the impact of years of social service cuts;
- Provide centre for homeless to do free weekly laundry; and
- Mental health issues.

### Health Issues

Health issues are the mandate of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. The health issue recommendations in *Practicing Democracy* are therefore not relevant to current City services and programs.

### Drug Addictions

- Proceed with the Four Pillars strategy, and in particular to create and make available more treatment programs;
- More safe injection sites - e.g. Community facilities; advertise existing ones; ease addictions by supplying drugs in a safe way; and
- Provide alternative drugs e.g. Methadone.

### **City Mandate**

*The City of Vancouver is not specifically mandated to support these groups. However, the City uses its Community Services Grants to help ensure equitable access to appropriate social services and to enhance the ability of community organizations to successfully address social issues. The Social Planning Department is mandated to work with community organizations, including groups which work with seniors and women. Through these grants, Social Planning's work, and other networks, the City facilitates linkages and collaboration that improve service provision and program delivery for a number of community agencies, centres and other related initiatives. This work contributes to a diverse, sustainable and equitable society. Further, the Vancouver Agreement provides a forum for the City to advocate with senior levels of government on behalf of City residents, specifically those on the Downtown East Side (DES).*

### **Current Initiatives**

#### Seniors

Current work and initiatives related to seniors' issues include:

- The City provides Community Services Grants to 18 different seniors programs (\$476,000). These seniors groups all provide programs and activities for seniors and several provide outreach and friendly visiting. These latter include Chinese Community Library, DERA seniors, Jewish Family Services Seniors, West End Seniors Network, Neighbourhood Helpers. Many seniors groups have phone trees to check on members. All of the above groups provide a place for seniors to gather, share information and build networks.
- Some City-funded seniors groups provide outreach counselors/multilingual counselors, and seniors Peer Counseling.
- 23 Community Centres, which are supported by the City, also provide drop in space and programming for seniors.
- Community building initiatives supported by Social Planning include:
  - Support to the Vancouver Cross-Cultural Seniors Network;
  - Support for the Seniors Summit II conference Nov. 6/7, 2004. This is a community conference which will discuss a broad range of issues of interest to seniors; and
  - support to South Vancouver Seniors Council, which links senior-serving groups in South Van and provides community education.
- Seniors are integrated in the CityPlan process.
- The City's Newcomers Guide provides information for all ages, and is published in 5 languages.

- The City's Special Advisory Committee on Seniors Issues has a mandate to discuss and make proposals on any issues within the City mandate that affect seniors.

It should be noted that Vancouver Coastal Health is responsible for all Home Support, Home Care, and health related outreach for seniors. However, the City co-funds some community based programs with VCH, such as Seniors Peer Counselling. The City also works closely with VCH on planning of seniors supported housing/assisted living; seniors care facilities, and any plans that VCH has for new construction of hospital and community health facilities.

### Women

The City works with a number of different groups to address the issues facing women in vulnerable and low-income situations. The Social Planning Department and other City staff work with various women's organizations. City Community Services and Childcare Grants assist women's organizations and day care facilities.

Initiatives that support women include:

- A Women's Task Force initiated by City Council and co-chaired by Councillors Roberts and Woodsworth to further work on women's issues. A progress report from the task force is expected to be submitted to council in November 2004.
- Social Planning staff are currently working with other funders to stabilize the operation of the DES Women's Centre, and WISH Drop In;
- City staff participate in the Vancouver Agreement Women's Task Group, which is supporting initiatives for women in the DES;
- The City Community Services Grants fund 14 different groups which focus on services to women (approx \$350,000 in 2004);
- The City has a very extensive Childcare Strategy which includes development of new childcare centres and grants to enhance the operation of inner-city childcare, enhance programs and help stabilize centres;
- Some City-supported services focus specifically on at-risk children, provision of emergency child care, and supports to single mothers; and

Indeed, the City's involvement goes beyond the recommendations in the *Practicing Democracy* report in its support of services to women, also including support for at-risk children, emergency child care, inner-city childcare, women's centres, and other programs.

### Sex Trade Workers

The City of Vancouver is involved in work related to sex-trade workers through multiple avenues. Its City Community Services Grants include grants to WISH Drop in for sex trade workers, and PACE. City staff participate in the Vancouver Agreement's Women's Task Team and other Vancouver Agreement initiatives that address issues faced by sex trade workers. The VPD are working with sex trade workers on de-escalation techniques and other initiatives. Further, the Vancouver Agreement is working with a coalition of community groups and organizations on a new project to develop a well-informed, multi-pronged approach to addressing the health, safety and other impacts of street-based prostitution.

### Urban Bush Dwellers

City Council has recognized the impacts of the social service and other cuts on the homeless and has urged the provincial government to provide adequate funding and to re-instate funding to a number of programs including Income Assistance time limits and reducing benefits, health care services, including mental health and substance use services,

community social services, etc. City Council has also encouraged the Union of BC Municipalities to do likewise.

In terms of services, the City provides a number of these to the homeless, often through community centres. For example the Evelyne Saller Centre and the Gathering Place provide free laundry services and showers. Kitsilano Community Centre has a weekly free shower and breakfast program.

Many of the issues related to 'urban bush dwellers' will be included in the Homeless Action Plan, such as outreach, mental health services, etc.

### Health Issues

Health issues are the mandate of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. However, the Vancouver Agreement is working with health authorities to improve the general health of citizens on the Downtown Eastside.

### Drug Addictions

The Community Services Drug Policy Group's vision is of a civic culture that is aware and involved in empowering communities, has access to appropriate services and participates in fostering community health and reducing drug related harm. Their goal is to implement a comprehensive and evidence based approach to problematic substance use in Vancouver across the four pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement.

