

Crane, Bob OHCS:EX

From: Anderson, Maryann GCPE:EX
Sent: Wednesday, May 9, 2012 9:21 AM
To: Loughran, Elizabeth OHCS:EX; Moran, Jennifer OHCS:EX; Steves, Gregory OHCS:EX; Symes, Leslie EMNG:EX; Vasey, Jeff OHCS:EX
Subject: Housing Communications Materials
Attachments: QA_Safer Indoor Sex Work Environments Study_May 2012.docx; KM_HSG_Indoor Sex Workers, Subsidized Housing.docx

The American Journal of Public Health will publish a study today on Indoor Sex Workers that focuses on two provincially funded social housing developments in the Downtown Eastside. The researchers will issue a news release this afternoon. Dr. Perry Kendall is quoted. It is likely that any media enquiries will focus on Ministry of Health and harm reduction.

Thanks
Maryann

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Questions & Answers

Negotiating Safety and Sexual Risk Reductions with Clients in Unsanctioned Safer Indoor Sex Work Environments

A Study by the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- 1. Will the province allow this type of activity in more of its housing developments – or fund housing programs that allow sex work as recommended in the study?**

No. The province will continue to target our investments in programs and services that help women get off the street.

- 2. Why does BC Housing allow this type of activity to continue?**

We recognize that this activity is not conducive to a healthy lifestyle; however, some of the women come from very traumatic backgrounds which contribute to this behavior. It is important to recognize that not all the women who live in the buildings are involved in the sex trade industry.

The women at Sereena's and the Vivian have a long history of homelessness, untreated mental health issues, active drug use and poor physical health. Many of the women are victims of past and present abuse and violence. Supportive housing programs such as the Vivian and Sereena's provide an opportunity for women to transition into more positive and healthy environments.

- 3. How many other provincially funded facilities allow women to bring clients into their apartments?**

The primary focus of these programs is to provide safe supportive housing for vulnerable women. Like any other residence the women are allowed to bring 'guests' into the building. The women at Sereena's sign a regular tenancy agreement and under the RTA regulations the non-profit is unable to either restrict guest access or ask guests for ID. The Vivian is operated as transitional housing, so does not fall under RTA legislation. However women are permitted to bring in one guest at certain times of the day.

- 4. Will you be instituting policies that say this behavior is not allowed...Period?**

At this point, we will review the issues and themes identified in the report and take the appropriate measures to ensure the safety and well being of vulnerable women in the DTES. Women who have multiple barriers to housing such as drug use; mental illness and problematic behavior stemming from traumatic experiences have few housing options in the DTES. We will continue to work closely with our NP partners, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver Police Department to ensure the safety of women in the DTES is not compromised.

- 5. What client group is housed at these two sites?**

The service model, which is determined by the NP operators, seeks to house the most vulnerable and hard-to-house women with complex health needs in the community with primary consideration given to women who:

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- have a long history homelessness and/or an inability to sustain housing;
- work in the sex trade;
- use drugs;
- are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation and/or have a history of abuse and violence themselves;
- have multiple barriers to housing such as mental illness, physical health issues, experience of transphobia and trauma; and/or
- have been marginalized by systemic oppression

6. Who refers these women to housing supports and how are they identified?

Tenants are referred directly to the NP operators from:

- Emergency Shelters
- VCH related Health Services
- Other Housing Providers (due to eviction from their units)
- Street Outreach Programs/self-referrals

7. What internal services are provided once they are housed?

The NP operators offer a range of services to the women. Internal services include:

- Life skills training-such as meal programs and peer to peer programming.
- Individualized service planning/case management including brokerage of health services- health services brought internally to the residents, external referrals and accompaniments
- Family reunification
- Advocacy
- Crisis Intervention
- Health & Safety planning and monitoring
- Peer Programming
- Visiting Psychiatry and Nursing Services
- Staff extensively trained in evidence based best practices as they relate to: mental health & addictions, cultural competency, non-violent crisis intervention, FASD, First/Aid CPR and substance use and sexual health harm reduction.
- A Community Integration Worker, First Nations Community Worker and Service planning coordinator are embedded in the staff team. Staff members receive clinical supervision.

8. Aside from BC Housing and the non-profit operators, what further supports are provided or referred to the women?

Through the intake procedures – staff assess what external supports each woman needs.

Staffs refer the women to the following community supports and programs:

- VCH Health Services- mental health, physical health, sexual health, addiction services
- Addiction Treatment and recovery programs
- Sex-worker organizations; PACE, WISH
- Vancouver Police Department through the VPD sex-worker liaison officer

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9. What do other jurisdictions do?

