

Fwd: Issues Alert: Vancouver - Winters Hotel Fire UPDATED 645pm

From: Fieltsch, Raymond OHCS:EX <Raymond.Fieltsch@gov.bc.ca>
To: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>, Gurney, Taro OHCS:EX <Taro.Gurney@gov.bc.ca>, Will, Meghan HLTH:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: April 11, 2022 7:50:13 PM PDT
FYI

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From: Miller, Jennifer E SDPR:EX <Jennifer.E.Miller@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 7:18:28 PM
To: Fieltsch, Raymond OHCS:EX <Raymond.Fieltsch@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: Fwd: Issues Alert: Vancouver - Winters Hotel Fire UPDATED 645pm

FYI-

Update as of 6:45 pm April 11

Vancouver Fire has confirmed that the Winters' Hotel fourth floor has collapsed into third floor. COV Building Department has completed an assessment and considers the parapet unstable at this time; they have also confirmed that the exterior bricks are in a compromised state but are not currently considered to be unstable.

Vancouver Fire has also confirmed that residents from all but two evacuated buildings will be able to return to their homes tonight, with readmittance beginning for some as early as 6pm.

Buildings with tenants who will not be able to return until further notice include the Winters Hotel (203 Abbot – 86 units) and the Gastown Hotel (112 Water Street – 90 units). Current approximate count of total affected units is 176.

There are currently five reported injuries, exact conditions of which are unknown. There are no reported casualties yet, and there are 10 people who are currently unaccounted for.

A total of 13 area businesses have been confirmed to be behind the fire line and will likely not be able to operate for a few days. Emergency response is coordinating notification for those affected and with COVs Building Department to establish a fenced safety perimeter once an appropriate distance has been identified.

All shelter sites except the Walton and the Evelyn Saller Centre are expected to be activated prior to 6:30 pm April 11 and COV cots have been delivered to all that requested this assistance. Food is being provided and emergency response is working to confirm overdose prevention and reduction supplies on site.

The Evelyn Saller centre is not able to accept new guests until 11pm, however until that time any arrivals' names will be put on a list for an easier intake later in the evening. The Walton will be available beginning 3pm April 12.

Vancouver Coastal Health has deployed a nurse on site at Bette's Boutique to provide health support. This muster point is expected to remain open as triage point for evacuees until midnight April 11, however staff will adjust and remain open if necessary to meet need. BC Housing staff are also currently checking with Atira to see if Bette's Boutique can remain open all night to provide any late arrival evacuees with a warm space and coffee

There is a strong likelihood that main muster point will shift to Japanese Hall starting April 12, and VCH will deploy a nurse to that site.

BC Housing has sent staff to Bette's Boutique to assist with response and tenant relocation. BCH is also working to coordinate VCH review of tenant list to confirm continuity for medication and urgent appointments on an as-needed basis.

Emergency Support Services have connected with psychosocial assistance and have confirmed they are ready to deploy if required.

Limited clothing options are being sent to Bette's Boutique for those who have lost items in the fire. There is availability to coordinate more significant clothing if required.

PHS has also flagged a need for social grants to displaced tenants to address ongoing needs.

Jennifer

On Apr 11, 2022, at 6:32 PM, Miller, Jennifer E SDPR:EX
<Jennifer.E.Miller@gov.bc.ca> wrote:

FYI

Jennifer

Begin forwarded message:

From: Henry Glazebrook <hglazebrook@bchousing.org>
Date: April 11, 2022 at 4:57:18 PM PDT
To: "Harbord, Darren GCPE:EX" <Darren.Harbord@gov.bc.ca>, "Butler, Liam GCPE:EX" <Liam.Butler@gov.bc.ca>, "Budd, Sarah GCPE:EX" <Sarah.Budd@gov.bc.ca>, "Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX" <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>, "Machell, Aileen GCPE:EX" <Aileen.Machell@gov.bc.ca>, "Miller, Jennifer E SDPR:EX" <Jennifer.E.Miller@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: "XT:Borghese, Matt GCPE:IN" <mborghese@bchousing.org>, "XT:Matthews, Laura GCPE:IN" <lmathews@bchousing.org>, "XT:Goldvine, Sara GCPE:IN" <sgoldvine@bchousing.org>, "XT:Langdon, Murray GCPE:IN" <mlangdon@bchousing.org>
Subject: RE: Issues Alert: Vancouver - Winters Hotel Fire

[EXTERNAL] This email came from an external source. Only open attachments or links that you are expecting from a known sender.

Hi everyone,

Latest on the Winters Hotel fire is below, with latest details highlighted in yellow.

Type of issue: Building fires

Date of issue: Ongoing

Time of issue: April 9 and April 11.

City: Vancouver

Constituency: Vancouver-Mount Pleasant (MLA Melanie Mark)

Site: Winters Hotel (203 Abbott Street)

BC Housing involvement: Funding for operations and toward lease.

Operator/partners: Atira Women's Resource Society

AHMA managed: N/A

Issue description:

The Winters Hotel in Vancouver has experienced two fires during the past three days.

The first fire took place April 9 and was contained to one room. Although small, the fire did result in water damage to the building.

The second fire, occurring April 11, started in two units and spread. It is currently unclear just how much of the building has been affected, but damage is confirmed to be quite severe.

It is believed that the fire may have spread quickly because the sprinkler system had not been put properly back online after the earlier April 9 fire.

Vancouver Fire is currently on site in response to April 11 fire as well as to assess cause and check sprinkler systems. At this point, it is not known how either fire started.

There are approximately 70 tenants at the Winters Hotel, all of whom require relocation due to extensive damage. There is a strong likelihood that displaced tenants will not be able to return in the near future.

Atira has not confirmed any injuries that have resulted from either fire, however as of 2:15 pm local coverage news is reporting three injuries – see CBC link below.

Vancouver Emergency Services has confirmed that they can assist with connecting displaced residents to immediate group lodging has established a triage site for tenants at Bette's Boutique (305 Main Street).

BC Housing staff are currently working with Atira and other housing providers to see if any vacancies are available for displaced residents.

Update as of 4:50 pm April 11, 2022

Latest count is that approximately **86 tenants** at the Winters Hotel have been affected by the April 11 fire.

