

October 30, 2006

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Government of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

The Honourable Gordon Campbell  
Premier, Province of British Columbia  
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

His Worship Mayor Sam Sullivan  
City of Vancouver  
453 West 12<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

**RE: Crisis in Vancouver. Additional mental health services, drug treatment options and supportive housing needed now.**

---

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of organizations that represent virtually the entire Vancouver business community, we are writing to ask that the governments representing Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver commit to making the necessary changes required to effectively address the crime and street disorder crisis that is now endangering our community. Recognizing Vancouver's role as a 'gateway' to British Columbia and Canada, and the fact these problems are not isolate to Vancouver, there are broader implications for the province and the country.

Vancouver is in the grip of an urban malignancy manifested by an open drug market, rising property crime, aggressive panhandling and a visible, growing population of the homeless. Both as citizens and business people we are deeply concerned by the lack of progress. As a society, we seem to lack a sense of urgency with respect to providing adequate supportive housing, mental health services and drug treatment. While we appreciate governments have not been standing still (the Premier's recent announcements at the Union of BC Municipalities' 2006 Convention are most welcome), the perception is one of a street environment that is slowly, but surely deteriorating.

- 1 of 5 -



There is also a widely held perception and evidence that criminals too often walk through a judicial 'revolving door'. While there are well documented steps that can be taken immediately to increase effectiveness across jurisdictions and agency mandates, clearly the court system and law enforcement agencies can not be counted on to effectively address serious, systemic gaps in our social safety net. Individuals habitually perpetrating lower order offenses (eg. theft from auto and aggressive solicitation) with known histories of drug abuse and/or mental illness are simply not being dealt with effectively.

Community courts are a welcome innovation although we are concerned that delays in developing 'wrap-around' services so critical to their success could keep pushing back their implementation. We need all levels of government in sync. And we need new approaches implemented now.

These perceptions of urban malignancy and revolving door justice are shared, not only among the business community, but also by residents and even by many foreign visitors. So much so that families are increasingly avoiding our downtown area and international travel planners are beginning to recommend that Vancouver be avoided as a travel and convention destination.

There is a growing consensus that our community is at a defining moment and that we need a new approach and bold leadership. We feel strongly that the future of Vancouver as a place to operate a business and to raise a family is at stake.

We have not lacked recommended solutions. What we have lacked is a sense of urgency, a will to put solutions into effect, and a cooperative framework within which business, non-governmental organizations and the three levels of government could pull together to effect change.

These absences will potentially hobble promising solutions such as: community courts; effective treatment initiatives for drug addicts and measures to prevent new addictions; 'Housing Matters BC' initiative; services for the mentally ill and people with concurrent disorders; and measures to help local communities launch crime prevention and community-building initiatives.

We acknowledge the recent re-engagement by the federal government (October 6, 2006 Roundtable on Crime and Public Safety) and municipal government (September 25 - October 2, 2006 Mayor's Roundtable on Improving Public Order). We also recognize that recent steps at the provincial level to address the serious and chronic shortage of social housing (noting the need for still more supportive housing) and mental health services represent progress. And we are encouraged to see Lorne Mayencourt, MLA



Vancouver-Burrard, who championed Safe Streets Legislation, continue his focus on advancing initiatives to reduce street level disorder through innovative drug treatment concepts and more.

Still, we remain concerned by the absence of a common plan and funding strategy to address the law enforcement, housing and health dimensions of this crisis.

The Vancouver business community, and many businesses beyond the Vancouver 'gateway', believe we are at a tipping point. To allow our lack of real progress to continue will most certainly lead to significant, long-term and negative impacts for our communities. We are ready for a new approach and welcome signs of new leadership to bring about positive change. To bring this into more focus we are asking that attention, on an urgent basis, be given to the following recommendations:

1. Aggressively follow-up on announcements to increase supportive housing;
2. Increase mental health services;
3. Increase drug treatment/prevention options;
4. Increase police resources coupled with dedication of judicial resources focused on street level criminal activity (eg. community courts); and
5. Create a funding stream to support partnership opportunities with local community/business organizations to launch crime prevention and community-building initiatives.