The City of Vancouver has been widely recognized for its innovative approach to the issues related to drug use and the reduction of drug related harm. The Community Services Drug Policy Group's initiatives that work towards this goal include:

- Developing and implementing policy on pharmacies that have methadone;
- Working with the community to improve access to methadone (conference on 20-21 of September on methadone maintenance in the province);
- Developing strategy to deal with crack smoking and exploring, with community and government partners, the initiation of a safe inhalation room pilot project within the supervised injection site in the DES;
- Develop strategies to move the Supervised Injection Site the North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI) programs from research to programs, if evaluation find success;
- Methamphetamine strategy for education and awareness re: precursors that can be used to manufacture methamphetamine;
- Analyze the need for utilizing current SIS at full capacity and creating additional injection sites in the city;
- Participating in ongoing enforcement planning focusing on the drug trade; and
- Participating on the Vancouver Agreement Addictions and Harm Reduction Task Team with the goal of maximizing access to addictions programs for all populations.

The Drug Policy team is developing and will implement a Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Use in Vancouver (strategy goes to City Council in February, 2005) through a community involvement process, with a focus on youth. It plans to release the draft Problematic Substance Use Prevention Strategy in November of 2004, and will present the strategy to City Council in winter, 2005.

## Staff Training and Development

The City incorporates training related to vulnerable and marginalized groups for many of its front-line employees. For example, Engineering Services is developing a training package for front line workers, supervisors and other Engineering staff who are involved with the delivery of services to the marginalized, or to city areas under stress. The purpose of this training is to increase awareness of the special challenges faced by marginalized people, and their different expectations regarding the delivery of services to them.

## III. Money

### *Practicing Democracy* Recommendations

*Practicing Democracy* divides the recommendations related to money into two sections: Income Assistance and Employment and Job Creation.

#### Income Assistance

The idea of a civic income assistance program presents a number of prohibitive obstacles regarding the authority, jurisdiction, control, scope, equity, cost, and logistics. Many of the recommendations in this section are therefore not relevant to City of Vancouver initiatives. However, the City of Vancouver has taken, and continues to take, an active role in advocating on behalf of income assistance recipients and others who have been affected by provincial government cuts to services and programs. This correlates with the *Practicing Democracy* recommendation to:

- take a leadership role in lobbying the BC and federal governments to restore and increase income assistance levels.

Previously, motions have been passed on the issues of healthcare, justice, child protection, housing, human rights protection, alcohol and drug treatment, assistance for seniors and persons with disabilities, and environmental protection.

#### Employment and Job Creation

The recommendation in the *Practicing Democracy* most relevant to City initiatives is to work with business sector to create employment opportunities for individuals living in poverty.

### City Mandate

*City Council passed the following resolution on the Encouragement and Protection of Economic Sustainability in Vancouver (File 3501) on September 28, 2004:*

*WHEREAS Vancouver prides itself in showing leadership as a sustainable city, seeking economic, social and environmental sustainability as three critical pillars of its development;*

*AND WHEREAS a recent FCM study of the quality of life in Canadian municipalities showed an increasing polarization of income in Vancouver, with most Vancouverites experiencing no income growth in the past decade, and the gap between rich and poor expanding at twice the national rate;*

*AND WHEREAS equitable distribution of income is critical to a city's sustainability;*

*AND WHEREAS providing access to decent-paying jobs is the best way to ensure all citizens have a fair opportunity to participate in the wealth generated in the city;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Council go on record as committing itself to encouraging job creation and protecting existing jobs as a key objective of City policy; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Council ask the City Manager to take additional steps to set out the economic and job-related aspects of major decisions coming to Council.*

*AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City Manager determine what special measures need to be taken to ensure equitable access for women, aboriginal people and visible minorities in relation to job creation and protection of existing jobs.*

### Current Initiatives

The City is working with the senior governments through the Vancouver Agreement and the business sector to create employment opportunities for individuals living in poverty. The Vancouver Agreement Employment Strategy's first focus is creating jobs and training opportunities for multi-barriered Downtown Eastside residents. This will be expanded to other parts of the city through the Inner City Inclusive Olympics commitment and related initiatives.

The City also participated in the development of the Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization plan for the Downtown Eastside, which outlines strategies and action to increase business activity and job creation. The plan aims to promote business retention and new business development, assist businesses and residents to participate in and benefit from increased economic activities and job opportunities, build on the rich culture and heritage of the Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods, and contribute to a growing sense of community identity and pride. The plan's three key strategies to stimulate business activity and generate local employment are to increase demand for the Downtown Eastside's products and services, strengthen the capabilities of local suppliers and increase employment opportunities.

The Vancouver Agreement is creating an organization to help implement its Economic Revitalization Plan. This organization will provide supports to social enterprises and give serious consideration to proposals from social enterprises that train and employ residents to provide services for others in the community. The Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization Plan will give priority to employment opportunities for multi-barriered individuals. Special efforts will be given to providing job and business opportunities for women, youth and aboriginal people.

Some of the jobs targeted for low-income residents have been secured through Fast Track to Employment's Social Portal which links businesses purchasing products to suppliers that are willing to hire inner city residents. The City and the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee are using the Social Portal when they put out tenders for purchasing goods and services.

The City is negotiating with developers of large-scale projects such as the Storyeum, Costco, Woodwards, Trade and Convention Centre and the Casino to secure jobs for multi-barriered local residents as a condition of rezoning and development applications.

The City of Vancouver also funds the Vancouver Economic Development Commission (VEDC). The Vancouver Economic Development Commission was established to promote economic development in the City of Vancouver by working closely with local business, foreign investors, site selection consultants, partners and stakeholders.

City council recognizes the critical importance of issues around income inequality, poverty, and money and is committed to working toward the creation of a diversified, sustainable economy in low-income neighbourhoods.

#### **IV. Food**

##### ***Practicing Democracy Recommendations***

The Practicing Democracy report includes recommendations to:

- Facilitate the creation of more community gardens on under-utilized City land (other than park space)
- Explore the possibility of planting fruit trees along streets, community gardens and parks
- Aim to collaborate with community organizations to combine work training with food growth, preparation and sharing.

##### **City Mandate**

*The City of Vancouver supports the development of a just and sustainable local food system that fosters equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health.*

##### **Current Initiatives**

On July 8, 2003, Vancouver City Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver. A just and sustainable food system is defined as one in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place. To provide leadership in achieving this goal, and to build on the work of the Vancouver Agreement Food Task Group, the Lower Mainland Food Coalition and other community groups, a Food Policy Task Force was initiated by City Council. The Task Force was co-chaired by Councillor Tim Louis and the Jacquie Forbes-Roberts, General Manager of Community Services. Two consultation processes took place with the Food Policy Task Force.