Alberta	No written policy regarding residents involved in the sex trade in their units. However, illegal or criminal activities could be a cause for terminating a lease as noted in section 21 of the Residential Tenancies Act.
Manitoba	<p>Beginning April 2008, a new six-point security initiative included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • train property managers and superintendents in crime prevention; • enforce a clarified eviction policy for even one criminal offence that poses an immediate risk to tenants, or for drug dealing or use, possession or storage of unlawful firearms, prostitution or sexual abuse and child exploitation under the Safer Communities law <p>Beginning in early 2008, Manitoba Housing projects have a new focused investigation team under the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act to gather the necessary evidence to shut down drug dens, sniff houses, prostitution bases, places of sexual abuse or child exploitation, and prohibited and restricted firearm possession or storage. This team acts on confidential complaints from tenants.</p> <p>http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=&Item=2775</p>
Nova Scotia	No specific policy on sex trade activity in social housing; however, a tenant can be evicted for any illegal activity or if they pose a safety risk to others in public housing. Any illegal activity of tenants will be reported to the local law enforcement office or community office in some project sites.
Ontario	Under Ontario's <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i> which applies to all rental accommodation, illegal activity is a ground for eviction.
PEI	No policies respecting prostitution in social housing.
Quebec	<p>No clear directive to housing managers other than to contact the police regarding criminal activities. The manager will then use evidence gathered by the police to evict the tenants.</p> <p>In the <i>By-law respecting the conditions for the leasing of dwellings in low-rental housing</i>, there is an article that clearly states that the dwelling must not have any commercial purpose (or something to that effect). Sex-related business can be a reason for eviction.</p>
Yukon	Will terminate tenancy immediately if any illegal or criminal activities are being conducted in social housing units.

10. These women pay rent, and some of their income is derived from prostitution. Is a provincially subsidized housing facility benefitting from these funds?

No. BC Housing provides funding for the on-site staffing. The non-profit operators of each building have support staff on site at 24/7 with at least two staff on at all times. The role of the support staff is multi-faceted; the primary function is to create a safe and cohesive community within the building and ensure that the women are able to maintain stability in housing, health and basic needs.

Many of the women who live in these buildings are left with very few choices as to the work they do and how they survive; they are often forced into dangerous survival sex work and use drugs to deal with the harsh realities of their existence.

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11. How many of the women that go through this program leave the sex trade – what are the stats?

The residents are supported to identify and work towards attaining self identified goals and the staff work with the women to help plan for next steps by letting them know the services and supports that are available. The NPs work with the women until appropriate next stage - permanent housing is attainable and secured. At the Vivian the average length of stay is 16-22 months with most women transitioning into permanent less supported housing.

The programs work closely with Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver Police Department through the VPD sex-worker liaison officer and other non-profits such as WISH etc. Where appropriate women are able to access supportive housing and treatment programs outside of the DTES

12. What other funders support these facilities?

The housing providers work closely with VCH and a range of government ministries such as MSD and MCFD. The Vancouver Police Department also works closely with the NPs operating the housing.

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May 2012

INDOOR SEX WORKERS IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

- **We have seen the paper. It is timely, and will help raise further awareness around the safety of the most vulnerable women in our communities.**
- **Many of these women have been victims of violence and suffer from addiction issues and mental health issues.**
- **These are low barrier housing developments - designed to get women into safe housing – then provide them with the support they need to rebuild their life and start making healthier decisions.**
- **We recognize that this activity in question is not conducive to a healthy lifestyle; however, some of the women have complex issues and come from very traumatic backgrounds which contribute to this behavior.**
- **It would be unrealistic to expect them to just get into safe housing and transform. It can be a long journey and the societies are there, working with all the women in their programs to help them get the supports they need.**

On provincial funding for the model:

- **The province will continue to target investments towards programs and services that help women get off the street.**

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Background:

- In early May, The American Journal of Public Health will publish a study, "Negotiating Safety and Sexual Risk Reductions with Clients in Unsanctioned Safer Indoor Sex Work Environments".
- The study was co-authored by representatives from the Centre for Excellence in Public Health, Rain City Housing, Atira Women's Resource Society, UBC and the University of California.
- The researchers conducted 39 interviews and six focus groups with women in two provincially funded, low-barrier, supportive housing developments, who conducted sex work transactions in their apartments. The developments, both staffed 24/7 and both in Vancouver, are Sereena;s House, operated by Atira and the Vivian, operated by Rain City.
- The women indicated that the environment promoted increased control over negotiating sex work transactions, including the capacity to refuse unwanted services, negotiate condom use and avoid violent perpetrators.
- The study focused exclusively on the experiences of residents who had been active sex workers in the past month. The views of residents who were not currently supporting themselves with sex work were not represented.
- The study concludes that there is an urgent need to further evaluate safer indoor sex work environments as public health and violence prevention interventions.
- In March 2012, the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down Canada's prostitution laws as unconstitutional. However, the decision is not binding in other Canadian provinces.
- BC Housing does not have a policy specific to activities such as prostitution in provincially funded supportive housing developments. There is an expectation that non-profit housing partners will abide by the law and report any illegal activity on the premises.
- The report identifies that at both housing developments: "Resident guest policies reflect the needs of women who are working in the street-level sex trade and thus allow women to bring clients to their rooms for transactional sexual encounters." In case of altercations, residents or staff will ask visitors to leave or call police to remove violent clients.
- Both buildings have received provincial funding for approximately five years. The women have a history of homelessness, mental health issues, active drug use and poor physical health. Many are victims of violence.

