

A large part of the problem from what I see is the addicts not having housing of any kind. The welfare system is unbelievably bureaucratically inept, and for the most part gutted from what it was 20 years ago. Just trying to call them to see or speak to a worker using their non-functional phone system it takes many hours or days of you waiting to hear back from them. The levels of funding is also a major barrier for housing it is 100% or more below the poverty line. It would take an entire cheque just to rent a room, with no funds for food, heat or power. The system is broken and fixing that would do more for this group of people than anything. When BC opted to create its own welfare act it has morphed into a huge tomb of rules, all primarily made to refuse some type of assistance that was in the Canada Welfare Act, which was the standard of Canada.

The BC GOVERNMENT needs to re-evaluate the huge amount of damage their policies have created over this 20 plus years since Harcourt's days. Which coincides with the start of the homeless problems. 1" Just so you remember it was Harcourt who took the right for food and housing away from BC's poor, which was our constitutional right, it is still gone, and this one thing is why BC has this huge problem, we only receive 25% of what the other provinces receive in Social Transfer payments now from the Federal Government annually." Most of these people on the streets have underlying factors which has precipitated their drug usage, chronic pain, mental illness, PTS, etc. These underlying issues and properly dealing with them is what should be done for all addicts and homeless only then will our society reduce the creation of these people to be so desperate. The showers, injection sites and food banks, which are all good needed things in our society, they all are band-aids and do very little for the poor and addicts long term.

A long term strategy is needed desperately in BC and would in my mind be a good start for the eventual solution to many issues like the needles in public areas, homeless camps and all of those now increasing eventualities of the current unjust policies. The BC Welfare Act should be re-evaluated, all previous levels of support from the Canada Assistance Plan reinstated with inflation and cost of living annual review, raising the basic level of support to the poverty line, and the bureaucratic system they have created for eligibility be totally thrown out, and rewritten so as people can get this assistance without huge barriers as it is currently. Rehiring workers trained in Social Services and trained in Mental Health would also be a huge long term investment in caring for the people on assistance, not like now which are all financial workers that have a mandate to just say no to everything by following the tomb of rules that allows them to justify this legislated poverty, not using common sense or compassion or what is the right thing to do for the aide to these people. It is criminal what BC has done and continues to do.

Sincerely,

Brent Winterbottom