We need all governments to implement, on an urgent basis, comprehensive and coordinated solutions to these complex issues. We need these issues benchmarked to allow concise measurements of the success or lack thereof of actions taken. We need you and your colleagues to view this as a societal crisis that deserves a joint commitment in the public interest and a setting aside of jurisdictional protocols.

We commit to work within the business community to rally support for existing and new programs and to activate business participation within them.

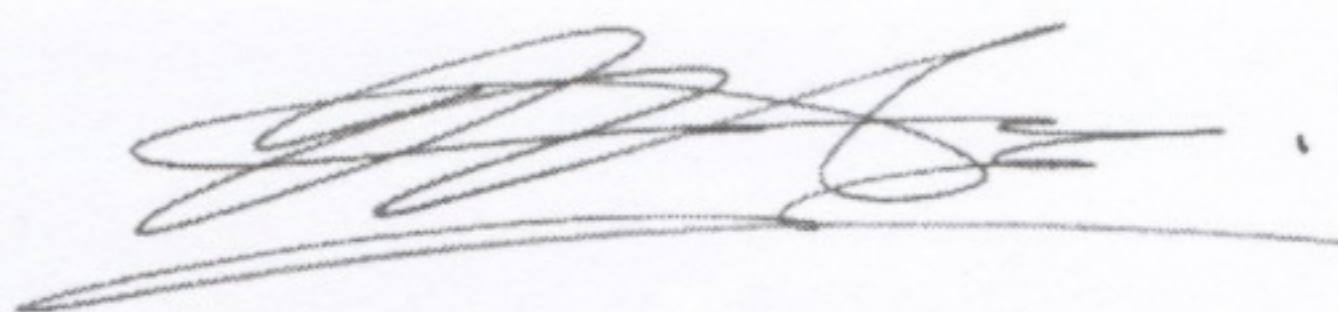
Respectfully,  
(enclosed)



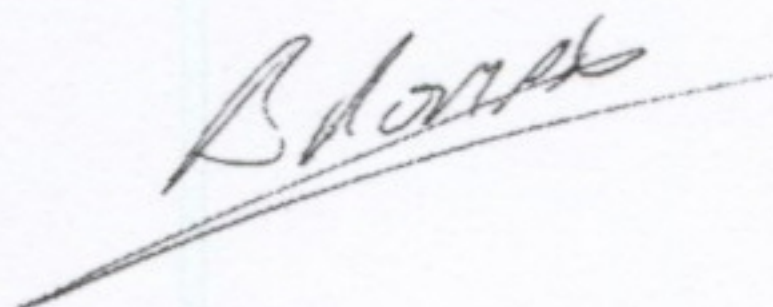
Respectfully,



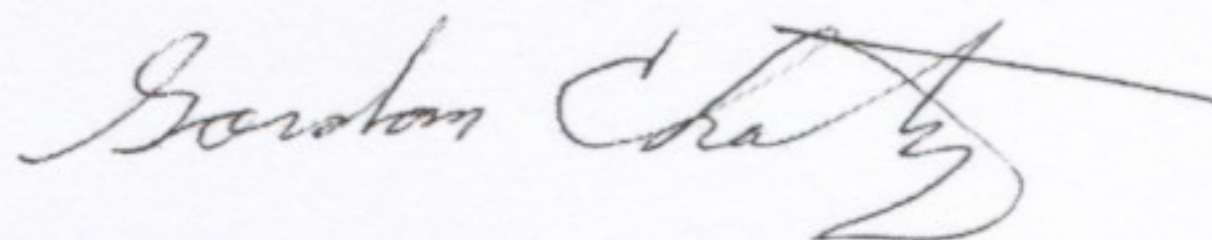
Jim Storie  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Tourism Vancouver  
(1,072 Members)



