

Streets home to many as homelessness grows despite prosperous times

The Daily News (Truro)
Mon 30 Oct 2006
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Section: Canada
Byline: By Dirk Meissner
Source: the canadian press
Edition:
Length: 594 words
Illustration:

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More on the streets despite boom times: Estimates have Vancouver at 2,175 homeless people, Victoria at 700 and Kelowna at more than 400

The Daily Courier (Kelowna)
Mon 30 Oct 2006
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Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 744 words

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Activists like Swanson are not the only people challenging the government to help the homeless.

Municipalities say low welfare rates are causing people in their communities to fall through the cracks and end up on the streets.

Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd said the city council in her community, a Liberal government stronghold, passed a motion calling on the government to increase welfare rates to prevent homelessness.

Opposition New Democrat Leader Carole James said the government's record on helping the homeless and poor during these good economic times is shameful.

Premier Gordon Campbell said his government will increase welfare rates next year when it tables its budget in February. He didn't say by how much, but indicated it will be one of the government's primary funding initiatives.

Welfare rates in British Columbia have not been increased in more than 10 years. A single person receives \$510 a month.

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Penticton Herald
Mon 30 Oct 2006
Page: A2
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Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 807 words

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The government recently announced a housing strategy that includes rent subsidies for the working poor.

Campbell said the government will attempt to do more to help the mentally ill, saying decisions by previous governments to shut down institutions and attempt to integrate the mentally ill into communities was a failure.

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Streets, bushes home to many as homelessness grows despite prosperous times

Nelson Daily News
Mon 30 Oct 2006
Page: 3
Section: News
Byline: Dirk Meissner
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 595 words

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BC-Homeless-Huge

Broadcast News
Mon 30 Oct 2006
Section: Western regional news
Byline:
Source:
Length: 142 words

VICTORIA -- Homelessness and poverty are real problems in B-C, and the premier wants to try to fix it.

Welfare rates will go up in February, if Gordon Campbell keeps his promise.

He won't say by how much but says higher rates are one way of acknowledging the issue.

Campbell says British Columbians are going to solve the problem one person at a time because poverty is a complex issue.

Despite B-C's economic boom, the number of people pushing their belongings in shopping carts appears to be growing provincewide.

Anti-poverty advocates say low welfare rates, a minimum wage stuck at eight dollars an hour, and a lack of rental and social housing are putting more people on the streets.

Vancouver activist Jean Swanson says she's never seen the situation this bad in the 30 years she's lobbied for the poor.

(BN,CP)

enl,dgr

Streets, bushes home to many as homelessness grows despite prosperous times

CP Wire
Sun 29 Oct 2006
Section: National general news
Byline: BY DIRK MEISSNER
Source:
Length: 745 words

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``The situation we see on our streets today is not acceptable," he said.

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Next budget to increase welfare shelter allowance, premier says: Campbell gives no indication of how much the assistance will rise, as NDP critic demands to know, 'How are people supposed to get through this winter?'

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Sat 28 Oct 2006
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Byline: Jonathan Fowlie
Source: Vancouver sun
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 505 words
Illustration: Photo: Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun / Beds await the homeless at a Vancouver shelter.

The B.C. government will increase the shelter allowance portion of welfare payments in its next budget, Premier Gordon Campbell announced Friday.

It will be the first such increase since 1994, although the next budget is not expected until 2007.

"I don't want to accept people living on our streets," he said during his speech to the UBCM annual convention. "None of us, least of all the homeless, want to accept it," he added.

Campbell gave no details about the amount of the increase and did not say if his government would make similar changes to the portion of welfare earmarked for general living expenses.

Affordable housing advocates were quick to question whether the increase will be enough to make a difference.

"Raising the shelter portion won't be enough, the support portion needs to go up too," said Jean Swanson, coordinator of Carnegie Community Action Project that is part of a campaign to have the entire welfare rate increased by 50 per cent.

Currently, single adult welfare recipients who are deemed employable receive \$510 each month -- \$325 for shelter and \$185 for other living expenses.

Kim Kerr, director of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, said Friday that those rates are far too low, and that it is nearly impossible for people to find accommodation for the amount they are given.

"Most people are paying closer to \$400 and often \$450 [for rooms]," he said, explaining people end up digging into the support side of their cheques to make up the difference.

