

# Former mayors support injection site

Harcourt, Owen and Campbell back Sullivan on keeping Insite open **NEWS A6**

# The Province

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**SECTION B**

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**SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION B**



# Ex-mayors back safe site

BY IAN BAILEY  
POLITICAL REPORTER

Three former Vancouver mayors have set aside political differences to support the Downtown Eastside's safe-injection site, North America's only such facility.

Mike Harcourt, Philip Owen and Larry Campbell plan to appear at a news conference tomorrow to urge the federal Conservative government not to close the operation.

"We don't agree on all issues. Certainly on this one, we do," said Campbell, now a Liberal senator. "This is something we want to continue."

Harcourt, who became an NDP premier after his stint as mayor, agreed.

"[Our unity] shows support right across the political spectrum of people who have dealt with this issue as mayor and chair of the police board," he said.

And Owen says he's eager for the team to make their case, suggesting it will be impassioned and impromptu.

"There's no plan for us to meet and have a script or anything, and I was a little worried about that," he said. "I'm not quite sure what those two guys are going to say."

The trio, recruited by the Insite for Community Safety coalition that supports the operation, plan to sign a letter urging Tories to renew Insite's operating exemption.

A three-year Health Canada



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— *Larry Campbell, former mayor*



**"[Our unity] shows support right across the political spectrum."**

— *Mike Harcourt, former mayor*



**"It's important for everyone to do their part."**

— *Sam Sullivan, Vancouver mayor*



**"There's no plan for us to meet and have a script or anything."**

— *Philip Owen, former mayor*

doses and the spread of disease. Owen said the facts support Insite.

"Talk to Vancouver Coastal Health. Talk to the 50 mayors in the world that have these. They all tell you it works. I can't find one that's closed up because it hasn't worked. It confirms Vancouver because Vancouver has worked."

Owen, who described himself as a Liberal inclined to accept good NDP and Conservative ideas, slammed the Tories for being skittish about harm reduction.

"I hear this old rhetoric of bigoted moral judgment on others coming out of Ottawa now and it just scares me," Owen said.

The Tories have said a decision is pending but have been vague about where they are leaning.

In Whitehorse this week, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said his government will focus on "enforcement, prevention and treatment" in the war on drugs.

Current Mayor Sam Sullivan said he welcomes the backing of his predecessors, suggesting "it's important for everyone to do their part" and that their united position "would be very useful."

"Everybody who feels strongly about this proposal should be communicating that to the federal government," Sullivan told *The Province*.

He said he has advocated for Insite in meetings he has held in Ottawa during three visits to the capital since he became mayor.

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exemption for Insite expires Sept. 12, and there are fears the Tories won't renew it.

That would mean the end of the operation, which allows addicts to take drugs safely, averting over-



# Message to Harper: Save the safe-injection site

I am not someone who uses the safe-injection site. Nor do I have any vested interest in its future, aside from the fact that lives are being saved. It's also a good thing resources are available to help those seeking treatment.

But I am a little afraid that Insite supporters have been taking the wrong route.

Maybe I'm skeptical. But I think pointing out the potential deaths that might occur with Insite's closing may only make the current government more motivated to shut it down.

Looking after those in the lower classes has never been this government's concern.

Indeed, they may now feel they will save twice as much money by shutting it down.

Please, Prime Minister Harper, prove that you are not the way I fear you are, motivated to serve only those who provide financial gain in support of your interests.

*Kristy Bjarnason, Vancouver*

## Milking the system

Addicts and their supporters are part of our human family and are just like children.

When Mom says no, they run to Grandma, who gives them whatever they want.

The actions of love take many forms, not always peaceful and stress-free. Most of us learn the consequences of our actions through love . . . and pain. Addicts have the same lessons to learn.

No doubt there are some benefits to keeping the Insite facility open as well as developing more forms of drug maintenance as a part of rehabilitation. But we should never forget that this is not the solution.