The outcome of the first round of consultation was the formulation a Food Action Plan that was presented to Vancouver City Council for approval on December 9, 2003. The Action Plan is made up of three components:

##### **(i.) Vancouver Food Policy Council**

The Food Policy Task Force recommended the creation of a Vancouver Food Policy Council (a voluntary citizen body with formal links to the City system) with a mandate to act as an

advisory and policy development body. The aim of the Food Policy Council was identified as improving the health and security of the local food system.

(ii.) Interim Work Plan

In preparation for linkages with the work of the Vancouver Food Policy Council, an interim work plan was proposed. This work plan was intended to be the first stage of a more comprehensive long-term set of actions that will be developed over the longer term. The action items in the interim work plan were chosen because they provided immediate opportunities to coordinate, maximize and expand upon food-related programs and services already provided and/or supported by the City of Vancouver, as well as those under development. The five action items are as follows:

- City-wide food system assessment
- Rooftop gardens
- Community gardens
- Farmers' markets
- Coordinated food processing and distribution facility for low income citizens

(iii.) Implementation Supports (staffing)

The Food Policy Task Force recommended the creation of two full-time dedicated City staff positions to facilitate food system goals. The two positions are a Food Policy Coordinator (permanent full-time) and Food System Planner (temporary two years).

Outcomes

On March 11, 2004, at the Standing Committee Meeting on City Services and Budgets, Vancouver City Council voted to establish a multi-stakeholder Food Policy Council. In order to support the work of the Food Policy Council, City Council also approved funding for the two staff positions proposed in the Food Action Plan. This, in conjunction with City Council's approval of the Food Action Plan on December 11, 2003, means that the City of Vancouver now has an official mandate to work towards creating a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver.

From May to July 2004 a second consultation process was undertaken with the Food Policy Task Force. The Primary goal of the consultation process was to establish the Vancouver Food Policy council. On July 14, 2004, the Food Policy Task Force, as its final act, elected members of Vancouver's first municipally affiliated Food Policy Council. The Food Policy Council will now begin to develop a detailed work plan that integrates and builds upon the projects and goals identified in the Food Action Plan.

An important part of this new City mandate will involve exploring ways to address a number of the issues raised in the 'Food' section of the Practising Democracy recommendations. Adopting a systems approach to food issues (production, processing, distribution, access, consumption and recycling), the City's food policy and Food Policy Council will continue to address issues of distribution, access and supply of food, especially to marginalized populations. Some of the specific areas that are expected to improve the access and supply of food to Vancouver residents include the following:

(i.) Research Assessment

The City of Vancouver has been awarded a research contract through Western Diversification Canada to conduct a food system assessment. The objective of the food assessment is to

provide a comprehensive audit and analysis of the current state of Vancouver's food system, focusing on the unrealized opportunities in the food system to create and support food-related social enterprises for residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

(ii.) Partnership Development

From the outset of the development of the Food Action Plan it was acknowledged that some of the resources and policy tools necessary to address food system issues fall outside of the jurisdiction of Vancouver. As such, the development of partnerships with other agencies has been, and will continue to be instrumental to the process. Key partners include Vancouver Agreement, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver Coastal Health and community organizations among others.

(iii.) Urban Agriculture

The City of Vancouver's Food Action Plan endorses the creation of more community gardens on under-utilized City land (other than park space), and investigating the possibility of providing spaces to grow food in private developments. The City of Vancouver has approximately 580 community garden plots in 12 operating community gardens. Since the Park Board approved a community gardens policy 1995, additional community gardens on City land have been established or expanded. Even with the notable successes of the existing policy, it is clear that there is a great untapped opportunity to further develop community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture in Vancouver.

The Park Board, at their Planning & Environment meeting of July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004, discussed the issue of community gardens on park land, and requested a policy review be undertaken within 1 year. Further, Park Board staff participated in the American Community Gardens Association Conference and pre-conference Municipal Training Day in Toronto Sept. 30 - October 3. Park Board representatives convened a meeting with other delegates from Vancouver attending the conference to network and share learning.

(iv.) Fruit Trees on City Land

At the Vancouver Park Board meeting on Monday, February 9, 2004, a motion was passed requesting staff to explore the possibility of planting fruit trees along streets, community gardens and parks. At a follow up meeting held on May 13, staff discussed the benefits and concerns relating to planting fruit trees in parks, community gardens and on streets. The meeting finished off with the group identifying opportunities such as introducing a trial program of planting selected fruit tree varieties on streets; considering the possibility of a community orchard if an established group is willing to steward it; and running educational programs out of our community centres focusing on fruit production.

The Park Board considered the issue of fruit trees in parks and on boulevards at the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee on October 5, 2004.

(v.) Green Roofs

The Action Plan calls for a feasibility study of rooftop gardens on residential and industrial buildings. The aim will be to examine the opportunities for facilitating, where possible, the inclusion of rooftop gardens on flat-roofed residential developments, commercial buildings, and industrial buildings.

Role of the Vancouver Food Policy Council

The Vancouver Food Policy Council began to meet in September 2004. In the coming months, the Food Policy Council will develop a work plan that may include strategies to address the issues listed above, and possibly other initiatives.

While still at its initial stages of development, the City's commitment to creating a Just and Sustainable Food System is making progress on a number of recommendations from the Practicing Democracy Report. It should also be noted that the City's new food policy mandate includes many aspects not mentioned in the report. In many cases, the emphasis is on community capacity building and neighbourhood empowerment.

## Safety

### *Practicing Democracy* Recommendations

The City's approach to community safety and outreach speaks to the following recommendations contained in *Practicing Democracy*:

- Ensure police culture and training includes:
  - Sensitivity and compassion for those living in poverty and on the margins
  - Anti-stereotyping of people in poverty, street people, sex trade workers, people with addictions
  - Diversity training
  - Understanding that "serve and protect" includes all members of the community;
- Encourage dialogue between police and community;
- Strengthen community liaison with police; and
- Provide Community police to visit seniors' residences.

