

Vancouver Police Department News Release

February 13, 2010

1:00 p.m.

As Vancouver Police faced protestors once again today, they encountered a criminal element within the legitimate protestors.

The criminal element, apparently willing to wield anything that might cause damage or injury, marched among about 200 legitimate protestors this morning beginning at 8:30 a.m. They walked down Georgia Street breaking windows, turning over news boxes and clashing with police.

This group contained more than 100 masked people, many of whom kicked and damaged numerous parked cars. They used spray-paint on cars and transit buses and tore down signs.

They also clashed with members of the public and pedestrians who didn't support them. At one point, they used a ladder as a moving barricade.

The demonstration involved a number of anarchists, some of whom dress all in black and employ a tactic called "Black Bloc." This included a loosely organized group of thugs from central Canada known to attach themselves to any cause, travel to any event that attracts media coverage and promote anarchy wherever they go.

Because the criminal element hid within the ranks of the legitimate protestors, it posed challenges to police who had to identify who among the crowd were responsible for the property damage and violence.

Vancouver Police respect the rights of those who wish to express their criticism, but that does not give them right to commit crimes and jeopardize the public's safety.

As this group began to escalate their violence and vandalism, Vancouver Police increased their presence along Georgia Street to preserve public safety. Members of the Integrated Security Unit also joined the effort to restore the peace. Members of the VPD Crowd Control Unit also participated.

Once the violence began, specifically as some in the group smashed windows at the Bay department store, the bulk of the crowd drifted away, distancing themselves from the criminal element.

Part of the group's confrontational strategy is to provoke police. Some of the masked criminals were carrying vinegar soaked rags and goggles, fully anticipating that they could provoke police into using tear gas. To further bait police, they spat on officers, kicked at them and taunted them.

The Vancouver Police Department has always employed a strategy of cooperation and non-confrontation with protests groups in the hope of facilitating peaceful and safe events. On average, the VPD safely facilitates about 175 protests in the city every year.

Police are aware that they must always balance the rights of free speech and protest with the rights of the public to safely and freely enjoy the city.

By noon, police had been able to disperse the vandals into smaller pockets and greatly reduce the threat to the public safety.

Seven suspects were arrested and charges of mischief are pending. A bag with a hammer was recovered. One suspect had a bicycle chain wrapped around his fist when he was arrested.

Vancouver Police News Release

February 12, 2010

A crowd estimated at 1500 protesters left the Vancouver Art Gallery tonight and marched through the downtown core to Robson and Beatty Streets where they engaged police prior to, and during the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Games.

Protesters intent on provoking police moved to the front of the line and began throwing traffic barricades around. Their tactics then escalated as they sprayed vinegar in officer' eyes, threw sticks, and spit on members.

Officers on the front line maintained restraint and despite several surges from the crowd, the line held steady. After nearly two hours the crowd dissipated.

Two officers were injured with flying objects and one was sent to hospital with a shoulder injury but was treated and released. No protesters were injured.

One man was taken into custody and is facing a charge of assault.

It is unfortunate that some members among the protestors felt that it was necessary to pummel police with everything from sharp sticks to paint balloons.

The Vancouver Police Department respects the rights of those who wish to protest.

The VPD has a long history of peacefully policing protests in a city where free speech and the right of safe assembly are highly valued.

Each year the VPD polices about 175 organized protests within the city, on average one every two days.

While traditionally protestors and police have been painted in adversarial roles, in Vancouver there is a tradition of cooperation and negotiation.

In fact, the Vancouver Police not only supports the rights of protestors to publicly express their opinions, they actually facilitate the protests to ensure they are conducted safely for all involved.

It is routine in Vancouver for protest organizers to meet with VPD facilitators before protests to ensure there will be rolling closures of protest routes and security provided.

Throughout the Olympic journey the Vancouver Police has always respected the rights of critics and protestors to conduct lawful and peaceful events.

Today's arrest was conducted because the right to protest doesn't include the right to commit criminal acts that place the public's safety at risk or compromise the public's right to freely enjoy the Olympics.

The VPD will continue to cooperate and facilitate legal and peaceful protests and will also continue to keep the peace and safeguard the public.

Vancouver Police are appreciative of the assistance of the 2010 Integrated Security Unit members.