

# Former mayor Campbell criticizes Olympic Village social housing deal

BY MIKE HOWELL, VANCOUVER COURIER MAY 20, 2010

Former mayor Larry Campbell doesn't think Vancouver will see a time when there are no homeless people on the streets.

Why not?

"I just don't think that there's such a thing," said Campbell, who was mayor from 2002 to 2005 and is now a Liberal senator. "I don't think that there's such an optimum situation. But I think we'll see a time when the number of homeless have dropped to the point where we can say that we have it under control."

Campbell spoke to the Courier Wednesday in advance of his speech Thursday at the Kettle Friendship Society's annual fundraiser, held at the Four Seasons hotel.

Campbell was to talk about the current state of homelessness, mental health problems and addictions. The Kettle Friendship Society provides housing and mental health services for people in need.

The former mayor said he believes Vancouver has more homeless people than when he was elected in 2002. But, he said, the "housing situation" has improved and he praised provincial B.C. Housing Minister Rich Coleman for his commitment to ending homelessness.

Campbell pointed to the provincial government's purchase of more than 20 single-room occupancy hotels in the Downtown Eastside, where they've been renovated and are now managed by nonprofits.

The government is also committed to building housing on 14 sites owned by the city. The hotels and the new buildings will or already have support services attached to them, where health providers connect with people suffering from mental illness and addiction issues.

"Rich Coleman has done a magnificent job," Campbell said. "I know people pooh-pooh it, but I'm telling you he got it—he got it because it makes good business sense and it's compassionate."

Campbell, who was a founding member of Vision Vancouver, said Mayor Gregor Robertson's efforts to keep temporary homeless shelters open has also helped homeless people link with services and housing.

But Campbell doesn't think Robertson and his ruling Vision council should have settled on the so-called 50/50 deal for the 252 units at the Olympic Village originally slated for affordable housing.

The 50/50 deal means half of the units will go to social housing and the other half rented at market rates to "essential workforce" employees, such as police officers, firefighters and paramedics. The

Vision council devised the deal after learning the cost of building the units had increased by \$65 million in 2006 to \$110 million.

Campbell said he would rent the units and use the money to fund new social housing elsewhere in the city and lobby senior levels of government to match the funding. He said his plan could potentially double the number of units for social housing in the city. He would sell the units once the real estate market improved.

He has no time, he said, for critics who still believe that low-income people promised a unit under the original plan for the Village should still get one.

“This argument that we don’t want the poor to have a view...you know what, take that lefty crap and stick it. It’s just not realistic. I want people with houses, I want supportive housing and that’s how we go about it.”

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