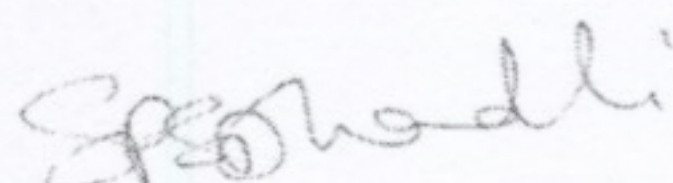
Frank S. Borowicz Q.C.  
Chairman  
Vancouver Board of Trade  
(5,500 Members)



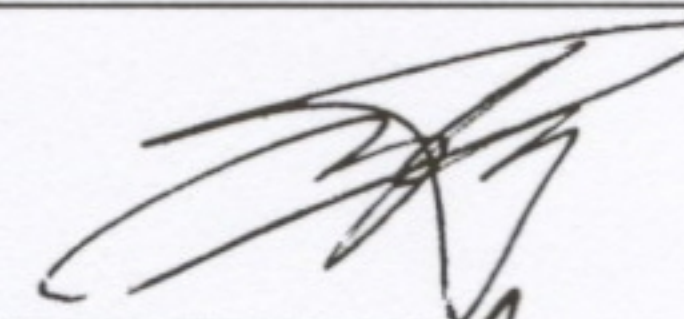
Bill Rempel  
President  
Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement  
Association  
(8,000 Members)



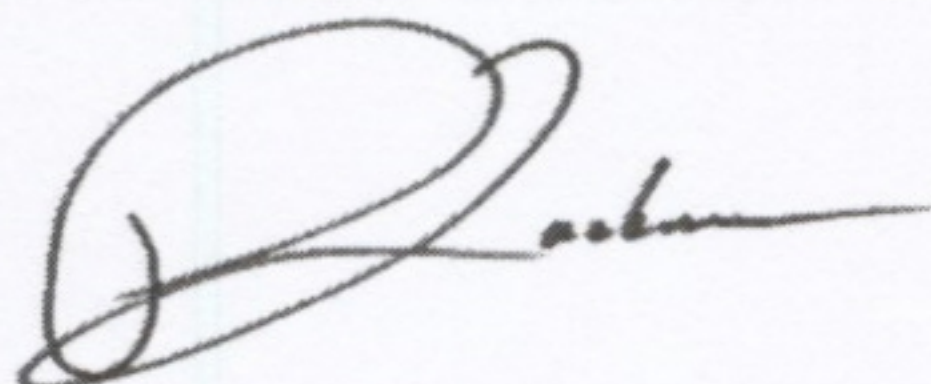
Gordon Chatry  
Chair  
Vancouver Hotel Association  
(58 hotel members)



Surinder Dhadli  
President  
Vancouver Taxi Association  
(2,300 drivers & operators)



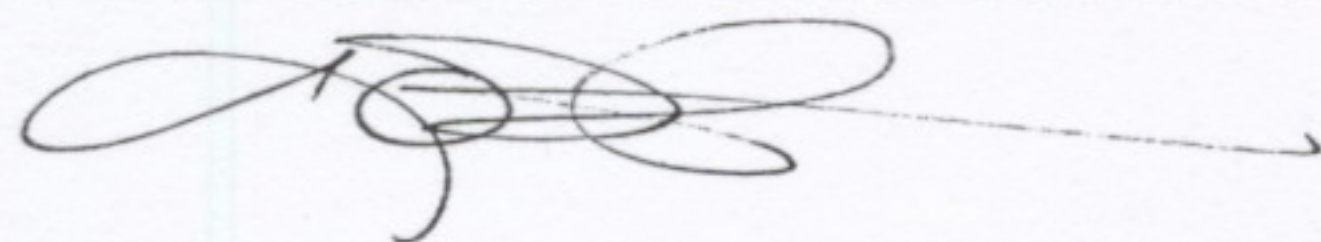
Mark Startup  
President, CEO  
Retail BC  
(3,000 Members)



