

FRIENDS > OF > THE > WOODWARDS > SQUAT

friends@woodsquat.net > www.woodsquat.net > 604-682-3269 ext. 6315

PRESS KIT

26 OCTOBER 2002

DAY 43

- 1) Statement for the "Give It or Guard It" Press Conference (26 October)
- 2) Summary of Demands (Updated 26 October)
- 3) Transcript of Statement Presented to City Council (22 October)
- 4) Preliminary Inventory of Items Destroyed or Stolen by the Vancouver Police Department on 21-22 September (14 October)
- 5) Contact Information for Groups Involved in the Woodward's Squat (Updated 25 October)
- 6) Summary of Demands of the Woodward's Social Housing Coalition and Anti-Poverty Committee which are endorsed by Friends of the Woodward's Squat
- 7) Letter Intended to Prevent a Third Police Eviction at Woodward's Endorsed by Friends of the Woodward's Squat and Other Groups

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATION OF ANYTHING IN THIS KIT PLEASE CONTACT AARON VIDAVER BY ELECTRONIC MAIL AT <FRIENDS@WOODSQUAT.NET>.

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STATEMENT FOR "GIVE IT OR GUARD IT" PRESS CONFERENCE 26 OCTOBER 2002

Today is day 43 of the Woodward's Squat. The City of Vancouver, BC Housing, the BC Government, and the Federal Government have all refused to even acknowledge the letters sent to them demanding action to resolve the immediate social housing crisis in this city. Friends of the Woodward's Squat presented to the City Council a list of our demands and a preliminary inventory of items destroyed or stolen by Vancouver Police on 21-22 September. We asked them to respond by the close of the business day on 25 October. As we stated to City Council at their meeting on 22 October: if the City failed to act in a timely manner our moderate organization would endorse and proceed with, and actively encourage others to proceed with, more militant participation in the nation-wide Give It or Guard It campaign. Today is 26 October. The City has failed to act and we will wait no longer. We interpret the silence of our governments as a provocation. We are here today to endorse the Give It or Guard It campaign and I would like to announce how our group shall proceed.

First, we shall assist Vancouver's homeless to open up their own social housing units. If they do not have tools for renovation, we will get them tools for renovation. If they require carpenters, plumbers, electricians, we will bring carpenters, plumbers and electricians to them. If they require private security to guard against violent eviction by the police we will be there to assist with safety and to document any unlawful Police or City actions. All levels of government should expect to see these new units of social housing open over the course of the next two months in publicly-owned abandoned buildings in the City of Vancouver.

Second, we shall assist Vancouver's homeless with filing freedom of information requests until all information regarding the involvement of the City Engineering Department in the Police actions of 21-22 September, including the destruction and theft of the possessions of the homeless, is disclosed. We should advise the City that they will be receiving a large quantity of such requests over the next two weeks and additional City staff may have to be hired in order to fulfil these requests.

Third, we shall assist Vancouver's homeless with filing official police complaints and affidavits regarding the unreasonable use of police force during the evictions on 21-22 September, the arrests at the Britannia Daycare and Canadian Tire on 03 October, and the arrests and detainments on 04, 05 & 23 October. We will not cease until The City, through the Mayor's role in the Vancouver Police Board, brings disciplinary action against the Chief Constable for this unreasonable and unlawful use of police force.

Fourth, we shall assist in the documentation of the ongoing daily and nightly harassment of the homeless by the Vancouver Police Department at the Woodward's building especially as it pertains to: (a) the issuing of verbal threats; and (b) the misuse of police vehicles. We cannot prevent the VPD from engaging in unlawful harassment, detainment or arrest of the residents but at least we can document it for the courts if the City refuses to put a stop to it.

Finally, we shall assist the Woodward's Social Housing Coalition and the other community groups involved in the Woodward's Squat to the achieve their goals. We shall pursue this with persistence and with all the material resources that are available to us--which are considerable--until we win.