Several properties adjacent to the Winters Hotel have been evacuated and there is a possibility that residents from some or all of these buildings will not be able to return today due either to smoke damage or ongoing fire response activity. Current estimate is that 200 – 300 people may be unable to return today, though no exact count has been confirmed.

Properties which have already been evacuated and have been identified as having strong potential for tenants not being able to return today include:

- ****Gastown Hotel - 112 Water Street (90 units)**
- ****Dominion Hotel - 210 Abbot Street (approximately 49 units)**
- ****Colonial Hotel - 122 Water Street (approximately 71 units)**
- **Abbot Place private rental - 233 Abbot (46 units)**
 - **Total = ~256 units**
 - ****Properties for which BC Housing provides funding**

BC Housing, City of Vancouver and Emergency Response Services have identified 157 spaces which can be activated today if for evacuees if needed. Winters Hotel residents will be prioritized for spaces where there is 24 hour operations. Spaces include:

- Japanese Hall (approx. 50 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- Evelyn Saller (42 spaces, 11PM-7AM operations)
- Woodward's (20 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- Walton EWR (15 spaces, 3PM-7AM operations)
- Hornby Shelter (15 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- Metson Shelter (4 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- First Ave Shelter (4 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- Yukon Shelter (5 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- Al Mitchell (2 spaces, 24 HR operations)
- UNCONFIRMED - The Metson (15 spaces, may not be available until April 12)

As some of the above sites do not have cots available, City of Vancouver has confirmed they can provide cots and blankets to accommodate. Emergency support services can provide transportation as needed, either via bus or taxi, and is also coordinating food for evacuees.

Emergency Response has confirmed that the Winters Hotel will need to be assessed prior to adjacent buildings being occupied again and have advised that this process will likely take some time.

Vancouver Coastal Health is sending clinical outreach workers to assist on site and coordinate with community clinics to fill prescriptions for those with ongoing medical needs who have lost existing prescriptions in the fire.

City of Vancouver is also working on a flyer for distribution to evacuees and has requested BC Housing communications review their draft once available.

Emergency response is also exploring the possibility of providing counselling services for evacuees, however these talks are very early and are not confirmed.

There is currently no information regarding confirmed injuries or casualties.

Current status: ongoing

Outcome:

Issues Note being developed: Not at this time.

Key messages:

- BC Housing would like to thank residents, front line staff and first responders who worked together to safely evacuate residents from the Winters Hotel in Vancouver following a fire April 11.
- For 72 hours starting April 11, Emergency Support Services will provide accommodation for residents displaced by the fire.
- BC Housing is currently working with the City and emergency services to confirm available, long-term spaces for those who have been displaced. Further details will be made public once they are available.
- Once confirmed, shelter arrangements for residents displaced by the fire will be in place for the foreseeable future while damage to the Winters Hotel is assessed.
- We would like to thank Emergency Support Services and Atira Women's Resource Society for their quick response and continued assistance to support displaced residents.
- We will continue to support and stay connected to residents who have been displaced, and do everything possible to meet their needs during this difficult time.

Media or social media coverage:

- [Massive three-alarm fire breaks out in Vancouver - North Shore News \(nsnews.com\)](https://www.nsnews.com)
- [Jen St. Denis on Twitter: "A fire at the Winter Hotel in Gastown https://t.co/YWMLNOTXmJ" / Twitter](https://t.co/YWMLNOTXmJ)
- [3 people hurt as fire tears through building in Vancouver's Gastown area | CBC News](#)

Other notes:

From: Henry Glazebrook

Sent: April 11, 2022 2:16 PM

To: Harbord, Darren GCPE:EX <Darren.Harbord@gov.bc.ca>; Butler, Liam GCPE:EX <Liam.Butler@gov.bc.ca>; Budd, Sarah GCPE:EX <Sarah.Budd@gov.bc.ca>; Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>; Machell, Aileen GCPE:EX <Aileen.Machell@gov.bc.ca>; Miller, Jennifer E SDPR:EX <Jennifer.E.Miller@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: Matthew Borghese <mborghese@bchousing.org>; Laura Mathews <lmathews@bchousing.org>; Sara Goldvine <sgoldvine@bchousing.org>; Murray Langdon <mlangdon@bchousing.org>

Subject: Issues Alert: Vancouver - Winters Hotel Fire

Type of issue: Building fires

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- [Jen St. Denis on Twitter: "A fire at the Winter Hotel in Gastown https://t.co/YWMLN0TXmJ" / Twitter](#)
- [3 people hurt as fire tears through building in Vancouver's Gastown area | CBC News](#)

Other notes:

Henry Glazebrook (he, him, his) | Senior Communications Advisor, Media Relations | BC Housing
Direct: 236.668.7576 | hglazebrook@bchousing.org
#1701 - 4555 Kingsway, Burnaby, V5H 4V8

RE: For Approval: AG Media Request: BCH: Winters Hotel Fire

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: May 9, 2022 12:38:03 PM PDT
Hi Krysta,

No concerns with the proposed response.

Thanks,

Meghan

From: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 9, 2022 12:31 PM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: For Approval: AG Media Request: BCH: Winters Hotel Fire

Hi Meghan,

Could you please see the attached and let us know ASAP if you have any comments or concerns?

Thanks,
~Krysta

From: Butler, Liam GCPE:EX <Liam.Butler@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: May 9, 2022 11:48 AM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>; Berndt, Eric GCPE:EX <Eric.Berndt@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: For Approval: AG Media Request: BCH: Winters Hotel Fire

Hi Alanna,

BC Housing has received another Winters Hotel fire request. Below is the response for your review.

I'd also like to introduce our new director, Eric Berndt. Today is his first day!

Thank you,

Liam Butler | Senior Public Affairs Officer
Government Communications and Public Engagement
Ministry of Attorney General and Responsible for Housing
778 584-2433
he, him

FW: For Approval: AG Media Request: BCH: Winters Hotel Fire

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>, Gurney, Taro OHCS:EX <Taro.Gurney@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: May 9, 2022 12:38:11 PM PDT
Attachments: The Tyee - Winters Hotel Fire.docx
FYI

From: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 9, 2022 12:31 PM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
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Liam Butler | Senior Public Affairs Officer
Government Communications and Public Engagement
Ministry of Attorney General and Responsible for Housing
778 584-2433
he, him

RE: For Approval: BCH Media Request - Tyee - Winter Hotel Fire

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>, Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: July 7, 2022 2:37:36 PM PDT
No edits from me.