### Vancouver Police Department (VPD) Mandate

*The Vancouver Police Department's mandate includes:*

- *A mission, in fulfilment of its public trust, to maintain public order, uphold the rule of law and prevent crime.*
- *Identified VPD values of integrity, professionalism, accountability and respect.*
- *A Diversity Advisory Committee whose mandate is to represent the diverse view points of the citizens of Vancouver, and its role to advise the Vancouver Police Department through the Chief, its mission is to ensure a safe, secure, fair and suitable city and/or environment for a diverse population provided through state-of-the-art policing.*

### Current VPD Initiatives

#### Community Policing

The Vancouver Police Department Strategic plan includes Community Safety as a core activity. One of the areas that the VPD focuses on specifically is violence against vulnerable people. Some of the people in this group are the elderly, children, sex trade workers, and occupants of single room dwellings. In order to reduce the violence against this group, VPD must first ensure that crimes against these people are being reported. To that end the VPD is improving its reporting rate by working with all of those communities, as well as advocacy groups, and schools. They are increasing their ability to investigate these types of crimes by training officers and victim service volunteers to overcome societal barriers. In addition the

VPD is developing specific investigative abilities to ensure that officers have the appropriate skill set to properly respond.

Inspector John McKay has provided consulting in Personal Safety and Confrontation Management to numerous private corporations and to community groups. Some of the many groups include Revenue Canada Women's Committee; Downtown Business Improvement Association; Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; Musqueam Reservation band office staff; Pace, Peers, WISH, sex trade advocacy groups; Mount Pleasant Community Centre, and the United Native Nations Crisis Centre. Some of this consultation was broadcast on Shaw Cable in order to reach a larger audience.

The Vancouver Police Department's commitment to community policing is further enhanced through its Community Policing Centres (CPC), and through the Chief Constable's Diversity Advisory Committee.

The focus with the CPC's is to enhance and promote public safety through the delivery of police-sponsored programs and services to local neighbourhoods. Examples of such services include volunteer patrols, crime prevention information, and traffic safety initiatives and public education. The Vancouver Police Department has partnerships with 8 CPC's across the City. Funding for the CPC's is provided by the City of Vancouver, ICBC, and a variety of other public and private sources.

In order to address the specific safety needs of diverse communities the Chief Constable has established the "Chief Constable's Diversity Advisory Committee". This committee was established to deal with issues that impact diverse communities. The appointed citizens to the committee sit as a consultative and advisory body to the Office of the Chief Constable. Consistent with the Diversity Advisory Committee's mandate to represent the diverse view points of the citizens of Vancouver, and its role to advise the Vancouver Police Department through the Chief, its mission is to ensure a safe, secure, fair and suitable city and/or environment for a diverse population provided through state-of-the-art policing.

The contribution of the Committee is to bring about the following results:

- A safe, secure and diverse public well served by a police force defined as competent, honourable, prudent, ethical and diverse.
- An absence of systemic barriers to entering, and to practising the police profession, for persons against whom discrimination is prohibited by Provincial or Federal Legislation.
- The achievement of excellence in policing related to diversity issues.
- A public well served by attitudinal, statistical and personal linkage with the ownership about issues, education about demographic and geographic realities and possibilities. This enables the Chief Constable, the Police Board, the Vancouver Police Department staff, and individual citizens to make informed decisions and choices about creating a safe, secure environment in Vancouver.
- The Diversity Advisory Committee as liaison between the Vancouver Police Department, and the needs, concerns, demands and fears of the ownership (the community at large), to produce a common and proactive vision of a responsive community-policing organization, knowledgeable about the entitlements of every citizen.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications stemming directly from this report. This report does not propose any new programs or initiatives, and requests no additional funding than what is already allocated to the initiatives to which it makes reference.

## CONCLUSION

*Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project* represents a unique citizen engagement process that produced many suggestions and innovative ideas about ways to counteract cuts in funding to social services and welfare programs.

This report outlines the City's current and ongoing activities as they relate to the recommendations in *Practicing Democracy*. The City of Vancouver engages in many of the issues identified in the *Practicing Democracy* report, and is committed to moving forward in a multitude of areas.

A number of initiatives are in the early stages of development, and their implications may not yet be felt in the community. These include the City's forthcoming Homelessness Action Plan, the Food Policy Task Force, the Women's Task Force, the NAOMI project and the Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Use. When the second report on *Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project* is submitted to Council, a better understanding of the outcomes of these initiatives will be available.

- - - - -

**Appendix A**  
**Report on Fire and Safety Issues Affecting SROs**



**CITY OF VANCOUVER**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP  
Chief Building Official's Office

**MEMORANDUM**

June 17, 2004

**TO:** Mayor and Councillors

**CC:** Judy Rogers, City Manager  
Jacquie Forbes-Roberts, General Manager, CSG  
Cameron Gray, Director Housing Centre  
Scott Henderson, Assistant General Manager/Deputy Chief Fire Prevention

**FROM:** John Robertson , Chief Building Official in consultation with the Deputy Chief Fire Prevention and the Director of Housing

**SUBJECT:** Report on Fire and Safety Issues Affecting SROs

---

This is to respond to Council's request of May 6, 2004 for a report relating specifically to fire and safety issues affecting SROs. Some general background material on the evolution of Building codes in the City and details on the 1970's fire safety upgrade program for hotels, rooming houses and seniors homes is contained in the attached memo to Council dated August 8, 2003.

In general terms, all SROs in hotels and rooming houses in the City constructed prior to the adoption of the National Building Code of Canada in 1973 were inspected and upgraded as appropriate under the Fire Safety Upgrade Program of the 1970's. This program was initiated in 1973 with most of the upgrading taking place in the period 1973-1975. The program was administered through the Fire Warden's office and was applied initially to hotels and rooming houses and subsequently extended to seniors' homes and hospitals.

The main components of the upgrade measures included:

- Installation of automatic sprinkler systems.
- Installation of smoke detection and fire alarm systems.
- Upgrading of suite doors and provision of closers.
- Upgrading of exits and fire escapes.

