



# Vancouver Housing Update E-Newsletter

## MESSAGE FROM VANCOUVER'S COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

### Guest Editorial David MacIntyre, Executive Director, MPA



How do you create a supportive community in a Downtown Eastside SRO hotel?

In 1998 the Motivation Power and Achievement Society purchased the Hampton Hotel on Powell Street, ensuring affordable housing would continue to be available in the Downtown Eastside. After significant planning and in partnership with BC Housing, the hotel underwent significant renovations in 2006. The hotel was transformed into a home and a supportive community environment for people

recovering from mental illness. The renovations created liveable independent suites but also created a communal kitchen which became the social epicentre for the new Hampton community. Tenants work together to create meals and a supportive environment.

Since the renovations, we have had many visitors from around the country interested in learning more about the transition from individual rooms to a supportive environment where people have their own space but live in a social, supportive environment. It all began with the much needed renovations. Tenants were relocated during the extensive renovations. However, almost all returned to the Hampton after a year and began the process of creating a new community.

MPA has been chosen as the operator of the Savoy Hotel and we hope to follow a similar path with this hotel. Like the Hampton, the residents have been relocated during renovations and all are welcome to return to the hotel once the work is complete. It is expected that they will return to a much improved living situation and will have the opportunity to start developing their supportive community. As part of the renewal, the Savoy Hotel will receive a new name.

MPA supports the purchase of SRO hotels by BC Housing and we look forward to working with our partners and tenants to develop a safe, supportive environment for all.

Sincerely,  
David  
dmacintyre@mpa-society.org

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## Oppenheimer Park homeless find homes in government-owned SROs

On Thursday August 14, the VPD, BC Housing and homeless outreach workers collaborated as a team and entered Oppenheimer Park to help relocate about 40 homeless people who were camping in the park along with many others over the past few weeks.

The health and safety conditions in the park were deteriorating and the VPD was becoming increasingly concerned about on-going violence, drug-use, drug-dealing and the unsafe sanitary conditions.

It was apparent that the danger level in the park was escalating and before anyone could get hurt the VPD and BC Housing collaborated to find a solution. They entered the park and set up a kiosk and met with people who needed housing. BC Housing placed them in units it was able to free up in four of the SRO hotels, which were being used as temporary accommodation for existing tenants to occupy while their units were being renovated.

BC Housing is currently managing renovations for the 17 downtown government-owned SROs and is working to ensure that the renovations proceed on schedule without any delays because of the loss of these temporary units.

### More supportive housing for the Downtown Eastside

The City of Vancouver has purchased a two-storey building at 514 Alexander Street, which it will lease to Lookout Emergency Aid Society. The 20 SRO units will be upgraded to supportive housing in partnership with BC Housing. Over time, there may be a consolidation with an adjoining city-owned site at 510 Alexander Street which is also leased to Lookout.

## Renovations update

Construction has begun in three of the government-owned SROs (Walton Hotel, Carl Rooms and the Rice Block) and is expected to begin within the next few months in several others. Renovations are going well with no major surprises.

The extent of renovations required at the Walton, Savoy and Park is greater than initially identified. Tenants from the Walton and Savoy have moved temporarily to other nearby SROs (Tamura House and the Drake Hotel); more than half of the Park tenants have also elected to relocate during the renovation process.

The Drake Hotel, which is owned by the City of Vancouver, has been made available to BC Housing for relocation purposes. The site received a number of upgrades before tenants from the Savoy moved in in mid-July. The building now has improved fire, life, and security systems, the plumbing was fixed, and rooms painted. Programming and administration space was also added.

Previously vacant units at the Marble Arch have been set aside as temporary accommodations for tenants who need to relocate during other SRO renovations. The building is being upgraded to deal with immediate structural issues and to provide appropriate washroom facilities.