	Serena	Vivian
Number of units	57	24 SRO rooms
Annual Provincial Funding	\$417,492	\$464,832
Policy on guests and visitors	Residents sign a regular tenancy agreement – under Residential Tenancy Act regulations 'guest' access cannot be restricted.	Transitional Housing does not fall under RTA legislation. Women are permitted to bring in one guest at certain times of the day.
Tenant Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both buildings have at least 2 staff on-site 24/7.• There are no on-site services in either building.• Staff connect tenants to community supports including primary health care teams and specialist programs when appropriate.	

Pages 8 through 13 redacted for the following reasons:

Not Responsive

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Q&A: DTES SROs

September 5, 2012

Logistics for Interview:

- Minister Coleman to meet Kathy Tomlinson at Premier's Vancouver Office at 3:00 p.m.
- A tour through (name and address of SRO) has been arranged at (time). Minister Coleman (will/will not) accompany reporter and provider on the tour.

RECENT ACTIVITY/ITEMS OF NOTE:

- CBC interviewed Janice Abbott. Primary focus was on the buildings and staff concerns.
- Have been advised that a tenant or staff member took reporter on a tour of the Dunsmuir (a leased building, not on the SRI list, and one in bad condition).

BACKGROUND:

- CBC report on the management and condition of DTES SROs managed by Atira. The reporter has interviewed/spoken with Atira Management; current and former Atira employees (under anonymity); VPD; WorkSafe BC; CoV; and other housing operators.
- Segments will air September 10th and 11th on national television; national and local radio; and posted on web: Story # 1 - financial management and condition of the buildings; Story # 2 - safety and security
- Reporter has specifically requested interview with the Minister to discuss:
 - State of disrepair/cleanliness/lack of maintenance/supplies in these buildings;
 - Rampant crime (drug dealers living/doing business in the rooms, prostitution);
 - Unsafe conditions for staff/tenants; Drug/alcohol use by staff on the job;
 - suppliers not paid, staff selling items intended/purchased for tenants;
 - underage girls found in buildings (one had overdosed);
 - VPD frustration - not being allowed into buildings to investigate serious crimesReporter would like to talk to the minister about: his expectations for these buildings vs their condition; Why and how Atira got the contract to run them; How much taxpayer money has been invested; and concerns about conflict of interest and what comes next.
- Reporter asked for amount paid to Atira to manage each of the buildings since the inception of each contract. BC Housing noted it would take time to compile and would not be available by the deadline. Funding for fiscal 11/12 was provided.

SRO's Managed by Atira

Year Acquired	Hotel	Address	Units	11/12 funding
April 2007	Marble Arch	518 Richards	142	\$245,777.23
April 2007	St. Helens	1161 – 1163 Granville	86	\$233,957.04
April 2007	Carl Rooms	355 Princess	44	\$348,150.96
April 2007	Hutchinson Block	429-433 Pender	50	\$337,323.96
April 2007	Savoy	258-260 E. Hastings	25	\$347,958.96
Feb 2008	Gastown	110 Water	93	\$568,589.77
Feb 2008	Arco	81-83 W. Pender	63	\$547,074.41
Jan 2009	Cordova	54 E. Cordova	34	\$163,839.00
Jan 2009	Dominion	210 Abbott	64	\$402,868.92
Jan 2009	Hazelwood	342 E. Hastings	110	\$159,638.04
Jan 2009 (leased)	London	700 Main	73	\$424,261.92
Jan 2009 (leased)	566 Powell	566 Powell	12	\$67,817.04
Sept 2009 (leased)	Dunsmuir	500 Dunsmuir	167	\$365,380.00
Leased from City Aug. 2008	Drake	606 Powell	24	\$213,517.56
Total for 2011/12				\$4,426,154.81

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Q&A: DTES SROs

September 5, 2012

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Q&A: DTES SROs

September 5, 2012

KEY MESSAGES: General

- **The SRO housing stock in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is an important source of affordable housing.**
- **In the mid-2000s; this stock began to appear on the market as economic forces began pushing toward redevelopment for these properties.**
- **The province acquired 24 SROs in Vancouver beginning in 2007, to maintain and improve this crucial source of low-income housing. The alternative would likely have seen these buildings transformed into market-rate accommodations or redeveloped into condominiums.**
- **Our first priority was to address immediate life safety and security upgrades. The buildings were run down – they had been neglected – as an example, some of the buildings did not have fire escapes.**
- **The province invested over \$65 million to improve the health and safety conditions in the buildings.**
- **In March this year, we announced further improvements, through a partnership with the federal government to renovate 13 of the SROs, in addition to the basic renovations we've already done. It's getting underway this fall, with the Marble Arch first on the list.**
- **The BC government is investing \$87 million, the federal government \$29 million, to do major renovations on these buildings.**
- **The SRO renewal will improve living conditions for the residents and restore the heritage value of these century old buildings.**

Pages 17 through 22 redacted for the following reasons:

Not Responsive