Some rental apartment buildings were also included in the upgrade program although sprinkler protection was not mandatory for these buildings.

Detailed records from the 1970's period covering these inspections and upgrades are somewhat dispersed in City filing systems, however, based on the information available to us we believe that virtually all hotels of any size and most larger rooming houses in use as SROs at that time were upgraded under the program. Certainly the improved fire safety record of our stock of SRO buildings was highlighted by the significant decline in fire casualties in the City from 1973 onwards.

It should also be noted that many of the upgrade orders of the 1970's were challenged and taken before the Building Board of Appeal. Based on the decisions of the Board, the City developed a subsection of our Building By-law dealing exclusively with upgrading of buildings when undergoing significant renovation, change of use, or additions. These requirements were placed in the Building By-law in 1978, and represent, I believe, the first such provisions to be adopted by a Canadian City in its Building By-law. Since 1978, the By-law has required that all buildings greater than 4 storeys in building height converted to residential use including SROs be sprinklered in addition to other appropriate fire safety measures. In 1987, this requirement was changed to require sprinklering of all SRO conversions.

While it is possible that some smaller SROs were not upgraded under the 1970's Fire Safety Upgrade Program, or that some have been converted to SROs in contravention of City By-laws, we would expect that the routine fire inspection of hotels and rooming houses conducted by our Fire Prevention Office would normally handle these situations.

In assessing fire safety hazards in buildings it should be noted that design and construction standards represent only one part of the picture. Standards of operation and maintenance, along with occupant behaviour in fire situations are equally significant.

Operating and maintenance standards require annual inspection and testing of fire safety equipment including fire alarms, extinguishers, sprinklers, fire door closers, etc. While our Fire Prevention Office will attempt to deal with these situations, there may be situations in smaller buildings or buildings operated covertly which have not come to our attention.

Occupant behaviour is also a very significant determinant in the fire safety of buildings. Occupants with physical or cognitive disabilities including hearing and vision impairments are particularly vulnerable in fire emergencies as they may not be capable of recognising and acting upon the early signs of fire and may need assistance in evacuating the building. It was for these reasons that the City moved to mandate the sprinklering of SROs, as this measure is an extremely effective strategy in protecting persons who may not be fully capable of self preservation.

The other significant safety issue affecting SROs is the issue of their vulnerability to the effects of earthquakes. This is a much broader issue affecting large numbers of buildings in the City with occupants from a broad cross section of our society including many from outside our boundaries. It is beyond the scope of this report to examine this problem in any depth, but I would note that the problem is under review by staff. Currently we are developing recommendations for a long term strategy to address the more serious areas of seismic vulnerability in the City. The main focus of this strategy would be to provide some rudimentary yet cost effective upgrading methodology for unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings in the City. These buildings, constructed in the period 1890-1930 were originally

constructed mainly as hotels, commercial buildings, and large apartment buildings. While in economically vibrant areas of the City such as Yaletown and parts of Gastown, these buildings have been extensively renovated and seismically upgraded, many of the older URM buildings including hotels and rooming houses used to provide SRO accommodation have not. These older URM buildings will be the primary focus of our forthcoming report.

John Robertson

*Phone: 604-873-7522*

*Fax: 604-873-7100*

JR/fns/firesafety.doc/ATT.

**Appendix B**  
**Recommendations in *Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project***

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**I. HOUSING**

**A. Target Groups**

- Provide shelter options for those who need to be housed separately (e.g. Women), and for those who would benefit from mixed housing (e.g. Couples and families)
- Community housing
- Provide Co-ed shelters that permit couples to stay together; splitting couples up makes each individual more vulnerable

**(1) Women**

- Create City-funded women's shelters to replace provincially funded centres recently de-funded
- Provide housing specifically for pregnant women and low-income single mothers and children, including job training and transition to independent housing

**(2) Seniors**

- Create more co-op housing and public co-housing (residents develop ownership interest through contribution via welfare or pension), emphasizing mixed generational living - e.g. UK and Europe, all ages living together in council housing; US program where seniors and university students share accommodation; White Rock BC
- Lobby BC government to amend provincial tenancy laws to impose some responsibility on landlords for well-being and safety of tenants (e.g. seniors), not just for maintaining the property

**B. Improve Accessibility:**

- Mandate shelters to offer more flexible hours of operation
- Create and maintain a housing registry that will help link single mothers with seniors and others who are isolated - combining skills and resources can afford both better living accommodations and support
- Up to date information on shelters and services should be available 24 hours per day through drop-in centers or information kiosks; new services need more publicity, as many in attendance reported learning of new resources through a third party, often too late to help the individual in crisis
  - Drop-in centers stay open 24 hours per day; a place for homeless to access information on what services are available in emergency situations;
  - Staff drop-in centers with volunteer residents experienced in homelessness;
  - 24 hour kiosk, preferably staffed, or minimally with access to computer, with up to date information on shelter and support services available throughout the city, and on individual rights;
  - reinstate/expand Carnegie program involving street workers handing out information in DTES

### C. Increase Availability:

#### (1) Emergency shelters

- Establish tent city as a legitimate, safe and ongoing place of shelter, accessible 24 hours per day, with facilities on-site or nearby;
- Establish an "urban campground" where for a small sum per night, homeless people could have access to hot showers, heat, and a hydro hook-up. Community breeds safety - the answer to alienation, isolation and desperation is not always in spending huge amounts of money - it's money spent wisely
- Use City owned buildings for emergency overflow housing: PNE buildings;
- Create emergency shelter using construction trailers that are no longer used, and place on city-owned land that is yet to be developed;
- Use community centers and neighbourhood houses as emergency shelter in the evening and night-time hours;
- Collaborate with churches that offer emergency shelter and support to synchronize efforts across the city;
- Make portable shelters available for pick-up at 24 hour location (e.g. Waterproof corrugated sleeping tubes; tarps to cover bus shelters; see PARASites project in New York<sup>1</sup>)
- Reinstate hotel vouchers - Vancouver Police used to hand out

