

REPORT ON COMMUNITY FORUM

"Crime Prevention & Sustaining Healthy Communities"



February 8th, 2008 Coast Capri Hotel (Vineyard Room) ~ Kelowna, B.C.



FORUM OVERVIEW

Guest Speaker - Dr. Craig Jones, Criminologist, Researcher and Executive Director of John Howard Society of Canada, presented on the topic of "Crime Prevention & Sustaining Healthy Communities". Dr. Jones' presentation highlighted the use of '**harm reduction**' as an effective response required to meet the changing needs of communities brought on by rapid economic growth.

"Rapid economic growth does not benefit everyone equally".

"People can do long-term damage to themselves and pass on the costs of this behaviour to their communities".

(Excerpt from Dr. Jones' presentation outline)

The presentation was followed by a **moderated** discussion/question and answer period involving a **panel of local experts** that consisted of:

- Mayor Sharon Shepherd
- RCMP Superintendent Bill McKinnon
- Robert Fine - Executive Director, Economic Development Commission
- Christene Walsh - Drug Policy Coordinator, Regional District of the Central Okanagan
- Brian McKay - Manager of Social Work and Outreach Urban Health, Interior Health
- Shelagh Turner - Executive Director, Canadian Mental Health Association

The Moderator for the forum was J.A. Richardson - Member of the National Parole Board of Canada (retired) and JHSCSO Board Member.

OUTCOME OF FORUM

Quick Facts

Attendance

- Number signed in on Guest List = **90**
- Actual number in attendance = **150** (based on required seating)
- Forum was attended by representatives from municipal (Mayor of Kelowna and City Councilor) and federal government (MP Ron Cannan), as well as broad mixed representation that included the RCMP, representatives from provincial (Interior Health; PHSA) and federal government (Correctional Services Canada; Service Canada) organizations, the business community, the non-profit/charitable sector including outreach services, church groups as well as service consumers, parents and concerned citizens.

Media Coverage

- Shaw, Castanet, Okanagan Life, Sun FM, Oldies 1150 (on air pre-interview), Kelowna Daily Courier [pre-interview (Jan. 26th - front page) and post forum article (Feb. 9th)].
- Blog - Okanagan Life Magazine
http://okanaganlife.typepad.com/futurology_exchange/

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Evaluations

- 35 evaluations were completed

Participants were asked to score the forum overall on a 10 point scale [1= poor to 10=exceptional]

Average score: 7.9 Median: 8

94% of respondents reported that it was worth their time to attend the forum.

Sampling of Survey Responses:

What ideas/concepts did you find most interesting?

- Psycho-social dislocation vs. self-efficacy.
- Idea of a sobering station.
- Harm Reduction.
- Addictions and isolation.
- A renewed desire by the public for re-institutionalization.
- Treatment is not a 'place', but a process, and it take many forms.

In what ways will you use the information that you gained from today's forum?

- [I will] share our increased knowledge and awareness on our agency's website.
- [I will] educate and share with those on my team the highlights of today's forum.
- [I will] keep my daughter (addicted to cocaine) in our social system the best I can.
- [I will] promote health and detox/rehab program.
- [I will] further advocate for harm reduction in our community.
- [I will] use the information for networking and collaboration.
- [I will] use the information for inspiration.

Community Comments, Questions & Answers with Panel of Experts

1. What is being done to help the homeless learn life skills?

We have local outreach workers, several programs and services that target/support those living on the streets. Our system is not perfect, but we having an impact. We recognize that there is a need for greater nighttime services, and a greater need for teaching life skills.

2. Will the City of Kelowna and the RCMP contribute to a Sobering Centre/Station?

At this point the City has not allotted any specific amount to a Sobering Centre. The City of Kelowna desires to be one partner among several partners in this initiative. The RCMP receives its funding from the City, so it would not be making an additional contribution.

3. Issues identified/general Statements made by community members:

- More women's shelters are needed.
- Youth addiction issues are increasing.
- There is too long a wait (approx. 6 weeks) for clients to access detox beds.
- We need to recognize that treatment is more than one format - there are many forms of treatment or ways treatment happens beyond simply "going away" for treatment.
- Our community has resources, but we need to determine if we have the right resources to ensure there isn't a "disconnect" between needs and provision.
- More community citizens NEED to vote if they desire to have a voice/influence in directing our resources. In the last election, only 31% of citizens voted.

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- Municipalities need to decide to what measure they are prepared to fund social services. What funding measures are available? Are citizens prepared to see an increase in municipal taxes?
- The federal and provincial governments are placing increasing responsibility upon municipalities to address social concerns - federal and provincial funding is not matching this transfer of responsibility.
- Municipalities are accepting increased responsibility for addressing social issues without holding the two higher levels of government accountable. This needs to change. Local citizens cannot absorb the tax increases it would require to meet all the social needs of our community. It is NOT the role of municipality to cover these costs.
- We need a national housing strategy and funding from all levels of government to sustain it.
- There is no dignity in being homeless. There is nothing for us to be proud about when we all sit here clothed and warm, while people in our community live on the street.
- People change quickly when they are given a home and allowed some dignity.
- Inclusion of those who need social services is necessary when we are deciding the policies that directly affect them.
- In addition to the realities of the homelessness problem in Kelowna is the greater problem of those community citizens who cannot make ends meet. We NEED 8000 affordable housing units. Too many families are paying over 50% of their income on rent and 30,000 citizens access our food banks.

4. In recent weeks, the media in Vancouver have been focusing upon the high level of severely mentally ill clients who are also dealing with homelessness and poverty issues. Do we have the ability in Kelowna to address the challenges facing the mentally ill who are homeless in our city?

- RCMP in Kelowna deal with a high number of calls where mental illness is an issue, specifically among many the homeless population.
- There appears to be some need for “re-institutionalizing” those with severe mental health problems (provincial need). Need to revise old notion of institutions.
- Some good things ARE happening in homelessness services in Kelowna. Last year we were able to assist **130** homeless citizens find housing and additional supports.
- We do have a broad base of outreach workers and various social service agencies that can assist the mentally ill find the treatment they need.

5. Proposed Ideas by Community Members:

- We need improved coordination of nighttime care for the homeless.
- We could create a community webpage telling people where/how to access resources.
- We could have a public awareness/support campaign “Addiction Sucks” (or something similar).
- We need long term residential care for youth and adults dealing with drug addiction (It was noted that British Columbia’s first long-term residential treatment facility for youth ages 14 yrs-24 yrs is scheduled to open this Fall in Keremeous. This will be an important resource for Kelowna as well).

The winner of trivia question: “**Who was John Howard?**” was **Ray Yarbrough**.
Ray won a **\$50** gift certificate for Ric’s Grill, generously donated by **Meiklejohn Architects Inc.**

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