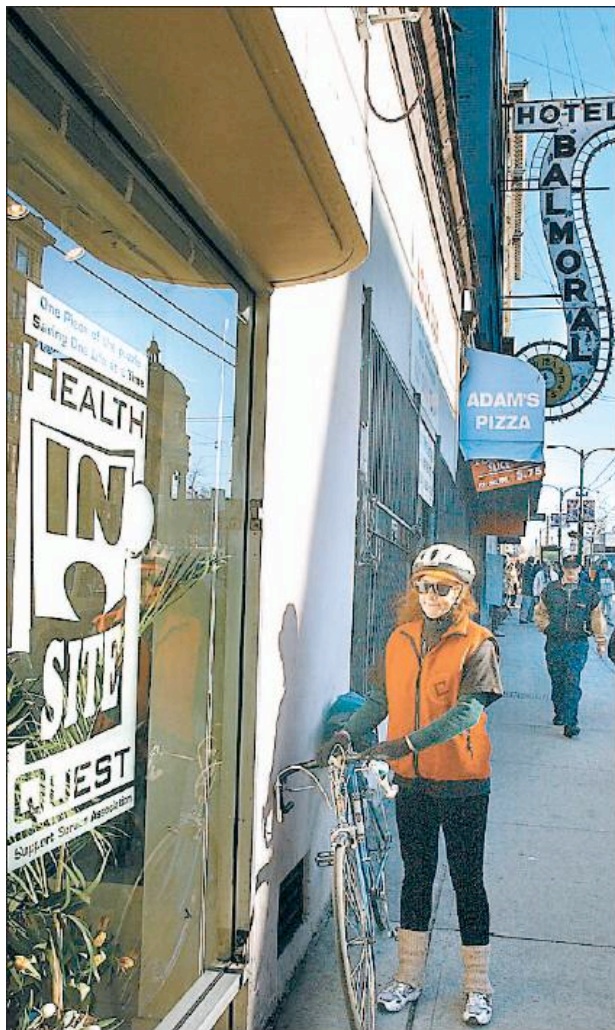
The very nature of addiction and the social non-conformity that leads to addictions will have addicts and functional drug users milking the system for all it's worth, making us also feel like it's the only solution.

*Robert Van de Meeberg, West Vancouver*

## Kudos to Campbell

I would like to thank Premier Gordon Campbell for taking his compassionate and principled stand to keep Vancouver's safe-injection site operating.

He has risen above party



Canada's first safe-injection site for drug users is located on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. LES BAZZO — THE PROVINCE

politics in this matter and deserves credit from all British Columbians for doing so.

Perhaps our prime minister can learn a little from someone more experienced.

*Chuck Beyer, Port Alberni*

## You're in the army now

I have a solution to the problem of young people with nothing to do except beat up law-

abiding citizens.

Introduce conscription. Give these kids a taste of the discipline their parents cannot instill in them. You can be sure the Canadian Forces can.

Canada is at war. With a volunteer army, conscription may soon become a reality to back up the soldiers who put themselves in harm's way to protect all Canadians — including the thugs.

Eighteen months in the Canadian forces would teach these kids all about discipline. With their release from the forces, we would have law-abiding citizens, instead of thugs.

*Brian Cialis, Surrey*

## Enforce the law

I was watching the news and saw that two men were beaten up trying to stop a group of young people from spray-painting their building.

The police tell us not to get involved, for our own safety. The problem with that is the police don't seem to be fixing the problem.

They give these kids a warning and let them move along. But that attitude is only moving the problem around.

People are getting tired of nothing been done. These delinquents just get a slap on the wrist.

When are the police and the courts going to enforce the letter of the law?

*John Archibald, Abbotsford*

## Spotty defence

Only columnist Michael Smyth, the champion of the counter-intuitive, could argue, along with federal Environment Minister Rona Ambrose, that spotted owls don't need habitat protection.

Michael and Rona should return to school to upgrade their science skills. The sad scientific fact is that spotted owls' numbers are decreasing due to ongoing government-sanctioned logging of their habitat here in B.C.

Recent hype about new spotted-owl habitat protection amounts to nothing more than the mother of all public-relations exercises.

Next time Michael, stick to the science, or find some other way to convince us poor readers that day is night and black is white.

*Andy Miller, Vancouver*

## Lazy parents

I am responding to the column by Betsy Hart. Is our society so desperate to know what balanced parenting looks like that we need to heed to the advice of a self-absorbed snob?

Parents need balance when raising their children. To hover over our children and be with them

24/7 doesn't give our children confidence or build self-reliance.

However, to boast about brushing your kids off like coat lint and spending no time with them because they are not mentally riveting is not only pathetic but is a social disaster waiting to happen.

Our communities express outrage at the negative consequences our society experiences when young girls become pregnant and then neglect or abandon their children.

British columnist Helen Kirwan-Taylor is no different.

The trouble with the woman from London Hart writes about is that she is just one person in a growing trend toward lazy parenting.

Kids are not accessories to be raised by the help and to look cute in yearly Christmas photos.

The old saying "you reap what you sow" escapes no one.

Oh well, at least these women will look fabulous when they visit their children in rehab or jail.

*Tara McIntosh, Port Moody*

## Mad-cow detectives

We know exactly where one cow with mad-cow disease is located among the millions and millions of cows in America.

But we haven't got a clue as to where thousands of illegal immigrants and terrorists are located.

Maybe we should put the Department of Agriculture in charge of immigration.

*Robert Sinyard, Burnaby*

## Crab cruelty

How could an agency like the Prince Rupert SPCA, supposedly concerned with animal cruelty and welfare, consider holding such a scandalous event as a crab boil?

Now that the public is outraged, the SPCA has decided to back down. But the damage has been done, and I'm left with a sick feeling that, if they could have got away with it, they would have.

The SPCA has once again given me reason to continue supporting such organizations as the Sea Shepherd Society and Animal Advocates, who truly fight to give a voice to the voiceless.

*Carmina Gooch, North Vancouver*