

No, BC Actually Mentored Saskatchewan's Poor-Bashing

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, March 11, 2016

<http://politicsrespun.org/2016/03/no-bc-actually-mentored-saskatchewan-poor-bashing/>



Despite being Metro News, Emily Jackson's great piece yesterday [below] about how brutally cruel the Saskatchewan government is should make us mindful of a number of issues.

Not the least of which is that the neoliberal Saskatchewan Party has been photocopying many of the worst of BC's regressive and anti-social policies.

That makes the BC Liberal government Saskatchewan's poor-bashing mentor.

Let's re-spin this piece and explore some key context, then work up some solutions!

1. In Saskatchewan there's a lot of racism and classism and discrimination against the poor and those with mental health issues. BC too.
2. 1 in 7 people in Saskatchewan is aboriginal.
3. In Saskatchewan, the police have been known to drive aboriginals out of town to dump them on the outskirts of town. In the winter. There are even jovial nicknames for that little jaunt.
4. Saskatchewan has cut funding to shelters. So has BC. It's called poorbashing. People, after all, should pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Because, after all, we are all born with equal opportunity to succeed in life! [Myth, as you know.]
5. The BC premier is an opportunistic liar when it comes to the 2 men the Saskatchewan Party put on a bus with a one-way ticket to BC: "Wherever they are in Canada, we should be supporting them... if they decide to come to British Columbia, we're going to support them in that." There are hundreds of thousands of stories of people in BC who are being degraded, de-funded, insulted and left to dangle in the wind from almost 15 years of cuts to social programs. Perhaps she thinks these men from the bus can work in LNG because that's mythical as the BC Liberal Party social conscience.
6. A Vancouver city councillor is deluded if he really believes his own words, that he "hopes Saskatchewan will **look to British Columbia** and Vancouver for how to properly treat people who need low barrier shelters." Vancouver has a dismal record of actually contending with

homelessness and inadequate housing. And if he really believes that anyone should look to the BC government for how to deal with the poor, he's at best disingenuous. But then he shows his weakening credibility: "We're a humane and just society here in Vancouver, and **certainly our province is as well.**" Jang said. "You just don't treat people that way." BC treats its vulnerable populations hideously. Our province is a train wreck.

Solutions Time!

1. The same Vancouver councillor is right in calling for a national homelessness strategy, and far far [more robust than this insult](#).
2. We also need a [poverty reduction plan](#) in BC.
3. We also need [living wage legislation](#) in BC.
4. We need a housing authority in Vancouver, [like Whistler has](#).
5. We also need a [national poverty strategy](#).
6. And a [national housing strategy](#).
7. This isn't really all that difficult. #1-6 indicate some intentional planning, based on sincerity and integrity and actual concern to ensure that people in a rich country like Canada don't have to live in squalor.
8. Which brings us to #8. Welcome, #8! Canadians are ignorant or oblivious or criminally indifferent to the squalor we have created over generations on reserves and for off-reserve first peoples. We are content with their inadequate housing, untreated mental health disorders and addictions, pathetic healthcare and education, insufficient physical and social infrastructure, and a myriad of other socio-economic problems reminiscent of 21st century failed states. And you won't see any comments on this piece about how they just need to pull themselves up by their...bootstraps. I'll just delete them upon submission. So there's that.
9. Oh, and we also need the post-carbon energy infrastructure transition to ramp up to 11 now because delaying will create climate chaos that will exacerbate all the socio-economic problems above, and many more.

Ultimately, we can simply coordinate our ample brain power, increasing tax base and will to create a just and equitable Canada for everyone.

And if that isn't compelling enough for you because it's the right thing to do, imagine if you weren't born who you were. Imagine you were born lacking the socio-economic entitlements you have and you lived in communities like I mentioned in #8. Bad luck, eh.

If you have the neurons to even just imagine that, then ask yourself, shouldn't you be advocating for public policy that would provide people with the best shot at a good life on the off chance that you would have been born into a vulnerable community? After all, all humans deserve an equal chance to have a good life, and not be born into deprivation, right?

And if the answer is no, it's probably because you weren't and you're ok enjoying your entitlements while others born into vulnerability can just rot.

There's a word for that kind of person. Many words, even.

[B.C. will help two homeless men sent west by Saskatchewan government: Premier Christy Clark](#)

Vancouver councillor Kerry Jang said the Saskatchewan government "should be ashamed" for buying two homeless men one-way bus tickets to B.C.

By: [Emily Jackson](#) Metro Published on Wed Mar 09 2016

British Columbia Premier Christy Clark said the province should and will help the two homeless men en route to the west coast after the Saskatchewan government bought them one-way bus tickets to B.C., where neither had social services lined up.

Saskatchewan's ministry of social services spent \$500 on B.C.-bound bus tickets for the two First Nations men instead of helping them at home, where their local shelter recently faced funding cuts, the [Saskatoon Star Phoenix reported](#) Wednesday.

According to the newspaper, one man has family in Victoria and one, a 21-year-old who struggles with mental health problems, doesn't know a soul in Vancouver, his final destination. The men embarked from North Battleford, Sask. Tuesday night, but it's not clear whether they arrived in B.C.

Regardless, Clark said the province stands ready to help, adding that B.C.'s strong economy is attracting a variety of people.

“I think everybody in British Columbia would say we want to support people with serious mental illness and we want to make sure they get the care that they need,” Clark told reporters.

“Wherever they are in Canada, we should be supporting them... if they decide to come to British Columbia, we're going to support them in that.”

Vancouver Coun. Kerry Jang, who is also a psychiatry professor at UBC who researches mental illness, said this story shows homelessness is a problem across Canada, not just in major centres, and called for a national homelessness strategy. Meanwhile, he hopes Saskatchewan will look to British Columbia and Vancouver for how to properly treat people who need low barrier shelters.

“To treat two human beings that way, slapping them on the bus, one reportedly with mental health issues, to send them off into the night, is absolutely disgusting,” Jang said.

“I hope Saskatchewan learns from this and says we've got to invest in our social services and get people the best care to get them on their feet again, not push it off and hope fate will take care of them.”

The [Star Phoenix](#) reported that Saskatchewan social workers have the discretion to buy people bus tickets, usually to join family, but it is not typical. The government announced Wednesday it will review the case.

Vancouver's annual homeless count takes place Wednesday night to Thursday morning. If volunteers meet either man, they will offer help.

“We’re a humane and just society here in Vancouver, and certainly our province is as well,” Jang said. “You just don’t treat people that way.”