

The Editor  
The Record  
New Westminster

Re: NDP not blameless, The Record, January 6, 2010

It is unfortunate that people play politics while "Rome burns". It is a fact that Dr. Nigel Murray, CEO of Fraser Health Authority is authorizing cuts to services in New Westminster that will have devastating and wide ranging effects on our residents. It makes no difference whether those cuts are outlined in an opinion piece by Dawn Black, NDP MLA or Kevin Falcon, Liberal MLA. While politics are played, people suffer.

The President of the Purpose Society recently wrote a letter to the editor outlining how the Fraser Health Authority is slashing the annual budget of the Stride Program from \$160,000 to \$68,000. This is the only local community program providing services to people positive for HIV and Hepatitis C. This program serves the most vulnerable, marginalized and under-resourced citizens in the community. Currently, there are 165 clients receiving service on a weekly basis. Many of them are homeless, marginally housed, unemployed, active in their addiction and/or mentally ill. It is fair to say that this program keeps people alive.

To my knowledge, there has not been a single letter to the editor acknowledging that slashing this program will have serious effects. No one has called Purpose to ask "What can I do to ensure that all residents of New Westminster have their basic needs met". By basic needs, we are not talking about 'eating cake'. We are talking about a place to get warm do your laundry, get some food in your belly, have someone help you to find shelter and, perhaps, provide a bit of comfort.

Please, New Westminster, let's stop attacking one another and start a conversation about what these cuts mean to the people who are affected by them. Let's talk about whether a CEO of a Health Region should be making \$466,00 plus benefits to cut our essential services.

You can contact to Purpose Society at 604 526 2522 for more information or to begin a conversation.

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The Purpose Society