False Promises on False Creek
A pamphlet on the disappearance of affordable housing in the Olympic Village

“Progress” at False Creek

“Vision strongly opposed the previous NPA administration’s cuts of middle and low-income housing from the Southeast False Creek Olympic Village site.”
-votevision.ca

“Vancouver has changed … and we are ready to take responsibility for our city… a city that takes care of our own.”
-Gregor Robertson (November 2008)

“I think it’s an important decision that we honour our commitment to affordable housing in the village,”
-Gregor Robertson (April 20, 2010)

“It's unfortunate that we couldn't have more social housing on the site.”
-Gregor Robertson (April 21, 2010)

Vancouver cuts Olympic Village social housing

-CBC Article Headline (April 23, 2010)

“Millennium water is the ultimate in exclusivity, especially in the luxury condo market.”
-Bob Rennie of Rennie Marketing Systems

Breakdown of Promised Housing at Southeast False Creek

July 2005

Low-income (Deep core)
Cops ("public safety workers")
Affordable (Core need)
Unaffordable market

June 2007

April 2010

http://falsecreekpromises.wordpress.com
Whose Homes Are These?

A city can be for everyone, or it can be for the few. There are built units at the Olympic Village that were promised for those currently being driven out of their city due to rising real-estate values, soaring rents, and the erosion of affordable housing. Now marketers are hoping to instead sell those units to a select class of global investors, many of whom will be buying second homes.

After Vancouver won the Olympic bid, the city promised two-thirds of the Olympic Village, roughly 800 of the 1200 units, as affordable non-market housing. In 2006, under then-mayor Sam Sullivan, this commitment was reduced to 20% non-market housing, or 252 units. In 2007, the city adopted a policy to divide those units into 40% social, 40% affordable, and 20% “low-market” (below regular market price).

On April 20th of this year, the city announced that the social and affordable housing component of the Olympic Village will be reduced by one half. The other 126 units will be rented out at market value to police officers and other “essential” municipal workers.

Mayor Gregor Robertson’s recent homeless count shows a 12% increase in homelessness since 2008, the year of his election to office. While Gregor ran on a platform to end homelessness, he and the Vision caucus have responded to this increase with the unaccompanied strategy of millions of dollars for increased policing.

Gregor’s HEAT shelters, opened for the Olympics, have almost all been closed down, leaving no homelessness policy other than a significantly increased police budget. Gregor hired more than 100 extra police (cost $13 million for 2009 alone), plus another $10 million this year to move headquarters to vacant Olympic infrastructure.

Another source of lost funding is the recently reduced corporate property tax, representing a loss of more than $10 million from city coffers. Adding these sums together amounts to $33 million, more than enough to cover the $32 million cost-increase cited as a justification for eliminating non-market housing at the Olympic Village.

As Berthold Lubetkin, the famous twentieth century architect, said: “nothing is too good for ordinary people.” The city pretends to have “accidentally” constructed the promised non-market units with high-end interior features and market-level design. This mismanagement is an unfortunate reality that contributes in no way to the argument for a sell-out of False Creek. Those units are available now, which is also when the housing crisis is underway. By breaking such a major promise as social housing in the midst of a housing crisis, Mayor Gregor Robertson has shown his commitment to the future of a gentrified Fortress Vancouver, a city tailored increasingly to a well-placed global elite who find themselves saturated in the comfort of billion-dollar spectacle-events like the Olympic Games. Is Vancouver a resort town – what condo developer Bob Rennie calls the ‘West Coast’s world class resort’ – or is it a city for true thought, a city for all?