

Being Poor in a World-Class (Civil) City

Project Civil City is an initiative of Vancouver's Mayor and City Council to address the perceived increase in public disorder. Through a series of roundtable meetings with business and community groups and a web survey, *Project Civil City* identified key components of public disorder and outlined targets for addressing this issue.

The survey and discussions produced the following results:

- public disorder has increased over the past 5 years
- public disorder has diminished the general sense of personal safety
- public disorder has tarnished Vancouver's international reputation
- poor and homeless people are primarily to blame for public disorder

The top 5 public disorder concerns were identified as:

- aggressive panhandling
- open drug use in public places
- sleeping / camping in public places
- excessive garbage as the result of binning
- public urination / defecation

All of these are the direct fallout of the increased poverty and homelessness in the city.

While "root causes" are given limited discussion in *Project Civil City*, the most immediate proposals for addressing these issues of public disorder are:

(a) increased police and private security presence, (b) various mechanisms of public surveillance, and (c) more aggressive by-law enforcement.

THE NET RESULT:

The poor are to blame! The poor are criminalized! The poor are punished!
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BUT WAIT ... the poor are our brothers and sisters!

The only just and moral response is the provision of adequate housing, sufficient income and enhanced support for the poor and homeless among us.
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