NDP housing critic Diane Thorne called the timing of Campbell's comments "mean-spirited and thoughtless."

"How are people supposed to get through this winter?" she asked. "The winter is coming, next week is November. This is when people need a shelter rate

increase. Right now."

Vancouver Coun. Peter Ladner said an increase is "long overdue and I'm very glad it's happening."

"[Hotel owners have] already raised the rents -- the average rent there I think is around \$385 and the shelter allowance is \$325," he said.

"The result is that people on welfare can't get the rooms."

Mayor Sam Sullivan said he is extremely pleased.

"There are really very, very few houses in Vancouver that cost \$325 per month," he said.

"People who require welfare are having to live substandard qualities of life," he added.

Campbell also urged local leaders to develop ways to speed construction of affordable housing and reduce overall costs.

"We're going to need to build smarter, faster and smaller," he said. "We're going to increase densities, reduce building costs and create new positive benefits for our environment."

Sullivan embraced the ideas.

Others, however, were less convinced.

"People in this province know how to build good affordable housing -- I'm living in some of it," said Swanson.

"It's not a problem of invention it's a problem of political will," she added.

"They have the political will to spend billions on the Olympics. Where is the political will to spend the money on the type of housing that people can call home?"

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Welfare recipients to get more money for shelter

Times Colonist (Victoria)

Sat 28 Oct 2006

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Byline: Jeff Rud

Source: Times Colonist

Edition: Final

Story Type: News

Note: Campbell's Promises

Length: 309 words

Illustration: Photo: WELFARE: The shelter allowance portion of welfare payments is to be increased, but the exact amount won't be revealed until February.

British Columbians on welfare will soon be getting more money for shelter, but they won't know how much more until February.

Premier Gordon Campbell, during a speech yesterday to municipal politicians, promised to boost the shelter allowance portion of welfare payments, which now ranges from \$325 a month for a single person to \$625 for a family of five.

But Campbell told reporters later that they'd have to wait until the 2007 provincial budget to find out the exact amount of the increase. He did say that the increase would cost the government more than any other funding announcements he made yesterday, which included a pledge to fund one-third of the cost of sewage treatment for Victoria.

It will be the first increase since 1994 in B.C.'s shelter rates for those on income assistance, Campbell said.

Besides shelter rates, welfare payments include an additional supplement that ranges from \$185 for a single person who is employable to \$531 for a single person with a disability.

During their week-long convention in Victoria, Union of B.C. Municipalities delegates passed a motion calling on the province to raise welfare rates. Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd said during a press conference Thursday that she wanted the province to implement a program that would adjust welfare rates annually, based on the B.C. consumer price index.

Campbell's announcement, though it didn't provide any hard dollar figures, was greeted with applause from the estimated crowd of 1,000.

But NDP Leader Carole James pointed out that the Liberal government cut shelter allowance rates in 2002 as it searched for ways to pare its budget.

"We heard the premier say some vague promise that he was actually going to increase shelter rates," James said. "We don't know the specifics of that yet, but we have to remember that it was the government who cut shelter rates back in 2002."

Campbell opens up B.C. coffers: More money pledged to shelter for those on welfare and money for Victoria's sewage plant

The Daily News (Nanaimo)
Sat 28 Oct 2006
Page: A5
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Byline: Jeff Rud
Source: CanWest News Service
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
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Mayor cheers welfare hike

Okanagan Saturday
Sat 28 Oct 2006
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Section: News
Byline:
Source: Okanagan Saturday
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 303 words
Illustration: Photo: Shepherd

Welfare recipients can count on getting more money for their housing costs, Premier Gordon Campbell said Friday.

The premier told delegates attending the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention in Victoria that the shelter component of the assistance payments will be increased, with specific details to come in the next provincial budget.

"When he said that, we gave him a standing ovation," Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd said. "It was good to hear -- exactly what we've been hoping for.

"He didn't announce any details -- when the payments would be increased or by how much -- but he's at least made the commitment now," Shepherd said.

On behalf of Kelowna city council, Shepherd was prepared Friday to bring forward a resolution calling on the government to increase the welfare rates as a way of addressing poverty and homelessness.

However, time ran out at the convention before the resolution could be discussed.