Immediate fire and life safety upgrades have been completed for the Arco Hotel and the Gastown Hotel, and should be complete later this month at Tamura House. This brings the buildings to an acceptable standard and ensures they are safe in the event of an emergency. Minor renovations were also done at 36 vacant suites at Tamura House to allow for further relocations.

Pre-construction work at Orange Hall has also gone well and S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the recently announced non-profit housing provider for the site, has worked out its requirements for the building's amenity space.

## Tentative construction schedule

Hotel	Current Units	Non-Profit Operator	Anticipated Pre-construction Period	Anticipated Renovation Start	Anticipated Renovation Completion
St. Helen's Hotel	96	Coast Foundation Society*	March to August 2008	September 2008	September 2009
Walton Hotel	51	Lookout Emergency Aid	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	June 2009

		Society			
Orange Hall	27	S.U.C.C.E.S.S.*	June to August 2008	October 2008	December 2008
Carl Rooms	47	Union Gospel (Heatley) Housing Society	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	June 2009
Molson's Bank Building/ Roosevelt	45	PHS Community Services Society	April to August 2008	October 2008	August 2009
Park Hotel	55	City Centre Care Society*	COMPLETED	August 2008	August 2009
Orwell Hotel	55	Vancouver Native Housing Society	April to Sept. 2008	October 2008	July 2009
Savoy Hotel	26	MPA Society*	COMPLETED	September 2008	August 2009
Rice Block	42	Atira Women's Resource Society*	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	October 2008
Gastown Hotel	95	TBD*	TBD	TBD	TBD
Shaldon Hotel	55	RainCity Housing and Support Society*	TBD	TBD	TBD
Arco Hotel	63	TBD*	TBD	TBD	TBD
Pender Hotel	40	Vancouver Native Housing Society	TBD	TBD	TBD
Marr Hotel	28	Atira Women's Resource Society	April to August 2008	September 2008	April 2009
Rainier Hotel	46	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Tamura House	110	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	TBD	TBD	TBD
Marble Arch	149	City Centre Care Society*	This building is being used for tenant relocations during the SRO renovation process and will also be renovated at a later date.		
Drake Hotel	25	Atira Property Management	This City-owned building is being used for tenant relocations during the SRO renovation process and will then be replaced with a new building providing supportive housing that will be managed by RainCity Housing and Support Society.		
* Atira Property Management is managing this building until renovations are complete, at which time the non-profit operator will take over management.					

## Park Hotel renovations

Extensive renovations needed at the Park Hotel require 50 per cent of the building to be vacant in order to allow for construction. The building's tenant liaison worker, Sheila Matthews from Atira Property Management, and BC Housing's Catherine Williams met with residents to review what they could expect during the renovation process. Sheila and Catherine also presented them with relocation options at other government-owned SROS.

"By late July, half of the tenants had committed to move," said Sheila. "A good portion wants to stay – this is their home and it's important for them to be here."

"We're also recognizing that although they say they want to stay now, they may not realize how much the



*Park Hotel: a typical unit pre-renovations*

renovations will affect them,” added Catherine. “We have a contingency plan should the construction become too much for them.”

Most tenants who are moving have opted to temporarily relocate to the Marble Arch and St. Helen’s Hotel. Sheila also identified a number of Park Hotel residents who were assessed by BC Housing’s Health Services staff. Six of these people will be moving into the agency’s directly-managed units as these come available.

## Savoy tenants relocate to the Drake Hotel

The city-owned Drake Hotel is serving as a relocation space for SRO tenants who need to move during the renovation phase. The 24 tenants who were living at the Savoy Hotel moved to the Drake in mid-July. Michael Dignard is one of them.



“The move went great,” he said. “They did all our laundry – I must have had six bags. There’s even a fridge in the room. It’s just two or three blocks away from where I used to live so I know the neighbourhood.”