Thanks,

M

From: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Thursday, July 7, 2022 2:30 PM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>; Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: For Approval: BCH Media Request - Tyee - Winter Hotel Fire

No comment from me on this one though only have time for a quick read.

From: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Thursday, July 7, 2022 1:53 PM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: Fw: For Approval: BCH Media Request - Tyee - Winter Hotel Fire

Hi Meghan - another media response for review ASAP please - sorry and thank you!

From: Butler, Liam GCPE:EX
Sent: July 7, 2022 1:17:18 PM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX
Cc: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX
Subject: For Approval: BCH Media Request - Tyee - Winter Hotel Fire

Hi Alanna,

Apologies if Tasha already sent this up, but please see the below response for your review.

Thank you,

Reporter:
Jen St. Denis
The Tyee
jstdenis@thetyee.ca
604-710-3964

-
Deadline: EOD July 7

Request:

I'm working on a story based on the fire investigation report for the Winters Hotel fire. The family of the deceased still have questions about why the operator did not realize Dennis Guay and Mary Garlow were missing until several days after the fire. Has BC Housing completed its review into this? Is there any insight you can share about how this happened and how it might be prevented in the future? My deadline is end of day Thursday, if possible.

Draft response from BCH:

We would like to express our sincere condolences to the families and friends who tragically lost loved ones during the fire at the Winters Hotel.

It had been reported that the Winters Hotel was safely evacuated of all occupants during the April 11 fire. However, Atira filed a formal missing persons report for one of the tenants on April 12th and followed up again on April 15th and both times was advised by emergency services that the tenant had been accounted for. Atira also raised concerns about the second tenant at a number of community round tables and was informed the tenant had been accounted for. We continue to be disheartened to learn that these accounts were inaccurate.

A taskforce group that includes representatives from the City of Vancouver, emergency services agencies, non-profit housing operators and BC Housing will secure an external third-party contractor to lead a full review of the response to the fire at the Winters Hotel. The contractor will ensure fairness and objectivity.

The full scope of the review is still being determined, but we know this review should make recommendations to ensure clear roles and responsibilities of all parties to inform an improved response in future to major disasters. The review will also determine if each of the parties need to make any updates to existing policies and procedures.

Once the terms of reference for the review have been finalized, then the taskforce will select a contractor to undertake this work. We expect the review will begin in the Fall and will be complete by Spring 2023.

RE: Input requested - ST, KMQA on Winters Hotel deaths inquest

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>, Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: July 18, 2022 3:53:48 PM PDT
Attachments: KM - Inquest into Winters Hotel deaths DRAFT 15Jul22 MW.docx, ST - Inquest into Winters Hotel deaths DRAFT 15Jul22 MW.docx

Hi there,

Some comments/edits from me.

Thanks,

M

From: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2022 10:47 AM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: Input requested - ST, KMQA on Winters Hotel deaths inquest

Hi Meghan,

Please see attached and below and let me know of any concerns.

Thanks,

Alanna

Alanna Dixon
250 216-1638

From: Harbord, Darren GCPE:EX <Darren.Harbord@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: July 18, 2022 10:04 AM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Berndt, Eric GCPE:EX <Eric.Berndt@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: Input requested - ST, KMQA on Winters Hotel deaths inquest

Sorry hit send too soon. Please ignore my last email.

Hi Alanna and Krysta, please see the attached draft materials from PSSG GCPE regarding an upcoming announcement about an inquest into two deaths linked to the Winters Hotel fire.

The inquest is confidential so it is not meant to go to BCH yet.

Can you please take a look and let us know if you have any concerns.

I'm not sure what date the inquest will be announced. I'll keep you posted.

Thanks
Darren

KMQA
Inquest into Winters Hotel Deaths
July xx, 2022

Key Messages:

- Two people are believed to have died when a fire ravaged the Winters Hotel in Vancouver on April 11, 2022. s.13
- We are deeply saddened by this tragic loss of life and our thoughts are with Mary-Ann Garlow's and Dennis Guay's loved ones and the other former residents of the hotel.
- Everyone has a right to feel safe in their home and s.1 government is committed to making sure fewer families lose loved ones to fires.
- I am directing a coroner's inquest into the deaths of Mary-Ann Garlow and Dennis Guay.
- s.13 Recommendations from the inquest into the Winters Hotel deaths s.1 could help prevent fires in single-resident occupancy buildings and save lives.
- As the number of fire-related deaths increases in British Columbia, it is imperative that we take action to ensure vulnerable people are protected from fire hazards.

QA:

1. What happened at the Winters Hotel?

- On April 11, 2022, a fire ravaged the Winters Hotel, a single-resident occupancy building (SRO) hotel in Vancouver's Gastown. s.13
- It is believed that two residents' deaths were caused by the blaze, and five people were injured.
- The fire damage was severe and the building was demolished, s.13 s.13

2. Why is the minister directing an inquest into these deaths? Why now?

- Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and our government is taking action now to save lives.
- An inquest jury will hear evidence from witnesses under oath and make findings regarding the facts of the Winters Hotel deaths. The jury can also

make recommendations aimed at preventing deaths under similar circumstances.

- Potentially life-saving recommendations could prevent further tragic losses and ensure more people are protected from fires in their homes.
- With fire-related deaths increasing in B.C., it is s.13 imperative that effective fire mitigation measures are in place for everyone.
- **If needed:**
 - Over the last two reporting years, there has been a 119% increase in fire-related deaths around B.C., according to the Office of the Fire Commissioner's annual report.
 - In 2021, there were 59 fire-related deaths and 180 fire injuries.
 - Only 42% of reported residential structure fires had a working smoke alarm.

3. When will the inquest take place?

- The deaths of Mary-Ann Garlow and Dennis Guay are currently being investigated by the Coroner.
- An inquest cannot be held until the Coroner's investigation has gathered the necessary evidence for an inquest.
- Inquests often involve multiple agencies and organizations who are given participant status that includes legal representation.
- Confirming dates for the inquest will require finding mutually agreeable timing for all parties.
- The date for the inquest is unknown, but it is unlikely to be scheduled before late 2023 at the earliest.