"Our resolution was number 171, and they cut things off at resolution number 151," Shepherd said. "It was disappointing because I was ready to speak, but things turned out OK after all."

Welfare rates for non-disabled people have not been raised in 12 years. A single person considered to be employable gets \$510 a month, including a \$325 shelter allowance.

Outside the week-long UBCM convention, there were a number of protests and demonstrations by people calling for an increase in welfare rates. Kelowna's resolution calling for a boost in payments was expected to be endorsed by the other politicians from towns and cities attending the convention.

"I'm glad the government has listened," Shepherd said. "They seemed to have recognized that poverty is an issue."

A poverty action group, Raise the Rates, has suggested welfare payments be increased by 50 per cent just to bring the income of recipients up to the poverty line.

Politicians, activists call for homeless resources

The Daily News (Kamloops)
Fri 27 Oct 2006
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Column: News Briefs
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: The Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: News; Brief
Length: 95 words

The B.C. government is being urged to raise welfare rates and build more social housing.

The call came from a group of provincial politicians, church leaders and community activists gathered in Victoria.

Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd says many people in her community are falling through cracks and living on the streets.

Homeless activist Jean Swanson says the situation in B.C. is the worst she's seen in 30 years.

She's calling for welfare rates to rise by 50 per cent.

The homeless issue will be debated in Victoria at the annual Union of B.C. Municipalities convention.

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Politicians, activists join call for homeless help

Prince George Citizen
Fri 27 Oct 2006
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Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 365 words

VICTORIA (CP) -- The B.C. government is being urged to raise welfare rates and build more social housing.

The call came Thursday from a group of municipal politicians, church leaders and community activists who gathered in a Victoria church basement that serves as a night-time shelter for homeless youth.

Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd says many people in her Interior community are falling through the cracks and living on the streets.

She estimated there are more than 400 homeless people living in Kelowna, a number that has doubled in recent years.

Shepherd said the province needs to increase welfare rates to ease the burdens the homeless in her community, and homeless people across the province, are facing.

"I'm trying not to blame, but I'm saying we need them to seriously say they are there to help us," she said. "I seriously want them to take a look at the rates which have not changed for over 12 years."

The Union of B.C. Municipalities, meeting this week in Victoria, is expected to debate Friday a Kelowna motion that calls for increased welfare rates.

Shepherd said Kelowna is a traditional Liberal government stronghold, but the homeless issue stretches beyond political allegiances and requires teamwork on behalf of all levels of government.

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Welfare hike to be debated: Mayor of Kelowna spearheads broad drive for increase in rates

Times Colonist (Victoria)
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A4
Section: News
Byline: Louise Dickson
Source: Times Colonist
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 357 words

Illustration: Photo: Ray Smith, Times Colonist / From left: Kathleen Gibson of Faith in Action, Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd and Jean Swanson of the Raise the Rates coalition listen as acting Victoria Mayor Helen Hughes speaks yesterday at a joint news conference in the basement of the Church of St. John the Divine.

Sharon Shepherd wants to see shopping carts filled with groceries, not the possessions of homeless people.

That's why the Kelowna mayor has put forth a resolution, to be debated this morning at the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention, calling for an increase in welfare rates.

The welfare rate of \$510 a month for single adults has not increased since 1991, and rates for families have not kept pace with inflation, said Shepherd.

"Our resolution calls on the province to honour its responsibilities to make sure people's basic needs are being met," said Shepherd, who wants the provincial government to implement a program to adjust welfare rates annually based on the B.C. consumer price index.

Shepherd made her remarks at a news conference on B.C.'s homeless crisis at the Church of St. John the Divine yesterday. Her resolution has the support of church groups and anti-poverty organizations such as the Together Against Poverty Society and the Vancouver-based Raise the Rates coalition.

Victoria council has passed its own resolution to have Mayor Alan Lowe meet with Premier Gordon Campbell to discuss welfare rates, said acting Victoria Mayor Helen Hughes. Although Lowe met with Campbell, Housing Minister Rich Coleman and Employment and Income Assistance Minister Claude Richmond in early October, the government promised nothing, said Hughes.

"Hopefully, we will get the ear of those who make the decisions and help those who need the help," said Hughes, who supports Shepherd's resolution.

Government policy is causing homelessness, panhandling, binning and immense human suffering, said Jean Swanson, spokesman for Raise the Rates coalition.