Michael has been living in the Downtown Eastside for about five years; four of those were spent on the street. He moved into the Savoy a few months before the Province bought it. “It was filthy and full of bugs and cockroaches. The Savoy is way better than it was after BC Housing bought it – the difference between night and day, but I’m hoping it will be even better when I move back. The community kitchen will be awesome and I’ll use it for sure. I don’t like cooking on a hot plate in my room because you get crumbs every where and that attracts bugs. I hope to be working by then and off welfare. I’m 48 years young, healthy, and looking for work.”

Michael thinks the world of the Atira Property Management staff who worked at the Savoy and helped with the transition to the Drake. “They’ve made a total, unbelievable difference. Atira is a great organization.”

Atira staff will continue to work with tenants at

## Former SRO tenants moving to public housing

Sixteen tenants from the Park, Savoy and Tamura House referred to BC Housing’s Health Services division have been assessed as being capable of living independently in public housing. These individuals are moving into units as soon as these become available and several have already made the move.

For 40-year-old Bruce Jeffrey, it’s one of the best things to happen to him since he moved to Vancouver in 2001. Bruce has lived in SROs for seven years, the past five at the Park Hotel. “There’s no comparison between where I live now and where I’m moving to on Monday,” he said on the eve of his move. Bruce, who was assessed by Health Services in July made the move to a one-bedroom apartment at Sunset Towers in the West End on August 11. “It’s happened so quick; I’m still in shock.”



*Atira Property Management Tenant Liaison Worker Sheila Matthews and Bruce Jeffrey review some last-minute details before his move from the Park Hotel earlier this month.*

Unable to work because of a disability, Bruce used to spend most of his time watching TV. He is now connecting with his new neighbours and is looking forward to participating in the building’s meal program and recreational activities as well as cooking up a storm in his own kitchen. “Everybody deserves to have a safe place to call home,” he said. “This is a dream come true.”

Ichiya Mochizuki is still settling into his bachelor unit at Stamps Place. Born in an internment camp during World War II, Ichiya and his family were forced to return to Japan in 1945. They moved back to Canada when he was 17 and he has lived in the Downtown Eastside for going on 40 years.

the Drake in the coming months. Michael plans to take advantage of the support services that will be offered. "I need these. I'm not sober. I almost gave up hope a couple of times but I'm finding faith."

After 15 years living at the Savoy Hotel, Ichiya moved to his new home on July 21. "It's okay here," he said, "nice and quiet." BC Housing Health Services Coordinator Gordon Gies found him some furniture through Gathering Gift and Home Start; Ichiya also received a gift certificate to the Army & Navy and the Salvation Army thrift store.

### When the lights go out

The July 14 power outage that affected Vancouver's downtown core left the tenants of both the Marble Arch and Park Hotel without electricity. The underground fire that caused the outage was located right next to the Marble Arch; residents there were evacuated temporarily to ensure their safety.

Atira Property Management and BC Housing staff quickly arranged for generators and were able to reassure the tenants about any concerns they had. A meal was served to tenants of both sites at the Marble Arch, where the power was restored by mid-afternoon. Power was back on at the Park later that day. Tenants at both hotels were provided with flashlights, in case the power failed again, and overnight security was also brought in to provide safety and to assist in the event of another power loss.



*Emergency vehicles respond to the explosion and subsequent underground fire caused when two electrical cables failed to connect. The Marble Arch Hotel can be seen behind the trucks.*

### Downtown Community Court

Vancouver's Downtown Community Court is expected to open in September. Judge Thomas Gove and Judge David Pendleton will preside over the court, which will deal with cases more efficiently to achieve earlier resolutions. The court will deal with a broad range of crimes including theft, breaking into cars, causing a disturbance, and assaults. These crimes are often traced to social problems, addiction or mental health issues. Sentences can be fashioned to address community concerns, as well as the underlying reasons for the crimes.

The court will bring together justice, health and social services to improve responses to crime. This integrated approach will seek to address individuals' problems to assist them to change their criminal behaviour. The Community Court triage and case management teams will work with the accused and community agencies in the development and implementation of case management plans. This may include linking offenders to existing health and social services as appropriate.