4. How long will the inquest take?

s.13

s.13

5. Aside from this inquest, what action is s.13 government taking to reduce fire-related deaths?

- In June, our government announced a s.13 partnership with Statistics Canada to create a Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard to help B.C. fire services prevent fires, reduce injuries and save lives.
- The dashboard will provide statistical and geographical information to help B.C.'s fire services identify areas in communities at greatest risk of home fires.
- The Office of the Fire Commissioner will be launching pilots of the dashboard with the cities of Coquitlam, Surrey, and Port Alberni in July. The office intends to rollout the dashboard province-wide s.13 in early 2023.

6. Is a third death connected to the fire?

- A third death of a person who had been displaced by the fire is also under investigation.
- s.13

s.13

If asked:

7. By what authority can the minister direct an inquest?

- Pursuant to Section 19 (1) (a) of the Coroners Act, Minister Farnworth is requesting s.13 a coroner's inquest into the deaths, as he is satisfied that it is necessary or desirable in the public interest that an inquest be held.

STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
PSSGXXXX
July xx, 2022

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Minister's statement on s.13 Winters Hotel deaths inquest

s.13

VICTORIA – Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, has released the following statement on directing an inquest into two deaths linked to the Winters Hotel fire:

"Two people are believed to have died when a fire ravaged the Winters Hotel in Vancouver on April 11, 2022.

s.13

"We are deeply saddened by this tragic loss of life. Our thoughts are with Mary-Ann Garlow's and Dennis Guay's loved ones s.13 and the other former residents of the hotel. We also recognizes s.1 frontline staff members and first responders who have supported everyone impacted by the fire.

"I am directing a coroner's inquest into these deaths. Once the coroner's investigation has gathered sufficient evidence, an inquest jury will hear evidence from witnesses under oath and make findings regarding the facts of the deaths. The jury can also make recommendations aimed at preventing deaths under similar circumstances s.13

s.13

s.13 government is committed to making sure fewer families lose loved ones to fires. In June, we announced we are partnering with Statistics Canada to create a Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard to help B.C. fire services prevent fires, reduce injuries and save lives.

s.13

"Everyone has the right to feel safe in their homes. Recommendations from the inquest into the Winters Hotel deaths could help prevent fires in single-resident occupancy s.13 buildings and save lives.

"As the number of fire-related deaths increases in British Columbia, it is imperative that we take action to ensure vulnerable people are protected from fire hazards."

Contact:

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Media Relations
250 213-3602

RE: For Approval AG Media Request: BCH: SRO Fires - Globe & Mail

From: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
To: Warren, Brynn OHCS:EX <Brynn.Warren@gov.bc.ca>, Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: October 12, 2022 4:19:11 PM PDT
That's a good flag, thanks Brynn!

Alanna Dixon
250 216-1638

From: Warren, Brynn OHCS:EX <Brynn.Warren@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: October 12, 2022 4:17 PM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>; Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: For Approval AG Media Request: BCH: SRO Fires - Globe & Mail

I just want to flag that two people died in the Winters Hotel fire – we might consider acknowledging that loss as well as the people impacted by relocation. As far as I know that is the only fire on the list that has resulted in loss of life, BCH should be able to confirm.

Brynn

From: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2022 4:03 PM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>; Warren, Brynn OHCS:EX <Brynn.Warren@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: For Approval AG Media Request: BCH: SRO Fires - Globe & Mail
Importance: High

Hi Meghan,

Sorry, another rush media request – please see below and let me know of any concerns ASAP.

Thanks,

Alanna

Alanna Dixon
250 216-1638

From: Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: October 12, 2022 4:02 PM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: For Approval AG Media Request: BCH: SRO Fires - Globe & Mail

Hi Alanna and Krysta
Another tight turnaround, noting the info is pulled from the Hastings encampment KMs that were approved this afternoon.

Thanks

Travis

Reporter

Mike Hager, Reporter
Globe and Mail - BC Bureau
mhager@globeandmail.com

Deadline 5:00 PM

Request

Reporter is requesting the following data:

1. How many fires have taken place at SRO buildings managed by BC Housing this year?
2. What is the total number of tenants displaced by those fires?
3. How many tenants were moved into temporary lodging as a result of these fires, and how many were unable to return to their homes and required rehousing in permanent alternative units?

Recommendation **BCH To Respond**

The fires that have affected various SROs and other social housing projects across the city have been devastating to residents, local communities and Vancouver as a whole.

In each such event, BC Housing has worked with the City of Vancouver, emergency services and applicable housing providers to ensure residents' safety and provide continuity of indoor shelter.

Most recent information shows a total of six significant fires effecting BC Housing-funded SRO buildings in Vancouver in 2022, which displaced approximately 343 residents including:

1. The April 11 Winters Hotel fire, which caused long-term relocation of 144 residents from the Winters and neighbouring Gastown Hotel combined.
2. The May 15 St. Helen's fire, which temporarily displaced 29 people.
3. The July 6 Hotel Maple fire, which temporarily displaced 80 residents.
4. The Aug. 22 Princess Rooms fire, which caused long-term relocation of 36 residents.
5. The Sep. 24 Sereena's Place fire, which temporarily displaced 46 residents and led to longer-term relocation of eight individuals.
6. The Sep. 28 Hazelwood Hotel fire, nearly all residents from which were able to immediately return after evacuation.

SRO buildings in Vancouver may be publicly or privately owned, and the information above only covers those which are included within BC Housing's portfolio of housing projects.

Approximately 343 residents were temporarily relocated to shelter space following the fires, and either returned to their homes or were rehoused into long-term or permanent housing alternatives as was appropriate on an individual basis. A total of 155 residents were able to return to their original homes, and approximately 188 required long-term rehousing in alternative units.

Information on individual fire events can be provided on request. For details on open investigations into fires, please contact Vancouver Fire Rescue Services.

Background

The total counts have also been addressed as approximate figures for privacy reasons.

FW: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Rabinovitch, Hannah R OHCS:EX <Hannah.Rabinovitch@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: October 19, 2022 11:56:27 AM PDT
Attachments: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires_18 Oct 22_V2MW.docx
Just missed you being added, my response for context

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2022 11:47 AM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

Hi – some suggested edits from me in the attached.