"The policies are designed to keep people in need from getting on welfare," she charged.

Swanson quoted a recent report by provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall, who said B.C.'s welfare rates have failed to keep pace with inflation and fall

short of covering the cost of shelter and food.

Kendall recommended government tie welfare rates to the cost of living.

Richmond, attending the conference, said the government already examines welfare rates. The province spends more than \$35 million a year to get employable people back into the workforce, plus another \$7.5 million on life skills program, he said.

A whole \$6! Every day!: Unfortunately for our worst-off citizens, that six bucks has to cover food and all the other necessities of life

The Vancouver Sun
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A19
Section: Editorial
Byline: Jon Kesselman
Column: Jon Kesselman
Source: Special to the Sun
Edition: Final
Story Type: Column
Length: 745 words

Illustration: Photo: Mark Van Manen, Vancouver Sun, files / Young and old wait patiently at a food bank for a bag of groceries, a regular necessity for those on welfare.

Imagine that you wake up each morning with six dollars burning a hole in your pocket.

Let's see: How might you spend your money? Maybe contemplate breakfast, a midday meal and supper at nightfall?

On some days you might consider buying toiletries such as toothpaste, floss, soap, and grooming items; household supplies like toilet paper, cleaning products, light bulbs, and the like; perhaps replacing some worn-out clothes and footwear on occasion; a movie and the laundromat now and then; periodically repairing or replacing the toaster, radio or TV, and furniture; an over-the-counter medication; a newspaper; a bus ticket to visit a friend or search for work; and so on.

But with \$6, would you even get as far as lunch? You might if you had an operating fridge, range and cookware to prepare your own meals, which unfortunately you do not.

So your \$6 might get you breakfast at a cheap restaurant and a beverage for your lunch. But forget about the sandwich, and dream on about supper and all the other daily necessities.

Oh, don't worry about the rent; that's already been covered at \$325 per month, which, if you are lucky enough to find anything, gets you a small room in a dilapidated building with little security and shared but menacing bathroom facilities. And you may have roommates, too -- the ever-present bedbugs and rats.

These are the conditions that our society finds acceptable for British Columbians who are deemed employable but have no financial resources.

In fact, many beneficiaries classified as employable face significant barriers to employment, and others are denied welfare entirely or find it too difficult to access with the result that some end up homeless.

Welfare benefits for employable single persons in B.C. are \$185 per month (the daily \$6) plus a \$325 monthly housing allowance, for a grand total of \$510.

These figures have been unchanged since 1994 despite a rise in living costs of nearly 30 per cent; the

benefits are just one-third of what Statistics Canada computes as the low-income cutoff.

So should we be surprised to find B.C.'s city streets and lanes looking increasingly like scenes from a Dickens novel?

Welfare beneficiaries simply cannot survive without regular resort to food banks, soup kitchens and whatever else they can scrounge through begging, dumpster diving or stealing.

When employable welfare beneficiaries find even part-time work, their earnings are deducted dollar-for-dollar from their benefits.

As a society we fault these people for not working, but when they find some work we penalize them by confiscating their earnings.

No one should be surprised that beneficiaries seek to work for unreported cash, yet we attack them again under the rubric of "welfare fraud."

The situation is only somewhat better for persons deemed to have serious disabilities, who draw welfare benefits of around \$850 per month. Yet much of their additional funds, relative to employable beneficiaries, is consumed by special health care and personal needs related to their disability.

Remarkably, we pay non-aged British Columbians with severe physical, mental, or emotional disabilities \$250 less per month than the \$1,100 guaranteed to every Canadian elderly person via federal benefits. Are our most defenceless citizens whose work potential is limited by disability worthy of less support than our seniors?

Moreover, the B.C. welfare system allows disabled beneficiaries to earn up to \$500 per month without reducing their benefits.

This provision makes sense in promoting some self-sufficiency. But it is odd that we reward work for those with the most limited employability while penalizing the most employable beneficiaries for every dollar of earnings.

Clearly, B.C.'s welfare system is falling far short of

the needs of basic decency for our most vulnerable members.

These critical problems have emerged and been allowed to grow under both NDP and Liberal governments, so it is not a partisan issue.

Even B.C.'s latest program initiative to offer modest rent subsidies for low-income workers has ignored the needs of welfare beneficiaries.