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SUMMARY OF DEMANDS TO THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

UPDATED 26 OCTOBER 2002

- 1. The City must disclose all information regarding the involvement of the Engineering Department in the Police actions of 21-22 September 2002 including the destruction of the possessions of Vancouver's homeless.**
- 2. The City, through the Mayor's role in the Vancouver Police Board, must bring immediate disciplinary action against Chief Constable Jamie Graham for his unreasonable use of police force during the evictions on 21-22 September, the arrests at the Britannia Daycare and Canadian Tire on 03 October, and the arrests and detainments on 04, 05 & 23 October.**
- 3. The City must direct the VPD to cease the ongoing daily and nightly harassment of the homeless at the Woodward's building especially as it pertains to: (a) the issuing of verbal threats; and (b) the misuse of police vehicles. The City must prevent the VPD from engaging in any further unlawful harassment, detainment or arrest of the residents at Woodward's.**
- 4. The City must acknowledge and act upon in a timely fashion the demands of the Woodward's Social Housing Coalition and the other community groups involved in the Woodward's Squat insofar as these demands are within the City's area of functional responsibility.**

ELABORATIONS UPON THESE DEMANDS WILL BE POSTED TO ONLINE ON OR BEFORE 30 OCTOBER. THEY WILL INCLUDE BACKGROUND REPORTS WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE REGARDING SPECIFIC INCIDENTS.

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STATEMENT PRESENTED TO VANCOUVER CITY COUNCIL 22 OCTOBER 2002

Good Afternoon. My name is Aaron Vidaver and I am here as a delegate of the Friends of the Woodward's Squat. I am also a member of the committee of the Woodward's Coalition for Social Housing which is responsible for the Woodward's 58 Legal Defense Fund and the legal suit currently being prepared against the Vancouver City Police Department for destroying the personal possessions of the homeless camped on Abbott Street on 22 September. Friends of the Woodward's Squat is a support group that provided assistance with supplies and garbage removal during the inside occupation of the building and now assists residents with material support on the outside. We do not represent the Squat and receive no public funding, directly or indirectly, from any government agency. We do publish a daily newsletter called *W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T.* and maintain a web site at www.woodsquat.net. I've brought issue #17 which contains a preliminary inventory of items destroyed or stolen by the Vancouver Police Department on 21 & 22 of September of this year. While our organization has not had time to review Policy Report RTS No. 03026, released to the public just five days ago on 17 October, we believe that the housing crisis in the downtown eastside requires immediate attention. This crisis must be addressed by the City by 25 October in conjunction with the BC Government and BC Housing. An immediate political solution is required and this must occur prior to any deliberation over the logistics of the long-term redevelopment of the building and the volume of co-operative public housing that will exist inside it. There are an average of 157 homeless people living at the Woodward's Squat per day. Tomorrow is Day 40: Seven days inside, 33 days outside. Day 40 of the Woodward's Squat. The leaves began falling from the trees two days ago. Our citizens and residents must not be left on the street in dangerous alleys and in dangerous parks this winter. We expect you, Council, to announce what you, Council, are going to do about it by the end of the business day on 25 October. That's this Friday. If you fail to act by this time, our moderate organization will endorse and proceed with, and actively encourage others to proceed with, more militant participation in the nation-wide "Give It or Guard It" campaign. This is our first demand. We have three other demands. First: We demand that the City disclose all information regarding the involvement of the Engineering Department in the Police actions of 22 September. The City worked in conjunction with the VPD to destroy the possessions of Vancouver's homeless—blankets, pants, shirts, socks, shoes, jackets, IDs, medications, diaries, food—you can read our preliminary inventory list for yourselves, if you can stomach it. We can't and we won't. Second—and this is a multi-part demand—We demand that the City, through the Mayor's role in the Vancouver Police Board, bring immediate disciplinary action against Jamie Graham for his unreasonable use of police force in the evictions of 21-22 September, the police action at the Britannia Daycare on 03 October and the detainment of arrestees at the Canadian Tire parking lot at 1400 East Hastings that same day, as well as the subsequent targetting, harassment and arrest of citizens involved in the Britannia demonstration, on the following days, 04 and 05 October. We demand that the ongoing harassment of the Woodward's homeless cease immediately: in particular the misuse of police vehicles to intimidate the homeless at night. We demand to know who ordered the police action on the afternoon of 20 October when 11 VPD motorcycle officers stopped on Abbott Street and yelled threats about "moving day," to name but one example. Our homeless population in Vancouver now lives in fear of police violence during the day as well as during the night. This must end. You can stop it. We demand that you stop it. Our third demand is that you recognize and act upon in a timely fashion the entirely reasonable demands of the Woodward's Coalition for Social Housing, the Anti-Poverty Committee and the 17 other community groups involved in the Woodward's Squat insofar as those demands are within your area of functional responsibility.