Thanks,

M

From: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2022 8:20 AM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

Hi Meghan,

Please see attached IN and let me know of any concerns or incorrect information.

Thank you!

Alanna

Alanna Dixon
250 216-1638

From: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: October 18, 2022 9:28 AM
To: Dixon, Alanna FIN:EX <Alanna.Dixon@gov.bc.ca>; Dey, Krysta FIN:EX <Krysta.Dey@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Butler, Liam GCPE:EX <Liam.Butler@gov.bc.ca>; Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>; Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

Hi Alanna and Krysta, as discussed on last week's BCH comms call, we've drafted an issue note on the larger than usual number of fires at SROs and social housing so the AG
Has some lines if need be.

For your approval please.

Thanks,
Tasha

ISSUES NOTE: Attorney General 2022-10-13

SRO & SOCIAL HOUSING FIRES

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- The safety of residents living in SROs and social housing is a top priority. BC Housing and its service providers work hard to keep people safe. s.13
- We know fires are traumatizing and s.13 extremely disruptive for residents and the surrounding community.
- BC Housing works closely with fire and rescue and other service providers s.13 s.13 to ensure that policies and s.13 procedures are up to date for the safety and well-being of residents.
- It is vital that buildings are safe. BC Housing works to ensure that non-profit housing providers are aware of the need to keep on top of repairs, especially those related to health and safety, and supports them to address concerns as soon as possible.
- Some of the SRO buildings in BC Housing's portfolio are over 100 years old and require frequent and repeated maintenance. s.13 , safety s.13 concerns are addressed immediately. s.13
- In situations where sprinkler systems or other safety mechanisms cannot be repaired or reactivated immediately, BC Housing works with its non-profit providers to ensure that necessary secondary safety measures are established, such as a fire watch, until work can be completed.
- In the event of a fire, BC Housing and service providers work quickly to find alternate housing arrangements and to ensure that people receive adequate s.13 supports.
- People forced from their homes by fire, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive Emergency Support Services for immediate needs when alternative supports, including insurance, are not available.
- Services may include s.13 -meals, shelter, clothing, pet care, emotional support, and s.13 and family reunification. s.13

If asked about the future use of SROs:

s.13

BACKGROUND:

There has been recent media coverage of a higher-than-normal number of fires that have occurred in various SROs and other social housing buildings over the past year, resulting in two deaths at the Winters Hotel and the displacement of hundreds of residents.

The fires that have affected various SROs and other social housing projects across the city have been devastating to residents, local communities, and Vancouver as a whole. In each event, BC Housing has worked with the City of Vancouver, emergency services and housing providers to ensure residents' safety and provide continuity of indoor shelter.

As of October 2022, these fires have displaced approximately 343 residents, who were temporarily relocated to shelter space, and then either returned to their homes or relocated to long-term or permanent housing, as appropriate. Of these impacted residents, a total of 155 were able to return to their original homes, and approximately 188 required long-term relocation in alternative units.

s.13

s.13

s.13

The most recent information shows a total of six significant fires affecting BC Housing-funded SRO buildings in Vancouver in 2022, including:

- **April 11, 2022:** Winters Hotel fire, which took the lives of two people and caused long-term relocation of 144 residents of the Winters and neighbouring Gastown Hotel.
- **May 15, 2022:** St. Helen's fire, which temporarily displaced 29 residents.
- **July 6, 2022:** Hotel Maple fire, which temporarily displaced 80 residents.

ISSUES NOTE: Attorney General 2022-10-13

- **Aug. 22, 2022:** Princess Rooms fire, which caused long-term relocation of 36 residents.
- **Sept. 24, 2022:** Sereena's Place fire, which temporarily displaced 46 residents and led to longer-term relocation of eight individuals.
- **Sept. 28, 2022:** Hazelwood Hotel fire, nearly all residents from which were able to immediately return after evacuation.

s.13

SRO buildings in Vancouver may be publicly or privately owned, and the information above only covers those which are part of BC Housing's portfolio of housing projects.

Program Area	Deputy / ADM	GCPE
Henry Glazebrook – Oct. 18/22 Alanna Dixon/Krysta Dey – Oct. 19xx/22	– xx/22	T. Schollen – xx/22 P. Grewal – xx/22

FW: Global Media Request

From: Maxson, Sandra OHCS:EX
To: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>, Collins, Teri OHCS:EX <Teri.Collins@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: January 4, 2023 10:47:16 AM PST
Attachments: image001.png, IN_SRO Social Housing Fires_24 Oct 22_FINAL.docx
Thanks Tasha – the IN attached provides good general messaging – is there an IN in progress that more specifically addresses the legal action that Van Fire said they are undertaking in the CTV article that ran:

(BC-Fire-Calls)

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services says it's preparing to take legal action against a single-room occupancy hotel where it responded to 504 calls last year for various emergencies.

The department said in a tweet posted earlier today that has since been deleted that 300 of the calls were related to smoking cigarettes or drugs and it's currently billing the S-R-O for each false alarm.

Public information officer Matthew Trudeau tells C-T-V News that the fire department is not naming the S-R-O but it has received multiple calls daily from the building.

Trudeau says it's prosecuting the building for Fire Bylaw offences as a last resort in hopes of affecting some change -- but the process will likely take months to go to court.

From: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 10:38 AM
To: Maxson, Sandra OHCS:EX <Sandra.Maxson@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>; Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>; Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: FW: Global Media Request

Morning Sandra,

Some background information on the fire alarm situation at Canada Hotel. You'll see we now have an interview request from Global for the minister to do an interview and that is with the MO presently. We supplied the minister with the attached IN about SROs and fires.

From: Darren Harbord <dharbord@bchousing.org>
Sent: January 4, 2023 10:31 AM
To: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>; Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>; Henry Glazebrook <hglazebrook@bchousing.org>
Subject: RE: Global Media Request

[EXTERNAL] This email came from an external source. Only open attachments or links that you are expecting from a known sender.

