



Lessons Learned and Recommendations from the 2011 Vancouver Stanley Cup Playoffs Riot: Independent Review Report Released

Vancouver, September 01, 2011 -- The report of the June 15, 2011 Vancouver Stanley Cup Playoff Riot was tabled today by its authors, Douglas J. Keefe, QC and John Furlong, OC, OBC. Titled "*The Night the City Became a Stadium: Independent Review of the 2011 Vancouver Stanley Cup Playoffs Riot*", the report and its 53 recommendations are the first comprehensive independent examination of the riot and the changes needed to help ensure safe and enjoyable civic celebrations in the future.

Following a set mandate (see background below), the authors conclude that recommendations from a report on a 1994 hockey riot have been respected, largely adapted and implemented. The report provides a detailed chronology of events for the night of June 15th and analyzes the planning and the execution of those plans by the City of Vancouver (CoV) and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). This analysis points to significant challenges and planning misses and also notes the heroic effort made to bring the riotous behaviour under control. The report also paints a grim picture of how excessive alcohol fuelled the evening providing it with a reckless energy.

Key report key findings and confirmations include:

- The 155,000-person downtown crowd contained in an extremely compressed space was significantly larger and arrived hours earlier than civic and police personnel had planned for, making it extremely difficult to manage the venue as planned; security efforts were overwhelmed.
- Alcohol consumption was unbridled and fuelled the event creating unsafe and unpredictable behavior that led to the riot and significant criminal behaviour.
- Police plans and budgets were prepared with no political influence or interference.
- The number of police officers on duty began at 446 and eventually reached 928 at full deployment.
- Plans developed by the VPD evolved throughout the playoffs and included broad regional cooperation among police agencies; however compatibility issues with equipment, training and tactics hampered the effectiveness of those on the front line.

In their 53 recommendations, Keefe and Furlong outline the changes needed to significantly reduce the risk of a repeat event, with particular emphasis on security and event planning and execution. The report also addresses how media, social media, volunteers, Translink, E-COMM, the Vancouver Canucks, the National Hockey League and the public all have key roles to play to achieve a more positive outcome at future celebrations.

Key report recommendations include:

1) Public Safety

- The police and fire services across the region, together with BC Ambulance, E-Comm and Translink should together, and under the leadership of the Minister of Public Safety if necessary, develop a framework for mutual aid that can be adapted for regional events.
- When an event is deemed to be a regional event, there should be a 'regional event public safety plan' and it should contain mutual aid elements.
- The RCMP tactical troop and VPD public order unit should train together and develop common tactics they can use as a unit during joint operations.

2) Major Event Planning and Staging

- The CoV, working with multiple partners typically involved in helping to deliver major events of regional interest, should become cooperative joint sponsors of a new "Everyday Heroes" volunteer initiative to ensure that such a program is developed to meet some of the human and technical needs for staging these events.
- All the partners involved in delivering and benefiting from Regional Events should commit to the development of a special Twitter-like social media communications tool to be housed at E-Comm and that this initiative be funded properly so as to achieve immediate and continuing maximum impact.
- The CoV should form its own 'Major Event Planning Team' and draw on the considerable skills and abilities of individuals from within its own family to participate such as the PNE, Parks Board, Engineering and others, and that all key agencies provide resources and personnel to this process.

3) Alcohol

- TransLink should lead a process for the development of best practices for alcoholic beverage interdiction on and around its system. The process should include police forces in the region and a senior representative of the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch. That these practices include provisions for collaboration between Transit Police, local police services, private security, and carefully selected and trained volunteers, to ensure ample coverage.

- The powers of the General Manager of the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch should be reviewed to consider additional powers to dampen the sale and distribution of alcohol for regional events. This review should include enhancement of existing powers and new measures including closures, restricted hours of operation, limits to alcohol purchases and serving sizes, age restrictions, wider inspections of licensed establishments, and measures known to be effective in other jurisdictions.

4) Community Justice

- The Attorney General should establish a process or special court specifically for dealing with the prosecution of people accused of a riot-related criminal act that provides crown counsel and judges with a suitable range of processes and sentencing options necessary to:
 - respond with appropriate measures to the wide range of criminal acts and criminals; and
 - take into account the community harm done by the riot.
- In designing this process, the Attorney General should consult recognized experts on community justice, and the judiciary, affected businesses and residents.

5) Professional Hockey

- The Vancouver Canucks should be urged to embark on a program of activities using its considerable facilities and influence to encourage year-round responsible fan celebrations and sportsmanship.
- The NHL should be urged to partner with host cities and NHL franchises competing for the Stanley Cup to help ensure the best, safest public celebrations possible. Furthermore, that the league be urged to develop year-round programs that encourage responsible fan behaviour and sportsmanship around the game of professional hockey.

Quotes:

Doug Keefe:

“The troublemakers and those who cheered them on caused this riot and our goal was to understand what conditions or circumstances gave them the opportunity. There’s no question that mistakes were made and while hindsight helped us and all of those involved better understand what might have been done differently, we’ve tried to avoid using it to overly criticise those who acted at the time without its benefit. The real challenge was to determine how we might avoid this again in the future and the recommendations are broad reaching. We entrust them to the hands of Vancouver and BC’s public service, police force and remarkable citizens.”

John Furlong:

"Vancouver's downtown became a stadium that night – but without all the traditional and critical amenities that deliver a fulsome and safe stadium experience. Officials tried to do a good thing and acted with great courage but their plans were overwhelmed and their mistakes amplified by the impact of an immense crowd far beyond what was expected. Alcohol fuelled those bent on destruction and it resulted in a nightmare that embarrassed and shocked the city, the province and the country. This was not our Vancouver and at the end of the day everyone wants Vancouver to continue to be a city that enjoys and celebrates in its public spaces. There are no guarantees in our report, but rather the opportunity, with change, to greatly diminish the likelihood of the June 15th violence and destruction ever happening again."

The Riot Review of 2011 Executive Summary and full report are available at: <http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/vancouverriotreview/>

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Background:

Keefe and Furlong responded to a four-part mandate from the report's sponsors, namely to review:

- The learnings from the 1994 riot and how were they integrated into planning for this event.
- The foundational elements of the Vancouver Police Department /City plans for the event and the relationship of those plans to what transpired in the lead-up and during the riots.
- The availability of alcohol at public events and the contribution this made to the events that unfolded.
- Looking forward, a framework for how the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Police Department work with the appropriate partners to optimize the safe, inclusive and enjoyable participation of our public in celebrations in the public spaces for which our City is world-renowned.

They started work on the review in June with a submission deadline of August 31st.

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