We will win.

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PRELIMINARY INVENTORY OF ITEMS DESTROYED OR STOLEN BY POLICE (Reprinted from *W.O.O.D.S.Q.U.A.T.* #17 October 14, 2002)

This is the first part of an inventory of items stolen or destroyed by the Vancouver Police after the inside eviction of the Squat on Saturday 21 September & the outside "cleansing" conducted on Sunday 22 September. It is nowhere near complete.

Two aluminum 30'-40' ladders
Red first aid kit (\$250 value)
Five (5) large tarps (\$100 value each)
Four (4) large banners (Social Housing or Nothing, Woodward is Not For Sale, Our Home and Native Land, Sovereign Territory)
Two (2) bullhorns
Coffee maker, 8-cup
Seven (7) canvas folding chairs
Eight (8) air mattresses
Swiss-army knife with 8 tools
Two (2) rolls of 400 ISO film with undeveloped photographs of inside the squat
Carrying bag with document
Two (2) tents
Cell phone; Cell phone charger
Battery for video camera
Formal clothes for court (pants and shirt)
Miter saw (Delta)
Table saw (Craftsman)
Framing nailer (Tech)
Portable compressor and hose
Two (2) foldable construction tables
Skill saw (Shill)
Tool bucket with miscellaneous tools: hammers, screwdrivers, pliers, small hand tools
Two extension cords (50' yellow & red)
Boxes of screws & nails
Two (2) battery drills (9.6v Dewalt) with charger & extra battery
Fido phone black & grey and holder (#771-1408)
Pager Telus (#645-7050)
BCID; BC Health card
Sleeping bag (black & blue, waterproof, mummy-style, value \$150)
California King mattress, beige
Quilt blanket, medium dark blue solid colour
Four (4) pairs of jeans
Six (6) shirts
Big bag, clear
Sports socks, grey and white, numerous pairs
Sleeping bag, black nylon, arctic style
Mattress, multicoloured
Green dark blanket (large)
Terry-type cloth
Blanket - soft texture XL
Fall/winter jacket (woman's)
Cotton blend brown Khaki multi coloured designer jacket, thigh length and hood & wooden buttons
Stereo system
Two (2) Strathcrome sketch pads - green 16x24 & 8x11
Pastel set; Air brush; Badger
Five (5) pairs white sport socks
Green mattress, hospital-type with handles
Sleeping bag
Coleman summer type range without hood
Coat - black, parka-type, nylon with zipper waist length
Wool grey hat, long type
Large mattress with light blue solid colour
Red tan and black coloured pack with black Converse shoes tied to it
Backpack, silver and black with band names written on it
Skateboard
Mattress with white blue and yellow flowers
Sleeping bag