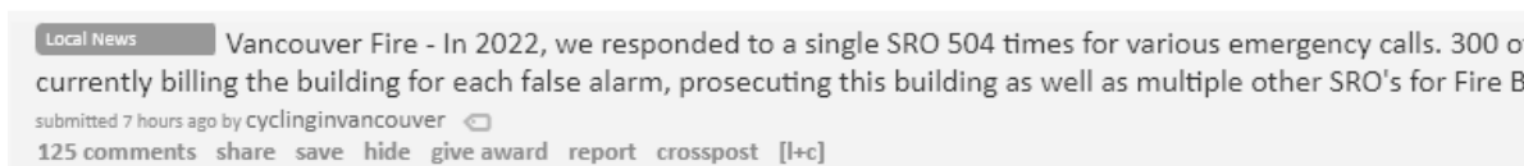
Hey Tasha, Atira (Janice Abbott) did do an interview with Global last night. She also did interviews with CKNW and CBC this morning.

She told me this morning that this is a jurisdictional issue – The City of Vancouver building code stipulates a one-stage system in SROs. They had asked to change to a two-stage system for a different SRO (Gastown). In a one stage system, every alarm goes to a monitoring company immediately. According to Atira, even if they call the monitoring company immediately and advise them it is a false alarm, they are required to have Vancouver Fire attend.

In a two-stage alarm, functions basically like this:

1. Trouble signal - these are for people smoking in a unit, tampering with a detector, wiring fault, etc. These trigger a local alarm only, which must be acknowledged within a certain timeframe (usually around 60 seconds). If it is not acknowledged at the panel, then the system calls the monitoring company.
2. Alarm Signal - heat, sprinkler flow, or heavy smoke detection - these trigger an immediate call to the monitoring company and Vancouver Fire.

Here is the tweet that was sent out then removed:



Thanks,
Darren

From: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: January 4, 2023 10:20 AM
To: Darren Harbord <ddharbord@bchousing.org>; Tim Chamberlin <tchamberli@bchousing.org>; Henry Glazebrook <hglazebrook@bchousing.org>
Cc: Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>; Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>; Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: Global Media Request

Hi folks,
Wanted to make you aware that we have an interview request from Global on the Canada Hotel.

Curious if we know why the City turned down Atira's request for the new alarm system it wanted? And do we know if Atira will be interviewing also?

From: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: January 4, 2023 10:16 AM
To: Madoc-Jones, Sian HOUS:EX <Sian.MadocJones@gov.bc.ca>; Dowler, Thea HOUS:EX <Thea.Dowler@gov.bc.ca>; Sidhu-Umar, Kiran HOUS:EX <Kiran.Sidhu-Umar@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>; Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>; Paterson, Travis GCPE:EX <Travis.Paterson@gov.bc.ca>; Marriott, Sarah GCPE:EX <Sarah.Marriott@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: 10:15am HOUS Media Request

1 Media Request

- Kamil Karamali/Global TV – Hotel Canada fire alarms (500+ in 2022) – due 3pm

Is MRK available to do this interview today? Reporter would need 5-10 mins by ZOOM or on-camera.

Reporter

Kamil Karamali, Reporter
Global TV | BC
Kamil.Karamali@globalnews.ca
604-351-5988 c: 604-351-5988

Deadline 3:00 PM

Request

Reporter would like comment from minister today about the SRO that has been visited over 500 times by Vancouver Fire Rescue in 2022.

Background:

Vancouver Fire Department apparently sent out a tweet yesterday (then removed it) indicating it had responded to 518 Richards St. (Hotel Canada) over 500 times last year. The SRO is managed by Atira, with operating funding provided by BC Housing.

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services says it's preparing to take legal action against the single-room occupancy hotel for Fire Bylaw offences as a last resort in hopes of affecting some change -- but the process will likely take months to go to court.

The department said that 300 of the calls were related to smoking cigarettes or drugs and it's currently billing the S-R-O for each false alarm.

According to Atira, a majority of these calls (approx. 300) were due to false fire alarms due to residents smoking. Atria says this building has ultra-sensitive smoke alarms. They want to switch to different alarms (double-stage), but the city turned down their request.

Atira was asked to comment yesterday and is considering doing an interview.

Response from BCH last night:

BC Housing recognizes that many SROs are not adequate for the long-term housing needs of residents. Most of these buildings, including the Hotel Canada, are more than a century old and were designed as temporary accommodations. This is why the Province and the City of Vancouver are committed to developing a long-term plan with the federal government to replace or revitalize SRO buildings. For any questions pertaining to the operations of this site, please direct your query to Atira.

Recommendation

See attached IN

Local News

Vancouver Fire - In 2022, we responded to a single SRO 504 times for various emergency calls. 300 of those calls were for smoking cigarettes/drugs. VFRS is currently billing the building for each false alarm, prosecuting this building as well as multiple other SRO's for Fire Bylaw offenses. (twitter.com)

submitted 7 hours ago by cyclinginvancouver



125 comments share save hide give award report crosspost [!+c]

SRO & SOCIAL HOUSING FIRES

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- The safety of residents living in SROs and social housing is a top priority. BC Housing and its service providers work hard to keep people safe.
- We know fires are traumatizing and extremely disruptive for residents, staff and the surrounding community.
- BC Housing works closely with fire and rescue and other service providers to ensure that policies and procedures are up to date for the safety and well-being of residents.
- It is vital that buildings are safe. BC Housing works to ensure that non-profit housing providers are aware of the need to keep on top of repairs, especially those related to health and safety, and supports them to address concerns as soon as possible.
- In situations where sprinkler systems or other safety mechanisms cannot be repaired or reactivated immediately, BC Housing works with its non-profit providers to ensure that necessary secondary safety measures are established, such as a fire watch, until work can be completed.
- In the event of a fire, BC Housing and service providers work quickly to find alternate housing arrangements and to ensure that people receive adequate supports.
- People forced from their homes by fire, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive Emergency Support Services for immediate needs when alternative supports, including insurance, are not available.
- Services may include meals, shelter, clothing, pet care, emotional support, and family reunification.

If asked about the future use of SROs:

- This work is ongoing, while we continuously work to improve the habitability of these rooms and bring people indoors using every opportunity available.
- Since 2018, more than 36,000 new homes are open or underway across the province for renters, homeowners and people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including more than 8,000 in Vancouver.
- We know there is more to do, which is why we have approximately 700 new supportive homes underway in Vancouver.