### The role of housing

Supportive housing can provide a stabilizing environment for people, particularly to those who currently live on the street or in unsuitable housing. BC Housing will make a range of housing options available to people in the Downtown Community Court, depending on space availability. These options include tenancy in the government-owned SROs, rent supplements, or tenancy in BC Housing's directly-managed sites, if the individuals are able to live

### Downtown Eastside demographic study

A report titled "Downtown Eastside Demographic Study of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) and Social Housing Tenants" is now available on the City of Vancouver's website. The study provides a picture of the socio-demographic and economic conditions of tenants in SROs and social housing in the Downtown Eastside. Market housing, care facilities, treatment centres and shelters were not included in the study. The information collected provides a better understanding of the

independently as determined by a health assessment.

“Supportive housing is a key part of the process,” said Judge Gove. “We’ll be seeing people who have a myriad of social problems such as addictions and mental illnesses. You can’t address these issues properly without first having a stable and safe place to live. Appropriate housing is the starting point and I’m very excited about the approach being taken with the government-owned SROs and the city sites that will also be developed. Realistically, I recognize that it will be awhile before all these units are renovated or built, so I will sentence in such a way that there will be as much flexibility as possible.”

BC Housing Health Services Coordinator Gordon Gies will attend the court each weekday morning to provide information, support and advice to the Community Court triage and case management teams. Gordon will work with the teams to provide access and links to find appropriate accommodation for offenders. Gordon, who has a degree in social work, has also been an outreach worker for Lookout Emergency Aid Society, working with homeless adults in New Westminster.

needs and circumstances of residents, including health issues, housing situation and history, and housing and neighbourhood perceptions. The study findings will be used to inform future policy decisions and programs in the Downtown Eastside.

## HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM

### **Collingwood Neighbourhood House collaborating with Coast Mental Health**

Three new Vancouver neighbourhoods have recently started receiving services through the Homeless Outreach Program. In Collingwood/Renfrew, Collingwood Neighbourhood House is working with Coast Mental Health to provide outreach workers who canvas the community looking for homeless people and connecting them to housing and other support services. Coast already offers outreach services through the Homeless Outreach Program in Yaletown and will be the non-profit housing provider at the St. Helen’s Hotel once renovations are complete on this government-owned SRO.

### **Sharing lessons learned on the Downtown Eastside**

Word of the Homeless Outreach Program and its successes is spreading across Canada. Brian Malkowich, with the Manitoba government’s Family Services and Housing, Health and Healthy Living ministry, visited Vancouver in mid-July to see what he could learn about the program. He spent a day touring the Downtown Eastside with RainCity’s outreach worker Christoph Hofmeister and program manager Lori Dennis.

“Part of my division’s role is to review existing housing-related policies, programs and services that lack coordination within the system and propose enhancements or alternatives to improve policy coordination and service delivery with respect to homelessness,” said Brian. “I was impressed with the flexibility of the outreach staff and the ingenuity with which they do their jobs. The program doesn’t seem to be heavy in bureaucracy and workers are given the autonomy to do what they feel is required to help an individual. I was also impressed by the variety of services provided and the resource knowledge of the workers.”

One of the things that Brian likes about the program is its approach to the challenges of breaking the cycle of homelessness. “The Homeless Outreach Program works holistically on all of the issues and does not endorse a silo approach.” Asked what he learned that he can apply to his work, Brian replied, “Various items such as the structure, resources and other elements need to be coordinated to ensure the success of programming and as to whether the programming is making a real difference to the lives of the clients.”

## EMERGENCY SHELTER PROGRAM

### **More Vancouver shelters making the switch to 24/7 operations**

Two more shelters in the Downtown Eastside will be moving to 24/7 operations soon. The Haven, with 40 beds, and the Beacon, with 60, are both run by The Salvation Army’s Vancouver Harbour Light.

