



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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CITY OF VANCOUVER
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February 5, 2008

The Honourable Jim Flaherty, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
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Dear Minister:

Further to our recent meeting and in advance of the upcoming budget, please find a summary of the City of Vancouver's federal fiscal priorities. Again, I want to thank you for your time and courtesy during my visit to Ottawa in December. Your interest in Vancouver issues is very reassuring.

As I indicated during our meeting, we have established five goals for our government:

- developing the strongest regional economy in Canada;
- ensuring civility on our streets;
- becoming a world leader in environmental practices;
- ensuring the most accessible & inclusive city in Canada; and
- making Vancouver a premiere destination for the celebration of arts & culture.

We have made significant progress to achieving these goals thanks in large part to improved relations with provincial and federal governments. Prime Minister Harper and Premier Campbell have been responsive to many of Vancouver's pressing needs.

The priorities I have identified in this submission support these goals. They are focused on:

- crime & security;
- housing & homelessness; and
- strategic infrastructure.

This summary complements the budget priorities we have submitted to the Provincial Government. We recognize that the Government of Canada has increased transfer payments to BC in recent years and we are working with other municipalities across the province to ensure that increase is reflected in our local transfer arrangements.

Last week, our government initiated an analysis of the current annual costs associated with financing services that have traditionally been the responsibility of provincial and federal departments, including:

- social housing;
- child care;
- mental health treatment;
- drug policy; and
- Port police.

I will forward this information to you once it is received from our staff. In the meantime, for your immediate reference, I have included a copy of a brief summary released this week with the Vancouver Police Department on how gaps in the provincial mental health system are putting a significant strain on our police resources.

Thank you again for your ongoing interest in Vancouver priorities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Sam Sullivan
MAYOR

cc: Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Hon. Stockwell Day, P.C., M.P.
Hon. David Emerson, P.C., M.P.
Metro Vancouver Senators & Members of Parliament
Federation of Canadian Municipalities Executive
Union of BC Municipalities Executive
Judy Rogers, Vancouver City Manager

Summary: City of Vancouver Federal Pre-Budget Submission

This submission focuses on three City of Vancouver priorities for you to consider in the 2008-2009 Federal budget:

- crime & security;
- homelessness & housing; and
- strategic infrastructure.

Crime & Safety

As Chair of the Vancouver Police Board, I am very proud of the commitment our new Police Chief Jim Chu and the men and women of the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) make to our city's quality of life each day.

In recent months, we have seen an escalation of gang violence in Metro Vancouver. The response to this problem is another demonstration of how municipal budgets are being used to address problems that go well beyond our jurisdictions. The mental health report I have attached is another.

The City of Vancouver is doing more than our share to address these issues - and we are prepared to do more. However, the resources of municipal taxpayers are not bottomless. In fact, I would suggest we are close to our limit.

In the last two years, City Council has approved funding for an additional 140 full time employees for the VPD - with more to come. Just before Christmas we increased VPD wage rates to help retain personnel in a very competitive human resource climate and we are investing millions in training and new equipment.

In addition to drug wars and mental illness, our VPD is forced to address issues associated with mental illness, human trafficking, port policing and security for 2010. To help us address crime and increase security for our citizens, we are asking the Federal Government to:

- fund 2500 new police officers across Canada and ensure provincial bilateral agreements are ongoing, completed in advance of upcoming municipal budgets and not require matching contributions from local governments;
- confirm enhanced security budget for 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games;
- re-instate the compensatory funding for VPD as a critical element of effective policing in the Port of Vancouver;
- develop an equitable police funding program for BC municipalities with policing services provided by non-RCMP forces; and

- support VPD's effort to return accused persons trying to evade prosecution under non-returnable warrants - or encourage your government to introduce legislation requiring provinces to bring back all accused persons for both indictable and hybrid offences.

These measures will help us reduce crime and disorder on our streets. Just delivering on the outstanding Federal commitment to put at least 2500 more police on the beat can translate into resources for over 50 additional police officers in Vancouver.