BACKGROUND:

There has been recent media coverage of a higher-than-normal number of fires that have occurred in various SROs and other social housing buildings over the past year, resulting in two deaths at the Winters Hotel and the displacement of hundreds of residents.

The fires that have affected various SROs and other social housing projects across the city have been devastating to residents, local communities, and Vancouver as a whole. In each event, BC Housing has worked with the City of Vancouver, emergency services and housing providers to ensure residents' safety and provide continuity of indoor shelter.

Many of the SRO buildings in BC Housing's portfolio are over 100 years old and require frequent and repeated maintenance. Safety concerns are addressed immediately. In situations where sprinkler systems or other safety mechanisms cannot be repaired or reactivated immediately, BC Housing works with its non-profit providers to ensure that necessary secondary safety measures are established, such as a fire watch, until work can be completed.

As of October 2022, these fires have displaced approximately 343 residents, who were temporarily relocated to shelter space and then either returned to their homes or relocated to permanent housing as appropriate. Of the impacted residents, a total of 155 were able to return to their original homes, and approximately 188 required long-term relocation in alternative units.

People forced from their homes by fire, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive Emergency Support Services for immediate needs when alternative supports, including insurance, are not available. Services may include mass care supports including meals, shelter, clothing, pet care, emotional support, and information about the crisis and family reunification.

The most recent information shows a total of six significant fires affecting BC Housing-funded SRO buildings in Vancouver in 2022, including:

- **April 11, 2022:** Winters Hotel fire, which took the lives of two people and caused long-term relocation of 144 residents of the Winters and neighbouring Gastown Hotel.
- **May 15, 2022:** St. Helen's fire, which temporarily displaced 29 residents.
- **July 6, 2022:** Hotel Maple fire, which temporarily displaced 80 residents.

ISSUES NOTE: Attorney General 2022-10-24

- **Aug. 22, 2022:** Princess Rooms fire, which caused long-term relocation of 36 residents.
- **Sept. 24, 2022:** Sereena's Place fire, which temporarily displaced 46 residents and led to longer-term relocation of eight individuals.
- **Sept. 28, 2022:** Hazelwood Hotel fire, nearly all residents from which were able to immediately return after evacuation.

SRO buildings in Vancouver may be publicly, non-profit, Chinese Benevolent Association or privately owned, and the information above only covers those which are part of BC Housing's portfolio of housing projects.

Program Area	Deputy / ADM	GCPE
Henry Glazebrook – Oct. 18/22 Alanna Dixon/Krysta Dey – Oct. 19/22 Meghan Will – Oct. 19/22		T. Schollen – Oct. 13/22 P. Grewal – Oct. 24/22

RE: Fire meeting SROs VFRS Feb 2

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: February 2, 2023 4:38:20 PM PST
Thanks for your notes! Some opportunities here it seems to keep in mind for the plan.

From: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Thursday, February 2, 2023 4:05 PM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>; Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: Fire meeting SROs VFRS Feb 2

Fire meeting Notes if you need.

170 SROs

Small VFRS team goes in UL study – go into every building in first quarter for insurance purposes

Focus on problem buildings – those with outstanding violations

Start with education, escalates to chief orders, municipal tickets and prosecutions. Some BCH buildings could have been resolved easier but now working with Jen B... also looking at lower risk buildings

Private and BCH buildings.

s.13

BSSB – owner not manager is responsible for code compliance. Potential follow-up. Violations should go to manager if delivered to operators.

Who is violation/order being written against? Will be given to whomever is onsite as representative. Staff give to manager. A chief's order is more formal, that would be delivered by registered mail, posted.

Bylaws and fire code enforcement to consider.

Data being collected. FDM – fit out inspection reports also click sense data and analytics can pull greater level of data and fire code. Reporting data is robust. Fire crews raise alert that going to same addresses for false fire alarms smoking in hallways, had that data and are now trying to target.

Doing public education campaign, fire and life safety in SROs with residents, working on smoking cessation with VCH.

False alarm data also correlates to number of fires.

Fire safety grant education: Originally targeting private but will include some public ones without sprinklers, idea is to train residents in fire safety. Our involvement is limited. Will train the trainer. Are offering training for all the staff and with BC Housing. Daily checks for operator – exits clear, debris. Risk with battery bikes etc. Developed course after winters fire. No uptake but now full

We hoped this could be something covered in operating agreements.

Fire in SRO every day. Some buildings 18 in a year

Follow up: Meet with BSSB, include OFC and look at code

Sarah Petrescu (she/her)
Director, Engagement & Coordination
Homelessness, Partnerships and Housing Supports
Ministry of Housing
250-812-7885
Sarah.petrescu@gov.bc.ca

*Offering acknowledgement in respect of the Lekwungen-speaking and Coast Salish Peoples,
traditional keepers of this land*

RE: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

From: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX
To: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>, Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: February 7, 2023 2:56:59 PM PST
Attachments: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires_6 Feb 23_V2 MW.docx
Hi Tasha – edits attached from me. Of note, I am awaiting some additional information from s.13
s.13 . I will f/up and share the info received as it will be relevant to add into this note.

M

From: Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2023 11:03 AM
To: Will, Meghan OHCS:EX <Meghan.Will@gov.bc.ca>
Cc: Petrescu, Sarah OHCS:EX <Sarah.Petrescu@gov.bc.ca>; Schollen, Tasha GCPE:EX <Tasha.Schollen@gov.bc.ca>; Suddaby, Clay GCPE:EX <Clay.Suddaby@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: For Approval: IN_SRO Social Housing Fires

Morning Meghan,

Attached is our updated SRO/Social Housing Fires issue note for your review. Sarah has provided her edits which have been incorporated.