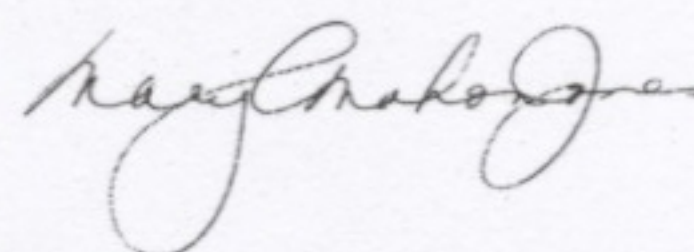
Peter Jackman  
President  
Downtown Vancouver Association



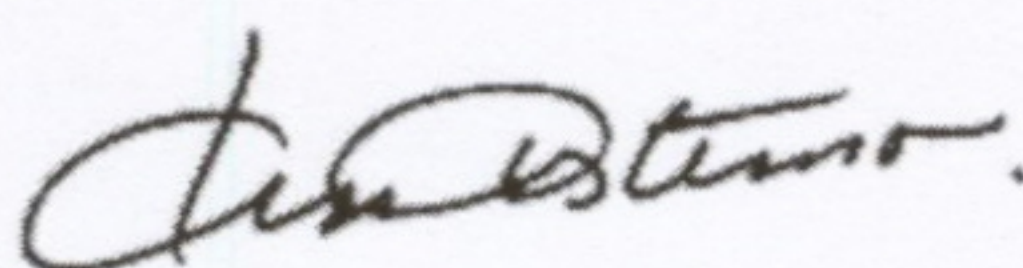
R. Gordon Johnson  
Chair  
Vancouver Hotel General Managers' Association  
(21 member hotels)



Lesley Heieis  
President  
Building Owners & Managers Association of BC  
(400 corporate members; representing \$7 billion  
commercial real estate industry in BC)



Mary Mahon Jones  
CEO  
Council of Tourism Associations of BC  
(59 Member Organizations, 11,000 Members)



Ian Tostenson  
President & CEO  
BC Restaurant & Foodservices Association  
(3,500 Members)



Tim Rodgers  
Board President  
BC & Yukon Hotel Association  
(600 Member Hotels=48,000 rooms and 45,000  
employees 200 Affiliate Members)



cc:

Hon. Tony Clement, Minister of Health and the Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario  
Hon. Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety  
Hon. David Emerson, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics  
Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development  
Hon. Beverley J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women  
Hon. Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians  
Hon. Carol Skelton, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of Western Economic Diversification  
Hon. Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board  
Hon. Vic Toews, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
Hon. Tom Christensen, Minister, Ministry of Children and Family Development  
Hon. Stan Hagen, Minister, Minister of Tourism, Sport and Arts  
Hon. Gordon Hogg, Minister of State for ActNow BC  
Hon. Ida Chong, Minister, Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Senior's and Women's Issues  
Hon. Shirley Bond, Minister of Education, Deputy Premier and Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy  
Hon. Colin Hansen, Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Initiative and the Olympics  
Hon. Wally Oppal, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism  
Hon. Claude Richmond, Minister, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance  
Hon. Carole Taylor, Minister, Ministry of Finance  
Hon. Olga Ilich, Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services  
Hon. Rick Thorpe, Minister of Small Business and Revenue and Minister Responsible for Regulatory Reform  
Hon. Rich Coleman, Minister, Ministry of Forests and Range and Minister Responsible for Housing  
Hon. George Abbott, Minister, Ministry of Health  
Hon. John Les, Minister, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Hon. Linda Reid, Minister of State for Childcare  
Lorne Mayencourt, MLA, Vancouver-Burrard  
Kim Capri, Councillor, City of Vancouver  
Judy Rogers, City Manager, Vancouver  
Brent MacGregor, Deputy City Manager, Vancouver  
Jamie Graham, Chief, Vancouver Police Department  
Ida Goudreau, Chief Executive Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority  
Heather Hay, Director, Community Health Services, Vancouver Coastal Health  
Lorna Howes, Director Mental Health, Vancouver Coastal Health  
Isobel Donovan, Executive Co-ordinator, Vancouver Agreement