

*April 11, 2003*

**Statement from Libby Davies MP, Vancouver East and  
Jenny Kwan MLA, Vancouver Mt. Pleasant.**

**Police Crackdown in the Downtown Eastside**

The Vancouver Police Department's crackdown on drug users in the Downtown Eastside is destructive, divisive and will not accomplish any improvement in the safety and health of this community.

Aggressive enforcement strategies at the street level have been proven not to work. Redeployment of police resources from other areas is also misplaced and increases safety and displacement concerns in these communities.

Based on reports we have received from the community about the confiscation of drugs, intimidation tactics, illegal searches and the use of aggressive police actions against users and non-users, and the violation of people's rights, we believe there should be an inquiry into policing in the Downtown Eastside.

We believe this display of police force is not only short sighted, it is completely counterproductive to all of the goals achieved through public consensus on the 4 pillar approach, adopted by Vancouver City Council and the Vancouver Agreement principles of working together.

We have consistently advocated for policies and programs, such as safe injection sites, heroin and stimulant maintenance programs, and accessible treatment options that respond to the health crisis amongst injection drug users.

We appreciate that Vancouver City Council has turned down the request from the Vancouver Police Department for additional funds now, for the operation it has offensively named Project Torpedo. We urge Council to make it clear that it will not support nor extend this initiative now or in the future. The acknowledged issue at hand is health, not enforcement. When the police hold up a rap sheet of an addict with more than 80 arrests, they provide us with compelling evidence that enforcement does not work. Instead of more police, users need more treatment. Project Torpedo needs to be stopped not reviewed.

We call on all three levels of government to re-focus political efforts to establish safe injection sites, and programs and practices that are proven to reduce disease, death and public use of drugs, to improve the health and safety of users and the community as a whole.