#### (2) Temporary Shelters

- Convert the many abandoned buildings in the city to shelters (many examples were cited, including buildings at 1st and Terminal, an old welfare office, a Buddhist Temple in Jericho):
  - Create time limits on building vacancies - limit how long a building owner can maintain an empty building before it is assumed by the City for conversion to shelter accommodation;
  - Legalize squatting (see City of Amsterdam for an example of organized squats that assumed abandoned buildings, renovating, establishing a community daycare for local businesses, and a nightclub - resulting in community rejuvenation);
  - Complete Woodwards plan with MORE affordable housing included
- Create a structure enabling community members to safely offer short-term accommodation to homeless
  - Foster parent model: build in safety measures for both parties; match suitability; provide financial support for "foster" home;
  - Billeting model (e.g. Foreign university students): Create a registry for community members who have a bed, or room and board to offer; match suitability
  - Relax zoning regulations to:

---

<sup>1</sup> paraSITES were developed by Michael Rakowitz in New York and proposes the appropriation of the exterior ventilation systems on existing architecture as a means for providing temporary shelter for homeless people, which is attached to the outtake ducts of a building's HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning) system. The warm air leaving the building simultaneously inflates and heats the double membrane structure. The paraSITE units are small, collapsible packages with handles for transport by hand or on one's back. The cost to manufacture each inflatable tent structure is approximately \$5 each. More information is on:<http://www.possibleutopia.com/mike/parasite.html>  
Civic laws regarding loitering and sleeping on the street may require amendment to accommodate parasites.

- permit secondary suites in single family homes, with incentives to provide accommodation to homeless or low income tenants
- permit developers to build very small self-contained affordable units for private market
- permit single family homes, e.g. oversized “Vancouver Specials”, to be divided and rented out as single rooms

### (3) Transitional Housing

- Create phased housing plan for individuals who need support in basic living skills as well as shelter - well intentioned for accommodations have been trashed and abused in the past (e.g. VanCity Place for Youth). Supervision and life skills support, as well as involvement in development, construction or renovation of shelter (e.g. Habitat for Humanity) can create commitment from residents to protect shelter, treat it and self with respect. Consider the experience of Covenant House and its Rights of Passage Programme for youth, and NOW Canada in Kelowna, which provides a graduated living program for sexually abused women.

### (4) Long-term Housing

- Create more affordable housing units:
  - build on city-owned land
  - relax zoning by-laws to permit secondary suites in single-family homes; provides prospect of rental income to homeowners who may find themselves at risk or who are aging, and provides additional rental homes
- Relax zoning regulations to allow two to three non-related tenants to share studio and one-bedroom apartments, enabling affordable market rents for more residents
- Develop community housing options, where it is possible for singles and small families to live together; mixed generations will encourage space for seniors to avoid isolation
- Create opportunities to work towards ownership of housing, e.g. rent-to-own
- Lobby CMHC to include extended family members within the meaning of a “family unit” to obtain subsidized housing
- Lobby BC government:
  - to amend welfare regulations that discourage and penalize family members from supporting each other and sharing living resources
  - to relax C Housing rule limiting guests to 14 days per year
  - to re-establish Vancouver Housing Authority
  - to provide rent subsidies geared according to income - allows freedom of choice to individual regarding where to live, rather than a forced choice to live in a particular building or part of town (examples include programs in Europe...)
  - to require landlords to provide a percentage of non-market rental units; provide tax credit

### (5) Financing creation of more shelters:

- Impose a development tax on builders who do not include affordable housing or shelter in their development plans, similar to a percentage of development costs relegated to public art and parks
- Increase development tax on condominium builders, as it has not been increased in 15 years
- Establish a donation program for community members to make small and large donations to build new shelters

- Impose a “tourism tax” to provide funding for shelters and social housing - see San Francisco for example

#### D. Improve Management of Shelters and Housing:

- Involve homeless, former homeless in operation, design and development of shelters. Their knowledge and survival skills are valuable, and involvement raises self-esteem to enable their own movement to another stage. As well, other residents could access peer support.
- Improve management of SRAs through SRA by-law; ensure residents can not be evicted for occasional overnight guests
- Limit SRA ownership to non-profit organizations

#### E. Improve Public Service Treatment of Homeless:

- Parks staff and Police should assist homeless in finding safe and appropriate accommodation, and treat individuals respectfully and humanely. Training in communications and respectful intervention should be provided and mandatory.
- The homeless have a right to vote, but no address to enable enumeration. In order to facilitate their participation in the democratic process, establish a city address (e.g. a box office number) that homeless individuals can use to become enumerated

## II. FOOD

### A. Access

- Food delivery to homeless
- Provide free transit to low income residents - enables mobility to access food
- Create space for food distribution, similar to recycling centers, where residents can donate
- Information pamphlets available to show access points for food distribution
- Create a City owned restaurant, staffed by low income individuals, with food donated by organic farmers, community gardens, local restaurants and grocers
- Provide a 24 hour community kitchen
- Replace meal tickets, which were recently eliminated
- Create mobile soup kitchens that deliver prepared food to areas with individuals in need
- Create job training opportunities to work in film facilities in exchange for access to catered food

### B. Supply

- Collaborate with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority regarding the application of the Health Act, to the safe donation and distribution of excess food by restaurants, hotels, grocers and film production companies
- Lobby VCHA to relax health regulations to enable donations of excess perishable and prepared foods in a safe and healthy manner:
  - Excess could be donated to community kitchens - perishable food could be prepared in soups etc.; prepared foods could be served immediately