Homelessness & Housing

As you know, thousands of people from across Canada live in a two kilometer stretch of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Almost half of them are drug addicts with little access to professional treatment. Many are homeless with mental illness.

However, statistics cannot capture how this problem attacks the moral foundation of our compassionate society. Those who suffer from other diseases are not treated this way. But when the organ affected by the illness is the brain, abandoning sick people to the street seems acceptable.

Over the past two years, our government has been working to address these challenges with the provincial government - with some success. Today shelters and outreach services are being expanded and more than 2700 units of social and supportive housing are in progress. But more must be done.

In two years, Vancouver will represent Canada to the world. The 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games are a catalyst to address this long-standing national problem that manifests itself on our Downtown Eastside. National leadership is required.

In this light, we are asking the Federal Government consider the following investments and tax improvements to capitalize on this opportunity and help increase the supply of social, supportive and affordable housing in Vancouver:

- recommendations from Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Big City Mayors' Caucus to maintain and expand existing national housing programs beyond the current 2009 expiry date;
- reduce GST payments on rental housing and allow rental investors to qualify for small business deductions;
- allow capital gain tax to be deferred by restoring capital cost allowance rollover;
- create an investment pool for affordable housing;
- allow a private foundation to hold supportive housing limited partnership units;
- allow a unit holder in a supportive housing partnership to donate units to charity at market value without incurring capital gains; and
- accelerate \$10 million Federal investment to BC under the new National Anti-drug Strategy to support new drug treatment and prevention measures in Vancouver.

Strategic Infrastructure

Canadian cities are engines of economic activity, intellectual capital, sustainable development, creativity, arts and culture. To make sure this engine continues to drive our nation's productivity, we need to make sure our infrastructure is sound.

In this light, we are asking the Government of Canada to support strategic Vancouver infrastructure investments in the following three areas;

- UBC Line - The Government of Canada is to be commended for their support for regional transportation infrastructure in Metro Vancouver. The Canada Line, new buses and border infrastructure improvements will help secure our economic future for generations to come.

Completion of the Millennium Line to central Broadway and UBC is the City of Vancouver's top transit infrastructure priority. Last month, the BC Government confirmed their commitment to complete the line and we need the Federal Government to match their commitment.

- EcoDensity - Urban planning represents a significant opportunity for municipal governments in Canada to support efforts to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The City of Vancouver has introduced an EcoDensity plan to reduce urban sprawl, implement green building standards and help Vancouver become more sustainable, affordable and diverse. In addition to public transit, local federal investments in public transit, local federal investments in community amenities, recreation and park facilities will support our EcoDensity objectives.

- Arts & Culture - Vancouver's aging arts infrastructure is in need of repair and replacement. When compared to cities such as Toronto and Montreal that have received millions of Federal dollars in the last decade to revitalize their theatres and cultural institutions, it is clear we have much work to do.

In partnership with the Province of BC, the City of Vancouver has developed a plan to establish a cultural precinct downtown that will enhance facilities and help establish Vancouver as a premier international destination for arts and culture. We have invited the Federal Government to support this partnership.

And, in light of our commitment to make Vancouver the most inclusive city in the world, we encourage you to expand current infrastructure programs to include community centres - particularly Vancouver's Multicultural Helping House and the Four Host First Nations 2010 Pavilion.



City of Vancouver
Police Department

JIM CHU
Chief Constable

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

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February 4th, 2008

TO THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE:

In 2007, after seeing a rash of incidents involving the mentally ill – some with tragic results – the Vancouver Police Department began a study into the nature and frequency of calls involving the mentally ill. Our objective was to use our unique vantage point to gather data and observations that could illuminate and illustrate the problems and allow us to become advocates for more efficient and improved care and responses for these marginalized people.

