

December 12/02

Dear Mayor and Council,

Welcome to office. We understand that many of you had a hand in ensuring that the City did not move on the enforcement order over the past four days. Thank you. We also appreciate your intervention and will remember that you did this for the residents of the Woodward's Squat. We hope that you will continue to exercise discretion regarding the enforcement order and that you will complete the negotiation process in good faith. We are also expecting you hold the City of Vancouver responsible for any police action at the Woodward's Squat. In order that the City may provide decent and dignified housing for everyone remaining on the street.

We however recognize that you have both stalled and ignored the real issues surrounding the struggle for decent and dignified housing for people and are only inclined to act on this due to the growing public support and open public criticism on your position on social housing. The housing crisis in Vancouver is a systemic crisis. The Woodward's Squat is only the most visible manifestation of this crisis. And while we are seeking a just resolution to the Woodward's Squat, we also expect that the newly elected council will adequately address the housing crisis on a systemic level as well.

In regards to the Woodward's struggles in particular, However, we as a Legal Defense committee dedicated to bringing justice to all people involved in the Woodward's housing struggle, will be pursuing Civil claims against the City of Vancouver for wrongful destruction of people's property on September 22/02. We will be pursuing Civil claims against the Vancouver Police Department in respect to police brutality and destruction of people's property by the Vancouver Police Department on the morning of September 21/02 and the evening of September 22/02. We feel your role as newly elected council belongs in supporting the Woodward's defendants and applying pressure to the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Police Department to settle fairly and substantially with the Woodward's defendants in the BC law court.

We recommend the following remedies:

1. The City should issue a written apology to the residents of the Woodward's Squat for the destruction of their possessions by Engineering Services on Sunday 22 September;
2. The City should take disciplinary action against the senior manager in Engineering Services who ordered the destruction; and
3. The City should provide fair compensation for the destruction of these possessions. Our preliminary inventory of items destroyed by the City was distributed to Mayor and Council at your meeting on 22 October. Inquiries regarding property destruction and the process of providing fair compensation should be directed to the Woodward's Legal Defense Committee at <woodwards-legal-defense@lists.resist.ca>.
4. The City should commit to settling financially with Woodward's defendants in Court.
5. The City should commit to the safety and the human rights of the people they represent here in Vancouver by pressuring the Vancouver Police Department to be accountable in court to the Woodward's defendants on the matter of property destruction and police brutality. It is unfortunate that the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Police Department haven't taken responsibility for, or offered compensation and apologies for, the treatment of people at the Woodward's site on Sept. 21 and 22. We as the Legal Committee would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with the new Mayor and Council.

Woodwards Legal Defense Committee