Green pillow; Four (4) blankets
Purse with wallet containing business cards & appointment book, \$5 in change, phone book, Guns & Roses patch, System of a Down patch
Care Card; Social Insurance Card
Five (5) markers
Black pants
Plastic bag with pair of wide large jeans and black shirt
Mattress, black & blue, full sized
Two (2) wool blankets, large, grey with sewn borders
Down comforter, white
Vial of pacholi oil
Ring, claw-type, silver, size 11
Two (2) glass-blown pipes
Hammock, natural hemp
Blanket, creme blue & yellow with borders
Wool cloth; Cotton blanket; Ukranian print, pink blue & dusty rose
Queen-sized cream mattress
Wedding band, male, 18k gold size 10.5
Burgundy plaid blanket; Cotton comforter
Pastel green-pink-tan-white cotton comforter
Two (2) brown blankets
Fleece cloth
Two (2) pillows, one feather, one poly with matching cases
Large mag-light flashlight
Stereo with two speakers (from kitchen)
White teddy bear
Double-yellow blue & flowered mattress
Pair of blue denim jeans size 36 waist / 32 leg, women's Wranglers
Skateboard with stickers on bottom and tan-yellow wheels, red & silver trucks, top has yellow strip
Address book; Personal diary
Four (4) brand-new CC batteries
Two-person tent, brown nylon
Camping mattress & foam
Sleeping bag, bright red with hood, cotton blend
Red comforter, embroidered & solid on one side, nylon & cotton blend
Two (2) pairs of mens Levis jeans 34/32; 3 T-shirts
Five (5) pairs sports socks
Battery-operated alarm clock
BCID; Birth certificate; Status card; SIN card; Bank card; Care Card
Green & black sleeping bag, nylon, waterproof, felt inside hood
Two (2) blankets, black
Blue pillow; Nailbar; Blanket
Framing hammer
Multi-screwdriver
Hammer
Black backpack (Mtn Equipment Coop)
Journal; Metal sieve; Cell phone
Pants; Shirt
Miscellaneous tools
Propane stove (Thunder Range) [case was returned but range missing]
Black headphones
Black windproof jacket, pockets containing dried sage, documents and ID, sunglasses.
New Arctic Holofoil sleeping bag
Various tools: allen keys, screwdriver, nailbar
Coleman propane lantern
Black duffel bag
Green & black sleeping bag
Black & blue gortex waist jacket (Mtn Equipment Coop)
Blue & green cordless drill
Grey waterproof work coat
Hilfiger underwear
Wallet
Jeans; T-shirt
Blue down-filled sleeping bag
Brown soft leather jacket
Drum
Small mattress
New shop vac
Personal documents and journal
Garabaldi hiking shoes (\$250 value)
Storm Fighter reflector pants, orange with yellow strips
Blue Optimus camp stove
Blue flashlight, rubber exterior
Electronic alarm clock
Office desk

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CONTACT INFORMATION FOR GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE WOODWARDS SQUAT UPDATED 25 OCTOBER

The Woodward's Squat

Corner of Abbott & Hastings Vancouver (open 24 hrs)

Donations & supplies for ongoing support may be taken directly to the reception desk.
Please park on the east side of Abbott to avoid obstructing flow of traffic.

Woodwards Social Housing Coalition

Box 30 - 16 West Hastings Street Vancouver V6B 1G4

604-681-6686

Contact the negotiating committee for additional info on demands. Financial donations for ongoing maintenance of the squat should be mailed to the Coalition.

Anti-Poverty Committee

42 Blood Alley Square Vancouver V6B 1C7

604-682-2726 | Fax 604-687-4347 | apc@resist.ca

Contact APC for info on the "Give It or Guard It" campaign demands or to donate to the legal fund for the people arrested during the Britannia Police Riot of 03 October.

Friends of the Woodward's Squat

604-682-3269 ext. 6315 | friends@woodsquat.net | www.woodsquat.net

FWS publishes a daily newsletter & internet site. A preliminary inventory of items destroyed by the VPD is posted on site along with evidentiary documents pertaining to police violence, interviews with squatters, a chronology with links to photographs & more. FWS is a material support group & does not represent the squat.

Woodwards Legal Defense Fund

Box 21552 - 1850 Commercial Drive Vancouver V5N 5T5

604-682-3269 ext. 9909 | woodwards-legal-defense@resist.ca

Donations to support the legal defense of the residents arrested on 21 September and legal matters arising from the subsequent police action on 22 September may be sent to this address. Cheques should be payable to "Woodwards Legal Defence Fund." The committee responsible for the administration of this fund reports to the Woodward's Social Housing Coalition and is accountable to that organization.