The results of our frontline observations were distressing: over one third of the incidents police attend in Vancouver involve a person who shows signs of mental disorder and whose illness was a contributing factor to the event. Sadly, in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, this number rose to almost one half of the incidents. When our officers encounter someone they find suffering from a mental disorder, and who poses a risk to themselves or others who is refusing to go for treatment, our officers are required to arrest them under the Mental Health Act and get them to a hospital. Over a few short years, there has been an extraordinary increase in these arrests from 360 in 1999 to 1743 in 2007; not surprisingly, this increase is correlated with the increase in homelessness.

Our research also looked at our interactions with the mental health system. We work with many mental health professionals and agencies who are dedicated and caring and are doing their best. But what we also see is a system that is not adequately serving many who need help the most. These are the seriously mentally ill we see on our streets, acting bizarrely, frequently homeless, who are often victimized because of their vulnerability, but who also create extraordinary and frequent public safety problems, ranging from property and public disorder offences to violent crimes. The mental health system is failing many of these people for several reasons. There is a lack of capacity to provide the care these people need. Involved agencies do not have a workable information sharing process so they can share case histories. We also have found that the current mental health system is not institutionalizing the small numbers of the mentally ill who are so sick they cannot do well in any other setting, and doesn't provide sufficient supports for those who could do well in the community.

Why is this of concern to the VPD? We are in the unique position of observing how these people are currently unable to cope in our community and how significant this problem is. Many times the lack of resources and lack of response by the system to help these people makes police de facto mental health workers, forcing the criminalization of the mentally ill because it is the only way police can address public safety problems.

In our newest Strategic Plan, the VPD has committed to taking a stronger leadership role in advocating for “upstream” improvements to reduce the draw on scarce police resources. Previously, the VPD

Chief Constable's Office

shone a light on the problems of predatory landlords and grossly substandard housing in the Downtown Eastside and saw positive change result. In the same way, we want to illuminate the problems in the mental health system, and we commit to working collaboratively with those who bear the primary responsibility for the mentally ill, so that we may better serve this difficult population, and also reduce the very significant drain on police resources that are better aligned towards crime control rather than health care.

We commend the extraordinary and compelling research conducted by Detective Wilson-Bates, and we thank Ms. Kate O'Brien for sharing her son Corey's tragic story.

We hope it will make a difference.



Jim Chu
Chief Constable



Mayor Sam Sullivan
Chair, Vancouver Police Board



LOST IN TRANSITION: HOW A LACK OF CAPACITY IN THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM IS FAILING VANCOUVER'S MENTALLY ILL AND DRAINING POLICE RESOURCES

The Vancouver Police Department has conducted research that reveals there is a profound lack of capacity in mental health resources in Vancouver. The result is an alarmingly high number of calls for police service to incidents that involve mentally ill people in crisis. More than one-third of all calls for Vancouver Police involve people with mental health issues. In the Downtown Eastside, the number increases to more than one in every two calls. VPD officers, along with the citizens with whom they come in contact, are bearing the burden of a mental health system that lacks resources and efficient information sharing practices, often with tragic consequences.

THE VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT IS RECOMMENDING THAT THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS ARE BADLY NEEDED:

- A mental healthcare facility that can accommodate moderate to long-term stays for individuals who are chronically mentally ill
- What has been termed an "Urgent Response Center" by Vancouver Coastal Health, where individuals can be assessed and "sorted" according to their needs
- Increased services for people who are dually diagnosed
- A continued increase in supportive housing in Vancouver
- For St. Paul's Hospital and Vancouver General Hospital to speed up the admission process for police who have arrested an individual under the provisions of the Mental Health Act (by negating the need for the emergency physician to initially examine the patient, for example) in the absence of an "Urgent Response Center," as detailed above
- Enhanced ability to gather data on all calls for service that are mental health related to facilitate further research on this matter and to establish benchmarks to track change
- A system, much like PRIME, that has readily accessible details of an individual's mental health history and addresses privacy concerns, for British Columbia mental health service providers

TO VIEW THE ENTIRE REPORT, GO TO WWW.VPD.CA.