

Illegal student suites nixed in BC

by Mike Gordon

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Students and low-income earners will be among the hardest hit of 40,000 people facing possible widespread evictions in a city-wide crackdown on "illegal" suites.

"A lot of students wouldn't be able to afford an education if there were no illegal suites," said John Neufeld, a Capilano College student. "Because the government's idea of affordable rent is outrageous."

There are an estimated 26,000 illegal suites in Vancouver, and depending on the outcome of zone-by-zone public reviews, many of them could be shut down.

Most of the city is designated as single family dwellings zones. If a building has more than one self-contained dwelling in it, this is defined as an illegal suite.

Alex Taylor and her family lived in an illegal suite for three years when she was in grade school. "We were poor, poor, poor," she said. "We were lucky, we moved out because we had money."

Taylor said students who are evicted will "have to find jobs, pay more money, or take to the streets."

David Lane, coordinator for the Tenant's Rights Action Centre (TRAC), said the average rent for a single-room suite in the Vancouver area is \$475. "Who's got \$474 if you're a student?"

The welfare rent allowance for a single person in BC is \$209 per month.

The crackdown was prompted by public complaints about inadequate parking, "monster" duplexes and triplexes, and improper health and safety standards.

A public committee in each area will recommend, based on anonymous door-to-door surveys and heated public meetings, whether the city should rezone the sector, or close down its illegal suites.

But critics say the process ignores the drastic lack of low-income housing which, if improved, would make illegal suites unnecessary.

"We have this rather absurd situation of 3/4 of land zoned as

single family housing," said city councillor Libby Davies. "Of course that puts incredible pressure on that land. If you don't allow for something legally, then it's done illegally."

"The housing's out there, we just want to make it legal," said Lane.

According to Lane, most complaints could be dealt with through

separate bylaws. "They could deal with all of the problems without throwing people out on the street."

"Any crackdown on illegal suites benefits big apartment owners... (and) reactionary and racist homeowners who see some ethnic changes in the neighborhood," said Lane.

Heading the city campaign is City Councillor Carole Taylor, who

would like to see secondary suites for family members only.

But Davies says she and several other councillors believe the "family" distinction is unworkable and possibly contravenes the Charter of Rights. "We just think it's immoral for city government to dictate what relationship can exist in a house," said Davies.

A similar bylaw was passed in North Vancouver, but later revoked by the supreme court for being discriminatory.

If passed, Davies says planning department figures show that the "family" clause would mean 80 to 90 per cent of illegal suites would be shut down, leaving the majority of tenants unable to face high rental costs.

"Often it's a pensioner or widow-

er who needs that income, and it's really no problem to anyone else in the area," said Davies.

A representative from an association of private apartment and complex owners says his organization would like to see suites legalized either way, and has no specific lobbying interest.

City permits officials say they have issued about 200 orders so far for landlords to shut down illegal suites.

Council also abolished the closure appeal process, before which 75 per cent of appeals were approved on a one-to-one basis, said Davies.

What remains are "hardship exemptions" granted to students or other low-income people as a 'stay' for one year.



PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CODE OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR
The following changes to the Code were recommended for General Faculties Council approval by the GFC Executive Committee on November 16 and will be considered by GFC on November 30.

1. That Section 30.3.5 (Definition of Sexual Harassment) be changed as follows:

Present wording: No student shall sexually harass another member of the university community.

Amended wording: No student shall sexually harass another

person.
2. That the following statement be reintroduced to the Code immediately preceding Section 30.3, which lists offenses:

Any of the following activities or conduct or attempts thereof or participation therein insofar as they relate to student affairs shall constitute an offense and be punishable.

3. THAT the required number of calendar days in which a hearing must be convened under the "dangerous circumstances provisions" be changed from 14 days to 25 days.

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U of L invites Russell to res

by Mirella Zappone
reprinted from *The Meliorist*
Lethbridge

Over 950 students, faculty and staff have signed a petition inviting Advanced Education Minister Dave Russell to spend 24 hours living in the residence at the University of Lethbridge.

"It's not a petition, but a cordial invitation," said Student Councillor Casey Van der Ploeg.

The invitation asks Russell to "visit the University of Lethbridge for a period of 24 hours in which you will stay at the residence and tour all the facilities and talk to the staff and students in the various disciplines about the effects of the budget cuts on the quality and quantity of education."

The concept for this petition came from U of L student Jake de Peuter. "We set up a table and away we went," explained Van der Ploeg.

The petition was sent to Russell's office on November 19, but there has been no reply as yet, said Van der Ploeg.

Van der Ploeg added that lobbying pressure on the government was not going to stop with the petition. "This is not the only thing that is going to be done. We are not going to stop lobbying the government until we see an increase in funding," he said.

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