- Collaborate with restaurants, hotels and grocers in developing policy and regulations that would allow donations and distribution of excess healthy prepared and perishable foods
  - Distribution process would require quick turn-around to maximize advantage - arrange for pick-ups at restaurants, grocers and events; create ways to allow restaurants, grocers to donate food at source. See Montreal for example: local restaurants and grocers have donation pick-up: run by volunteers, this program trains street youth in cooking and preparing food, which is delivered mostly to seniors. Volunteers from homeless, low income residents could deliver to others
- Provide funding to Quest to purchase a freezer - Quest provides food pick up and deliver services; however it is unable to distribute majority of food before it rots
- Collaborate with farmers to provide fresh produce; subsidize farmers to grow food specifically for distribution to low income residents
- Fruit Tree Project - fund and advertise this program, inviting home owners with fruit trees to donate excess fruit; volunteers will pick fruit and deliver to food bank
- As part of new Food Policy, create a Planting Policy - on City owned property - boulevards, parks - plant fruit bearing trees that are accessible to all; change ornamental gardens to fruit and vegetables
- Community gardens: provide more land to create more community gardens, with food grown available to those in need, or grown and managed by them
- Collaborate with community organizations to combine work training with food growth, preparation and sharing. Example: UBC Learning Exchange in DTES links students in agricultural studies, who are learning about food growth and preparation, with DTES where the food is donated

### C. Funding:

#### (1) Tax Revenue

- Create a tax on food waste for restaurants, grocers, etc. and channel funds to food programs and community kitchens;
- Create a tax on all take-out, disposable containers;
- Create tax incentives for restaurants and grocers to prepare, donate, deliver food, similar to tax incentives for developers
- Create a tax on higher priced restaurant bills to generate funds to create educational programs on healthy food and preparation to low income individuals
- Raise property taxes in wealthier neighbourhoods (e.g. West Side) to support food for low-income individuals
- Create a voluntary "care tax" that residents could opt into to support food distribution for low-income individuals
- Create tax incentives for home owners to share fruit off their trees

#### (2) Other Sources

- When negotiating with film producers, ensure contract mandates that catering donates excess food;
- Redirect funds collected from advertising on the banners for 2010 Olympics

- towards food distribution

### III. SAFETY

#### A. Police

- Create greater accountability of police to Vancouver City Council
- Increase review and checks on police behaviour and culture, relations with homeless, sex trade workers and low-income residents
  - Create stronger whistle-blower protection and programs to encourage within the police force; provide more support for officers to come forward
  - Create stricter penalties within the police force for wrongdoing
  - Create a separate, external “watchdog” body to review police actions - police policing the police has no credibility - city needs to take a stronger role in ensuring this happens - external body should be comprised of diverse pool of residents
  - Create an Internal Affairs department for police
  - Create “Civilian Chaperones” for police
  - Create a storefront complaints process for residents, similar to an external ombuds officer
  - Provide advocates for mistreated residents to go before independent Complaints board
- VPD should recruit more female officers
- Increase criteria to qualify for admission to VPD, raise the bar - e.g. Quebec requires three year training program
- Ensure police culture and training includes:
  - Sensitivity and compassion for those living in poverty and on the margins
  - Anti-stereotyping of people in poverty, street people, sex trade workers, people with addictions
  - Diversity training
  - Understanding that “serve and protect” includes all members of the community
  - Non-violent methods of restraint
- Encourage dialogue between police and community
  - Create forums where residents can tell their stories on policing issues, similar to ward discussions
- Develop workshops for residents who observe police brutality: what to do, how to handle

#### B. Community Safety

- Strengthen community liaison with police
- Stop closures of community police offices
- Provide Community police to visit seniors’ residences
- Re-instate emergency phone booths that have been removed; despite the proliferation of cell phones, not every Vancouver resident has one
- Create neighbourhood resident foot patrols, e.g. Guardian Angels
- Create intervention training programs - residents can learn how to intervene safely in assaults on others

- Expand “City Host” program (looking after tourists in Vancouver) to serve Vancouver residents
- Create a “Blue Light” system similar to UBC campus; residents in fear can touch Blue Light as they dash for safety; a security company monitors and will dispatch assistance immediately
- Practicing Democracy should be a regular production and forum for discussion, creates a perpetual dialogue with community

#### IV. SUPPORT

##### A. Seniors

###### (1) Connection

- Improve visiting and outreach services for seniors who are isolated, living alone, and/or with mobility issues
  - Outreach workers similar to street nurses, to visit seniors in isolation, provide emotional support, ensure medication taken appropriately;
  - Reinstate accessibility of home support hours
  - Support creation of a volunteer organization with a mandate to visit and connect with isolated seniors, particularly those with mobility issues
  - Provide incentives for community members to volunteer to check in on isolated seniors - e.g. free passes to City owned attractions
  - Create a “Buddy System Check-In” within communities
  - Create links between youth programs and seniors;
    - Provide practical training programs to youth in working with seniors, youth gain career options in home care support;
    - Link student loan repayment to volunteer time;
    - Vancouver School Board create programs on awareness re: seniors; provide credit to students who visit seniors, prepare food
    - School Board could develop practicum for students in social service programs to visit seniors
  - City Council could approach Telus to bridge the gap for isolated seniors on limited income by providing free or reasonably priced phone or cell phone plans geared to income;
  - Create a regulation mandating SRAs to supply in-suite phone to seniors, individuals with mobility restrictions
- Support development of Network to connect seniors
  - Provide a place for seniors to get together, build friendships; Create a destination seniors’ center, adult day centres, with activities and opportunities to develop friendships and community supports
  - Resource Network for seniors could be paired with resource network for homeless, where the two issues overlap, to bring together people with support needs to help one another - e.g. senior women connect with street women
  - Provide a 24 hour friendship line for seniors
  - Provide more funding for peer support outreach and mentoring programs for seniors
- Community building initiatives that include seniors

- Partner with landlords of buildings that house seniors living alone - help create a community within building and links to surrounding community; create space in building for gathering, connecting;
- Encourage business improvement associations (BIA) to sponsor ways for individuals living in apartments to meet one another - help build community; alternatively, community improvement associations could be developed to create links among residents, particularly those in isolation
- Promote community building initiatives that create trust and safety, integrate seniors in planning
  - Create structural opportunities to create community - e.g. safe spots in parks for seniors to go and meet others; building designs should include spaces to interact, and less long tract hallways
- Create community programs similar to Block Parents - safe homes for seniors to go to when they need help
- Offer seniors and disabled year-long discounts at community recreation centers, rather than limited to one program per season