Is the low political priority on improving our welfare system the result of voter indifference or simply ignorance of the facts?

A campaign endorsed by many community groups, called "Raise the Rates" (www.raisetherates.org), may help to heighten public awareness.

Yet it is a sad fact that political actors are stirred more by the threat to tourism revenues and the 2010 Olympics image than by concerns over basic human dignity.

Jon Kesselman holds the Canada Research Chair in Public Finance with the graduate public policy program at Simon Fraser University.

Welfare rates must be raised: UBCM: Politicians and activists join in call for more resources

The Daily Courier (Kelowna)
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A2
Section: British Columbia
Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: The Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 490 words

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BC Liberals urged to help the homeless

Alberni Valley Times
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A12
Section: News
Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 253 words

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Kelowna motion on welfare attracts attention at UBCM

Cariboo Press
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: 0b10
Section: Penticton Western - News
Byline:
Source:
Edition:
Length: 417 words

As Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd walked into the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention in Victoria this week, she saw and heard something unexpected.

A demonstration outside the doors by social groups urged delegates at the convention to support the resolution put forward by Kelowna.

That resolution asks the province to increase social assistance rates.

"It must be important for all these groups to be involved," Shepherd said.

The resolution will be on the table at the convention Thursday, along with more than 160 others. The convention started Monday and will end today following a speech by Premier Gordon Campbell.

Shepherd said the social assistance resolution will be lumped in with similar motions and, at this point, she's not sure how it will be received.

She does know, however, that the issue of income assistance leads directly to the other issues of homelessness and affordable housing. She believed the demonstrations were designed to push the municipal delegates to get moving.

"The suggestion has been we need to be more active," said Shepherd. "There's been too much inactivity."

There is also a rally planned for Thursday by anti-poverty advocates and faith leaders about the growing homelessness issue and Kelowna's motion. Two mayors will speak about how it concerns their cities.

Kelowna is currently in the midst of working through strategies to address the lack of affordable housing in Kelowna, but councillors have also said the province needs to come through with more money on the income assistance cheques. Other municipalities are facing the same circumstances as in Kelowna with high-priced rentals and not much vacancy.

The situation is dire for thousands of people looking for a place they can afford.

The province has come up with rental subsidies, but that doesn't increase the supply of housing.

"There are very little rentals," said Shepherd. "The rental subsidies are not helpful if there are no places to rent."

Property values throughout B.C. have risen sharply in the past few years and, as a result, rental rates have gone up, too. In contrast most income assistance rates have not gone up for several years.

Shepherd is attending the conference along with councillors Robert Hobson, who is running for second vice-president, Michele Rule and Colin Day. Also attending from Kelowna is MLA Al Horning and city manager Ron Mattiussi.

Shepherd has meetings scheduled with Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon, Health Minister George Abbott, Agriculture Minister Pat Bell, Minister of Economic Development Colin Hansen and Minister Responsible for Housing Rich Coleman.

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More resources needed for the homeless

Alberni Valley Times
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A8
Section: News
Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 491 words

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Welfare rates must be raised: UBCM: Politicians and activists join in call for more resources

Penticton Herald
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A2
Section: British Columbia
Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 512 words

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Opposition Leader Carole James told the UBCM delegates Thursday the government is doing little to address the plight of the homeless.

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Politicians and activists join in call for more resources to help homeless

Alaska Highway News
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: A2
Section: News
Byline:
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: Business
Length: 491 words

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B.C. politicians, activists join in call for more resources to help homeless

The Daily Bulletin (Kimberley)
Fri 27 Oct 2006
Page: 5
Section: News
Byline: Dirk Meissner
Dateline: VICTORIA
Source: Canadian Press
Edition: Final
Story Type: News
Length: 522 words

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"In the midst of economic growth, that's shameful," said James.

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Politicians and activists join in call for more resources to help homeless

CP Wire
Thu 26 Oct 2006
Section: Western regional general news
Byline: BY DIRK MEISSNER
Source:
Length: 504 words

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--B-C Update--

Broadcast News
Thu 26 Oct 2006
Section: Western regional news
Byline:
Source:
Length: 446 words

A charred body found in Delta has been identified as that of a pregnant Surrey woman who disappeared a week ago.