Renovations to allow for full-time operation have been completed recently at the Haven. New heating, air conditioning, roof repairs, improvements to the flooring, and room partitions have transformed this very old building into a great space. Harbour Light is aiming to have it ready to go 24/7 by September 1. Renovations are about to begin at the Beacon, which is targeting November 1 for continuous operations. The shelter will be adding cubicles, four showers, and its washrooms will be reconfigured.

The 100 clients who access the shelters currently spend their daytime on the streets. "Being able to stay indoors will be a much more positive environment for them," said Wayne Oster, Executive Director, Harbour Light. "They'll be able to meet with our counsellors and staff and we'll be able to connect them with mental health support and refer them to detox. I'm hopeful this will help our clients get their lives together. Other shelter operators who have already gone 24/7 have told me that it's been far more successful than they ever dreamed it could be. I'm hoping that if we look after people's basic needs that there will be a willingness to change."

## WHO'S WHO

### Vancouver's Community Non-Profit Partners

Eighteen of the city's most experienced and respected non-profit groups work to deliver housing, shelter and support services to those in greatest need. These community partners operate the SROs, deliver the Homeless Outreach Program, and/or provide emergency shelter in Vancouver. This chart outlines the work that the group does with BC Housing and is not a complete list of the organizations' activities.

Group	Contact information	Participation
Atira Women's Resource Society	www.atira.bc.ca 604-331-1407	SRO Operator (Rice Block; Marr Hotel; Sereena's Place; Bridge Housing for Women); Emergency Shelter Program (Bridge Women's Emergency Shelter).
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Vancouver	www.rcav.org 604-443-3219	Emergency Shelter Program (Catholic Charities)
City Centre Care Society	www.cccares.org 604-639-8248	SRO Operator (Marble Arch Hotel; Park Hotel)
Coast Foundation Society	www.coastmentalhealth.com 604-872-3502	SRO Operator (Pender Street Supportive Housing; St. Helen's Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Yaletown)
Collingwood Neighbourhood House Society	www.cnh.bc.ca 604-435-0323	Homeless Outreach Program (Collingwood/Renfrew)
Covenant House Vancouver	www.covenanthousebc.org 604-638-4438	Emergency Shelter Program (Covenant House; Rights of Passage Shelter)
Kettle Friendship Society	www.thekettle.ca 604-251-2801	Homeless Outreach Program (Grandview)
Lookout Emergency Aid Society	www.lookoutsociety.bc.ca 604-255-0340	SRO Operator (Tamura House; Walton Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Yukon Shelter; Lookout Downtown Shelter)
MPA Society	www.mpa-society.org 604-482-3700	SRO Operator (Savoy Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Kitsilano)
PHS Community Services Society	604-683-0073	SRO Operator (Molson's Bank Building)
RainCity Housing and Support Society	www.raincityhousing.org 604-662-7023	SRO Operator (Shaldon Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Triage Shelter); Homeless Outreach Program (DTES)
St. James Community Services Society	www.sjcss.com 604-606-0300	Emergency Shelter Program (St. Elizabeth's Home; Powell Place Emergency Shelter)
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.	www.successbc.ca 604-684-1628	SRO Operator (Orange Hall)
The Salvation Army	www.salvationarmy.org 604-299-3908	Emergency Shelter Program (Belkin House; The Haven; The Beacon; Crosswalk)
Union Gospel Housing Society	www.ugm.ca 604-253-3323	SRO Operator (Carl Rooms)
Vancouver Native Housing Society	www.vnhs.ca 604-320-3312	SRO Operator (Orwell Hotel; Pender Hotel)
Vancouver Recovery Club	www.thevrc.ca 604-708-9955	Homeless Outreach Program (Mt. Pleasant)
The Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society	604-736-2423	Emergency Shelter Program (Vi Fineday Family Shelter)

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