## (2) Health Issues

- Provide more resources to enable doctors and nurses to do outreach and home visits to seniors
- Require doctors to perform minimum number of pro bono hours, similar to law society's requirement for lawyers
- Create a database of isolated seniors and their medications (e.g. Healthwatch at Shopper's Drugmart), that would allow medical professionals and pharmacies to track prescriptions filled and flag potential over-medication risks;
- Seniors need better packaging for medication that is easier to open - child proof caps are often senior proof too; some seniors need help planning when to take medication - packaging could lay out days and times for each dose.
- Regulations to compel pharmacies to develop and provide packaging that is easier to open and read by seniors
- Collaborate with VCHA to increase visits from public health nurses could assist isolated seniors with proper ingestion of medication - daily, weekly
- Vancouver City Council could take on more responsibility for home health care through transfer payments
- Lobby provincial government to provide MSP coverage for access to alternative medicine
- Mandate supply of medical assistance in low income housing

## B. Women

- Support program for single mothers to share childcare
- Create more spaces in a graduated work program for pregnant women and single mothers
- Lobby federal government to provide EI maternity funding to laid-off workers on EI who become pregnant

#### D. Sex Trade Workers

- Proceed with development of policy regarding establishment of safe sex zones and houses; amend zoning regulations to allow safe sex houses run by women who understand what they are dealing with - see e.g. Holland
- Lobby federal government to legalize prostitution - create safety for sex trade workers
- Fund PACE Society, help get women off the street and raise awareness
- Shelters and transition housing specific to, or with programs specific to women in the sex trade, and preferably outside common sex trade neighbourhoods, away from pimps and potential abusers
- Provide empowerment and life skills training at shelters for women, assistance in planning for transition to independent living, including opportunities to contribute to shelter operations
- Women at risk of abuse, including sex trade workers, should be able to walk into police station and be guaranteed help
- Vancouver City Council could place a major emphasis on providing safety to women, become known as a safe city for women

#### E. Urban Bush Dwellers

- Vancouver City Council to make provincial and federal governments aware of this issue - the extent of the impact of years of social services cuts
- On-site visitations by outreach workers, street nurses, provide on-site medical assistance
- Recognition and better service of marginalized at hospitals and clinics; treat with respect and dignity
- Provide and support advocacy to assist marginalized to find their way through bureaucratic hoops, such as income assistance applications.
- Train volunteers to deal with marginalized individuals, assist with skill development
- Provide a central place to get food and nutritional care consistently
- Meal delivery to marginalized and at-risk homeless
- Provide center for homeless to do free weekly laundry
- Secure storage place where homeless can safely store possessions and access them as needed
- Develop a skills exchange program that legitimizes skills and strengths developed in surviving the urban bush - provides opportunity for individual to contribute, building self-esteem, confidence and trust in others, and to learn from skills and strengths of others
- Mental health issues:
  - Proper assessment to ensure individuals with mental illness receive appropriate treatment
  - Out reach/advocacy workers to support finding appropriate housing, interface with landlords, government ministries and other agencies

## F. Drug Addictions

- View addiction as a health issue, not a poverty issue; wealthy addicts are rarely newsworthy, and can gain immediate access to treatment with money; low income addicts have to wait and are in a catch-22 situation, as it is difficult to access detox treatment during sick periods
- Proceed with the Four Pillars strategy, and in particular to create and make available more treatment programs
- Detox available on demand: requires more beds and programs
- More safe injection sites - e.g. Community facilities; advertise existing ones; ease addictions by supplying drug in a safe way
- Make medical heroin available<sup>2</sup>; legalize access - see e.g. Netherlands
- Provide alternative drugs e.g. methadone

## V. MONEY

### A. Income Assistance:

- City of Vancouver should take over distribution of welfare; create civic welfare system (see City of Toronto for example)
- Provide advocacy to assist applicants to access welfare; many have difficulty finding their way through the system
- Facilitate ability of those without a fixed address to access welfare; provide city address or post office box number
- Facilitate access to money to cover damage deposit for rental accommodation, and to assist with non-payment of rent in order to avoid eviction
- Provide sources of emergency money
- Take a leadership role in lobbying the BC and federal governments to:
  - Restore and increase income assistance levels in Vancouver to match high cost of living and market rents
  - Provide greater flexibility for recipients in covering damage deposit for rental accommodation
  - Provide increased discretion to Financial Aid Workers (FAW) in assessing an individual's need for emergency money
  - Remove barriers that inhibit or penalize recipients from helping one another, sharing living accommodation
  - Broaden eligibility for income assistance and Employment Insurance for pregnant women
  - Provide subsidized 24 hour childcare
- Create opportunities for Vancouver residents to lobby BC government - e.g. name an official "Day of the Poor", including a mass march to Victoria; create televised speakers' corners for broadcast on Shaw TV, which could reinstate the community programming previously offered by Rogers
- Reinforce the City's report to the UN on the human rights crimes that have resulted from provincial welfare cuts;

---

<sup>2</sup> 5 On March 15, 2004, the Development Permit Board of Vancouver City Council approved the development of the NAOMI Project, involving the clinical trial of medically prescribed heroin/methadone

## B. Employment, Job Creation

- Work with business sector to create employment opportunities for individuals living in poverty
- Create work training programs for youth and adults to work with seniors and isolated individuals: provides training and develops employment opportunities in social services, home care, and supports seniors and the isolated
- Provide municipal support to women's centres, so workers like the character Elaine are not laid off from employment and become at risk of poverty and homelessness themselves
- Create a "job options training" program that provides subsidy during training, housing and programs for pregnant women, enabling them to qualify for employment after delivery. Available childcare is essential after delivery of baby
- Provide graduated work programs for pregnant women and single mothers
- Provide subsidized 24 hour childcare, enabling single mothers to search for and/or maintain employment - some jobs available require hours of work outside normal childcare hours.
- Create a support network for Employment Insurance (EI) recipients
- Provide free voicemail access numbers to low-income residents without a phone (see Toronto for example)
- Amend zoning regulations to allow safe sex homes, which will enable sex trade workers to work safely and earn income
- Provide a subsistence stipend for those who develop sustainable lifestyles - e.g. community sustainable farms
- Repeal anti-panning by-laws

\* \* \* \*