

October 24, 2011

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to give you one person's experience living in a St. Vincent de Paul sober house. I am hopeful this letter will give you pause in the course of action about to be embarked upon by City Council. To say that the sale of city homes currently under the St Vincent de Paul banner would be a grave error, is an understatement indeed.

I came to St. Vincent's, like so many others, a broken and bitter man. Addiction had taken me to the very depths of despair and hopelessness. I had been through detox and transitional housing through Seaton House. I had to move on and forward with my life. I needed somewhere safe to live. Where I would be held accountable and would be afforded the opportunity to begin the reconstruction of my life. I had no real options at that point. My family wouldn't help. Friends couldn't help and I had spent enough time within the shelter system.

St. Vincent de Paul was the only hand that was extended to me. Without judgement, without prejudice and with a loving heart. The Director of St. Vincent homes, welcomed me and gave me a place to begin again. Now, these homes are not vacation resorts. They are filled with people who have, in most cases, been relegated to the rubbish heap of life. Addiction had taken everything from them. But they are homes. Away from the streets. Away from despair. In the 12 steps we are taught that only an addict can effectively counsel another addict. This is exactly the principle, each one of the St. Vincent homes is founded upon.

I have grown tremendously while I have been allowed to stay in the St. Vincent VP Homes. I am a changed person. I have hope now and I see a future for myself for the first time in years.

I understand that there are financial concerns for the city, through years of mismanagement and personal agendas. Removing these houses as a safe refuge would be a temporary fix at best for the city coffers. The long term damage to the community as a whole, would reverberate for many years to come.

I would ask that you reassess your options and rethink your collective actions. I hope you would come to see that the wisdom of allowing St Vincent to keep it's commitment to the people who need them most, is in the best interest of all the people.

I never thought I would be living in community housing. I never thought I would be living on \$220.00 per month. I went to university. I had a career. I lost all that. Now I have hope. I want others to have the opportunity to experience this transformation. If you do decide that you wish to sell these homes. Ask yourself. *What if a member of my family needed this kind of support?*

Sincerely,

Grateful member of the St. Vincent family