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Subject : An open letter to the COPE membership
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An open appeal to the COPE membership as well as Council and Parks Board from the homeless aboriginal people in CRAB Park.

We take this opportunity to appeal to COPE to delay the upcoming injunction hearing for one week.

It is a fundamental right in civilized democracy that all citizens have equal representation before the law.

Today this right is being shoved aside by the COPE dominated parks board. The poor and homeless in the CRAB Park Squat have managed to acquire the pro bono services of lawyer Marjorie Brown. Over the past two weeks she has prepared to represent the homeless against a city-initiated injunction before the courts and the city's legal council, but will not be allowed to present her case on our behalf.

Because Ms. Brown is not available to appear before this court on the date selected by the city, we are requesting that the parks board instruct city legal council to seek a delay of one week. This is a right they are aware they have, yet it is an option they have instructed the city's legal council to avoid using. As people who supported the call for the reinstatement of legal aid for the poor, we are sure that the COPE council and membership agree that it would be a manipulative abuse of social justice for the parks board to deny the homeless the right to equal legal representation.

Our request is not for an abandoning of the charges. We only ask for a one week postponement. We welcome our chance to make our case, through legal council, for the right of homeless aboriginal people to encamp upon their own land. We only ask that this board and council make the playing field level. We do not have the personal capacity or knowledge to fight the city's high paid law office without access to our own legal council.

For this social democratic body to do anything but honour our request would be against all social democratic principles and would only be about the on-going exploitation and abuse of the poor by those in power.

Regardless of the outcome of this request we will continue to battle for social justice and will continue to stand up against any body which chooses to fight rather than negotiate and compromise.

I am saddened that COPEs' elected officials have chosen this fight. We offered an olive branch, inviting the Council and Parks Board to sit down and talk. In

response we received only injunctive notices.

As supporters of COPE and as social activists we give the Cope membership the promise that we will continue to fight for social justice wherever the fight presents itself.

Please join us as we fight to peacefully restore social justice within COPEs elected bodies.

If you believe, as we do, that the denial of civil liberties and legal representation for the homeless is in direct contravention of the philosophies of COPE and is against everything that you as a COPE member stand for, please act in solidarity with the homeless of CRAB Park by contacting all elected COPE officials by phone or e-mail and letting them know that you believe they should immediately delay the injunction hearing for one week.

Please help us continue this struggle for social democracy by attending the upcoming COPE Executive and parks board meetings.

In Solidarity;
Jim Leyden
Negotiator