



September 7, 2011

Chief Jim Chu
Vancouver Police Department
Vancouver, BC

VIA FAX: 604-665-3417

Dear Sir:

RE: Stanley Cup Riot in Vancouver

I write you in my role as President of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association concerning comments attributed to you and your department in the media and in the Vancouver Police Department internal review in relation to the Game 7 Stanley Cup riot in Vancouver.

Immediately following the Stanley Cup riot in Vancouver, our organization congratulated your force for restraint in its operations in what must have been a very challenging policing environment. We stand by that assessment. Following the riot, you and the Chair of the Police Board were reported as putting blame where it certainly appeared to us to belong, saying: "We had a small number of hooligans, basically, on the streets of Vancouver causing problems."

More recently, however, in the wake of reports criticizing the deployment of adequate resources to that event, we understand that you have proposed a ban on all major events that attract young people. In particular, the following quotation was attributed to you in the Globe and Mail on September 7, 2011:

When you attract a certain demographic, that's when the radar has to go on and we have to say, 'Look, given the number of people that were going to be attracted to this particular event, we're going to have to think twice about whether we want to have it.'

This concept was repeated in a report on the riot released yesterday by your department:

[The VPD recommends the city] not have large scale public events with 'festival seating/standing' that concentrate large crowds of young persons - particularly the young 'hooligan' demographic - who have the propensity for drinking in a small area.

With respect to these comments, we write to point out that it is not acceptable to blame all young people for the actions of a lawless few. Many people were downtown for Game 7, and indeed, many were young. However, a year earlier, many people gathered peacefully downtown for Canada's gold medal win in 2010, and many of those people were young. That event was, as you know, riot free. We note further that many young people gather without rioting every weekend on Granville Street in downtown Vancouver.

For that matter, we rightly trust law enforcement to many young officers who police events wearing VPD or RCMP uniforms. Almost one in five police officers are under 30 years old. The issue about policing major events has always been ensuring that sufficient numbers of police officers are present so that order may be maintained. Again, this issue does not appear to be related to age.

The Vancouver Police Department has itself engaged in outreach to youth that involves encouraging them to gather together for recreational and social purposes and deserves credit for that. Some of those programs involve encouraging groups of youth to assemble, including, for example, for sporting events.

The Vancouver Police Athletic League is one example;¹ the Vancouver Police Basketball Association is another.² The latter involves, as part of its activities, a tournament described as "the largest high school participation tournament in North America, featuring a 16 team boy's draw, a 16 team girl's draw, an aboriginal draw, a wheelchair draw and a cheerleading competition." Eastside Aboriginal Space for Youth (the "EASY" program) is yet another and involves police sponsoring programs and events, both recreational and social, for young people on the eastside of Vancouver.³

It is passing strange that the Vancouver Police Department would sponsor large sporting events for youth and encourage them to gather together for social purposes and yet would make the statements noted at the outset of this letter.

As you know, British Columbia's human rights code prohibits discrimination based on age. That applies to providing any service, including policing services and access to public celebrations. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms also protects against discrimination based on age, and protects mobility rights to move about freely, in addition to rights of peaceful assembly.

¹ <http://vancouver.ca/police/community-policing/youth-outreach/police-athletic-league.html>

² <http://vancouver.ca/police/community-policing/youth-outreach/basketball-association.html>

³ <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/ythgng/cpa12-vpdwgp-eng.aspx>

We will strongly object to the city or police trying to eliminate public gatherings by youth or young people in Vancouver, as such restrictions would be illegal, but just as importantly, would be a reactionary and inappropriate response to what appears to us to be a logistical and police procedure-related issue. Your department successfully, in our opinion, policed hundreds of thousands of people of all ages, but many of whom were young, during major crowd operations over the 2010 Olympic period without significant incident. Your department properly claimed success for these efforts.

We agreed with you then, and we remind you now, that public safety and security concerns ought to be addressed through common sense and deployment of properly trained police officers in appropriate numbers. Basing the refusal of an event license on the age of the anticipated audience is unacceptable, and age-based proposals are a distraction from the issues that the department will need to address to minimize the risk of this type of incident taking place in the future.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Holmes", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Robert Holmes, Q.C.
President