SELECTED ADDITIONAL CONTACTS & LINKS

Woodwards Squat Native Caucus <livingstonechris@yahoo.com>

Western Aboriginal Representation Society <jackatease@yahoo.com>

Collective Opposed to Police Brutality <<http://resist.ca/~copb-van>>

Pivot Legal Society <www.pivotlegal.org>

Keeping Time <www.geocities.com/emithsilas> [A history of squatting in Vancouver]

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty <www.ocap.ca> [responsible for coordination of Give It campaign in Ontario]

La Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistes <claclogement@yahoo.ca> [responsible for campaign in Quebec]

El Pachungo <elpachungo@hotmail.com> [responsible for coordination of Give It campaign in Halifax]

Squ@t!net <www.squat.net> [Information on squatting in an international context]

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS VISIT OUR WEB PAGE.

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DEMANDS OF THE WOODWARDS SOCIAL HOUSING COALITION AND ANTI-POVERTY COMMITTEE WHICH ARE ENDORSED BY FRIENDS OF THE WOODWARDS SQUAT

WOODWARDS SOCIAL HOUSING COALITION DEMANDS

1. Develop Woodward as social housing immediately. (There must be an allotment of housing in the building for aboriginal people equal to or greater than the percentage of aboriginal people in the Downtown Eastside.)
2. Reverse the cuts to social housing and all social services.
3. Draft a civic anti-vacancy by-law to seize and convert empty, abandoned buildings into social housing.
4. Full disclosure of all information regarding the proposed sale and development of the building.
5. The Federal government must fund and support the development of aboriginal business in the proposed commercial storefronts on the ground floor of Woodward. These storefronts must also include an urban native self-governing office with drop-in / support services and culturally sensitive native liason workers from the community.
6. Decent and dignified immediate shelter for all homeless squatters forced from Woodward and asked to leave the sidewalk in front of the building.

HOUSING DEMANDS FROM THE ANTI-POVERTY COMMITTEE

1. The Federal and Provincial Governments must begin funding social housing immediately and build over 2000 units of housing a year in B.C.
2. The City must develop an anti-vacancy by-law to seize and convert privately owned abandoned buildings and property into social housing.
3. The Province and the City must develop rent controls to ensure that no one pays over thirty percent of their income to housing.
4. The Province must re-open all closed Residential Tenancy Offices and make no changes to the Residential Tenancy Act that would diminish the rights of renters.
5. Develop the Woodward building into social housing immediately and respect the rest of the demands of the Woodward Social Housing Coalition.

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LETTER INTENDED TO PREVENT A THIRD POLICE EVICTION AT WOODWARDS ENDORSED BY FRIENDS OF THE WOODWARDS SQUAT AND OTHER GROUPS

For a complete list of organizations endorsing this letter contact the Anti-Poverty Committee.

We the undersigned are writing this letter to support the Woodward's Squatters in their struggle for social housing and social justice. In response to recent statements made by Chief Constable Jamie Graham and others, we would like to make four points that he and others need to understand, if they truly want to achieve a peaceful resolution to the situation.

1. There are over 150 homeless people camped in front of Woodward's.

Squatters and their supporters have been keeping count of the numbers and origins of the people sleeping outside, and we know that the overwhelming majority of Squatters are homeless and in need of housing. We know that it is one of the most peaceful blocks in the Downtown Eastside.

2. We oppose the police attacking homeless people.

The Vancouver Police Department should spend their time and money policing real violent crimes that go on in our city every day. Should they attempt a violent solution to this political crisis, they will only provoke a public backlash and entrench hostility to the police. Both times that the police have used force and violence, it failed to deter people from continuing, and failed to shift public support and opinion away from the Squatters.

3. We oppose the eviction of homeless Natives from unceded Native land.

We are all living on Coast Salish land, a people that have signed no treaty to extinguish their sovereignty over the land. Over one third of the people sleeping around the building are homeless Native men and women. This should not be surprising given the high levels of aboriginal poverty in the DTES, Vancouver and Canada as a whole.

4. We demand decent and dignified housing for all.

Winter shelters are an inadequate response to homelessness. Shelters are, by themselves, just a Band-Aid. Winter shelters are simply a Band-Aid on a Band-Aid. We the undersigned demand that the Police do not attempt any removal of homeless people camped around the Woodward's building without finding decent and dignified housing for all of them.