Thank you,
T

Tasha Schollen | Communications Manager
Government Communications and Public Engagement
Ministry of Housing
Cell: 250-889-1121

SRO & SOCIAL HOUSING FIRES

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- The safety of residents living in SROs and social housing is a top priority. BC Housing and its service providers work hard to keep people safe.
- We know fires are traumatizing and extremely disruptive for residents, staff and the surrounding community.
- The Province is working with the Office of the Fire Commissioner and Vancouver Fire Rescue Services to address fire safety in SROs^{s.13}
- BC Housing works closely with fire and rescue and other service providers to ensure that policies and procedures are up to date for the safety and well-being of residents and staff.
- It is vital that buildings are safe. BC Housing works to ensure that non-profit housing providers are aware of the need to keep on top of repairs, especially those related to health and safety, and supports them to address concerns as soon as possible.
- In situations where sprinkler systems or other safety mechanisms cannot be repaired or reactivated immediately, BC Housing works with its non-profit providers to ensure that necessary secondary safety measures are established, such as a fire watch, until work can be completed.
- In the event of a fire, BC Housing and service providers work quickly to find alternate housing arrangements and to ensure that people receive adequate supports.
- People forced from their homes by fire, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive Emergency Support Services for immediate needs when alternative supports, including insurance, are not available.
- Services may include meals, shelter, clothing, pet care, emotional support, and family reunification.

If asked about the future use of SROs:

- s.13

- Our intention is to create opportunities for those living in SRO spaces to live in self-contained units and, long term, to convert existing SRO stock into more appropriate self-contained units.
- The Minister of Housing is leading work to support a healthier and safer Downtown Eastside, which includes a range of housing and SROs.
- Following a request from former Minister responsible for Housing, David Eby, in August 2022, BC Housing launched a Request for Proposals for an independent firm to review the SRO Renewal Initiative P3 Project, announced in March 2012.
- Concerns have been raised about the use of private sector partnerships in providing SRO housing for vulnerable people, and in keeping these P3 buildings maintained under the terms of the agreements entered into at the time.
- The RFP process is complete, and a contractor has been selected. The review is expected to take several months. Key deliverables include:
 - Performance of the SRO Renewal Initiative P3 Project
 - Comparative analysis on the construction, post construction and all of the operations of a P3 vs a traditional model
 - To determine compliance of Project Co. with the requirements of the Project Agreement during the established review period.
- In 2021, the City of Vancouver reached out to the Province and CMHC to form an intergovernmental working group to develop a coordinated investment strategy to replace or redevelop SROs.
- This work is ongoing, while we continuously work to improve the habitability of SROs and bring people indoors using every opportunity available.
- The Ministry of Housing, BC Housing, the Federal Government and the City of Vancouver have formed a working group to assess the SRO stock, define renovation and redevelopment options, and determine resource allocation. This work will help to inform decision making and ultimately feed into work being led by the Ministry of Housing to support the Downtown Eastside.

ISSUES NOTE: Ministry of Housing 2023-02-07

- Since 2018, more than 36,000 new homes are open or underway across the province for renters, homeowners and people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including more than 8,000 in Vancouver.
- We know there is more to do, which is why we have approximately 700 new supportive homes underway in Vancouver.

BACKGROUND:

On Jan. 31, 2023, Vancouver City Council approved an initiative to improve fire safety in SROs. Council will grant \$110,000 to the SRO Collaborative Society to run a one-year fire safety pilot project.

There has been media coverage of a higher-than-normal number of fires that have occurred in various SROs and other social housing buildings over the past number of years, resulting in two deaths at the Winters Hotel and the displacement of hundreds of residents in 2022.

The fires that have affected various SROs and other social housing projects across the city have been devastating to residents, local communities, and Vancouver as a whole. In each event, BC Housing has worked with the City of Vancouver, emergency services and housing providers to ensure residents' safety and provide continuity of indoor shelter.

Many of the SRO buildings in BC Housing's portfolio are over 100 years old and require frequent and repeated maintenance. Despite investments in capital repairs and renovations in government-owned SROs, most SROs have significant challenges due to aging facilities and inadequate design. Conditions are often inhospitable, particularly in privately-owned buildings.

Major renovations are disruptive and costly, including due to possible heritage, seismic, brownfield, zoning, room loss, and resident relocation considerations resulting in many SROs continue to deteriorate.

A recent City of Vancouver bylaw change requires all SRO fire escapes to be assessed. This will result in considerable costs. For example, a recent assessment of one building resulted in upgrade costs of approximately \$500,000.

Safety concerns in government-funded SROs are addressed as soon as possible. In situations where sprinkler systems or other safety mechanisms cannot be repaired or reactivated immediately, BC Housing works with its non-profit providers to ensure that necessary secondary safety measures are established, such as a fire watch, until work can be completed.

BCH has recently launched a Fire Reduction Working Group among senior leadership and staff, which currently meets monthly while a smaller, core group convenes bi-weekly. This group is still in information gathering and research stage but will be working towards better understanding of fire events involving SROs and other BC Housing projects, including:

- Preventative measures
- Researching fire causes, including modern sources such as e-transport charging stations

- Response processes for staff and external partners
- Innovations in fire suppression

According to the City of Vancouver, as of October 2022, fires have displaced approximately 343 residents, who were temporarily relocated to shelter space and then either returned to their homes or relocated to permanent housing as appropriate. Of the impacted residents, a total of 155 were able to return to their original homes, and approximately 188 required long-term relocation in alternative units.

People forced from their homes by fire, floods, earthquakes or other emergencies may receive Emergency Support Services for immediate needs when alternative supports, including insurance, are not available. s.13

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The most recent information shows a total of six significant fires affecting BC Housing-funded SRO buildings in Vancouver in 2022, including:

- **April 11, 2022:** Winters Hotel fire, which took the lives of two people and caused long-term relocation of 144 residents of the Winters and neighbouring Gastown Hotel.
- **May 15, 2022:** St. Helen's fire, which temporarily displaced 29 residents.
- **July 6, 2022:** Hotel Maple fire, which temporarily displaced 80 residents.
- **Aug. 22, 2022:** Princess Rooms fire, which caused long-term relocation of 36 residents.
- **Sept. 24, 2022:** Sereena's Place fire, which temporarily displaced 46 residents and led to longer-term relocation of eight individuals.
- **Sept. 28, 2022:** Hazelwood Hotel fire, nearly all residents from which were able to immediately return after evacuation.

SRO buildings in Vancouver may be publicly, non-profit, Chinese Benevolent Association or privately owned, and the information above only covers those which are part of BC Housing's portfolio of housing projects.

Program Area	Deputy / ADM	GCPE
BC Housing – Feb. 6/23 S. Petrescu – Feb. 7/23 M. Will – Feb. XX/23		T. Schollen – Feb. 6/23 C. Suddaby – Feb. XX/23