The body of Manjit Panghali was discovered near the Roberts Bank container terminal on Monday, but dental records were needed to make a positive identification.

The Grade 1 teacher vanished on October 18th after leaving a prenatal yoga class.

Police have not made any arrests. (BN)

(BC-Child-Murder)

A B-C man has been arrested in Saskatchewan in the murder of a two-year-old boy.

Twenty-six-year-old Richard James Nairn was found in Lloydminster and will be returned to B-C to face a charge of second degree murder.

The R-C-M-P say Trake Richter was taken to hospital in Williams Lake with suspicious injuries on February 3rd and died five days later after being transferred to Children's Hospital in Vancouver.

Police aren't giving details of the fatal injuries. (CHNL)

(BC-Conjoined-Twins)

The conjoined twins delivered in Vancouver yesterday will have to grow bigger and stronger before tests can determine how much brain tissue they share.

Doctors say they twin girls -- who are joined at the head -- are stable and breathing on their own.

But they say their organs will have to become more mature before they can do the scans needed to find out if they can be separated.

That could take up to four months.

The twins -- named Krista and Tatiana -- were born to 21-year-old Felicia Simms of Vernon. (BN)

(BC-Ferry-Off-Course-Hahn)

B-C Ferries head David Hahn says human errors caused a ferry to go off course two years ago in the Gulf Island.

Word about the incident is just coming out now.

Hahn says one person was disciplined after the incident and a number of safety recommendations were implemented.

He says it's normal in the transportation industry to have mishaps, even major ones like this. (BN)

(BC-Teacher-Sex)

A former Vancouver high school teacher facing charges for having sex with his students has completed his testimony.

Tom Ellison says he doesn't know why he seduced the teenaged girls from Prince of Wales school 30 years ago, but he feels sick about what happened.

At the same time, he claims the girls were active and willing participants.

The trial has been adjourned until November 20th. (BN)

(BC-Homelessness)

The B-C government is being urged to raise welfare rates and build more social housing.

The call came from a group of provincial politicians, church leaders and community activists gathered in Victoria.

Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd says many people in her community are falling through the cracks and living on the streets.

Homeless activist Jean Swanson says welfare rates should rise by 50 per cent. (CP)

(B-C Update by David Lang)

Kelowna motion on welfare gets UBCM attention

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As Mayor Sharon Shepherd walked into the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention in Victoria this week, she saw and heard something unexpected.

A demonstration outside the doors by social groups urged delegates to the convention to support the resolution put forward by Kelowna.

That resolution asks the province to increase social assistance rates.

"It must be important for all these groups to be involved," Shepherd said.

The resolution will be on the table at the convention Thursday, along with more than 160 others. The convention started Monday and will end on Friday following a speech by Premier Gordon Campbell.

Shepherd said the social assistance resolution will be lumped in with similar motions and, at this point, she's not sure how it will be received.

She does know, however, that the issue of income assistance leads directly to the other issues of homelessness and affordable housing. She believed the demonstrations were designed to push the municipal delegates to get moving.

"The suggestion has been we need to be more active," said Shepherd. "There's been too much inactivity."

There is also a rally planned for Thursday by anti-poverty advocates and faith leaders about the growing homelessness issue and Kelowna's motion. Two mayors will speak about how it concerns their cities.

Kelowna is currently in the midst of working through strategies to address the lack of affordable housing in Kelowna, but councillors have also said the province needs to come through with more money on the income assistance cheques. Other municipalities are facing the same circumstances as in Kelowna with high-priced rentals and not much vacancy.

The situation is dire for thousands of people looking for a place they can afford.

The province has come up with rental subsidies, but that doesn't increase the supply of housing.

"There are very little rentals," said Shepherd. "The rental subsidies are not helpful if there are no places to rent."

Property values throughout B.C. have risen sharply in the past few years and, as a result, rental rates have gone up, too. In contrast most income assistance rates have not gone up for several years.

Shepherd is attending the conference along with councillors Robert Hobson, who is running for second vice-president, Michele Rule and Colin Day. Also attending from Kelowna is MLA Al Horning and city manager Ron Mattiussi.

Shepherd has meetings scheduled with Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon, Health Minister George Abbott, Agriculture Minister Pat Bell, Minister of Economic Development Colin Hansen and Minister Responsible for Housing Rich Coleman.

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