

June 2009



Vancouver Housing Update E-Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM VANCOUVER'S COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

Guest Editorial: Tung Chan, CEO, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



Not every one has heard about S.U.C.C.E.S.S., let alone our mandate to bridge the gap between new Canadians and established Canadian communities. S.U.C.C.E.S.S., has been serving the community for more than 36 years. It started by offering settlement services to the Chinese population in Vancouver. Today, it has broadened its scope of service to areas including employment, education, family counseling, and health services for as many ethnic communities in and beyond B.C. as needed.

To build a holistic and healthy community is a big vision; a more attainable goal is to start small. Building a healthy community within a community has been the concept that has motivated S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for years and propelled us to be the operator of the Orange Hall SRO hotel. In 1995 we stepped into the arena of health services and started planning for residential care for people in need. Like Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon, it was a giant step for S.U.C.C.E.S.S. when we opened our care home and adult day centre in 2001, and an assisted living development in 2006. Housing management might not be our strongest suit now, but we are confident our expertise in various social support and seniors' residential services can be transferred to Orange Hall in 2009.

Orange Hall has 27 self-contained suites varying in sizes. Most of the tenants are Chinese-speaking seniors. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will try to make the building a healthy and better living environment where tenants can "age in place." We will create a hygienic sanctuary and provide residents with friendly social support services. These are precious comforts most people have but the less unfortunate have to overcome multiple barriers to obtain.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will encourage tenants to find meanings in their lives and to ensure they are connected with the community. Our staff will do this by arranging social programs and lively activities such as festival celebrations and monthly outings. In the near future, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. hopes to provide more affordable supportive housing for seniors, and to actively participate in social housing.

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SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY HOTELS

Renovations complete at several SROs

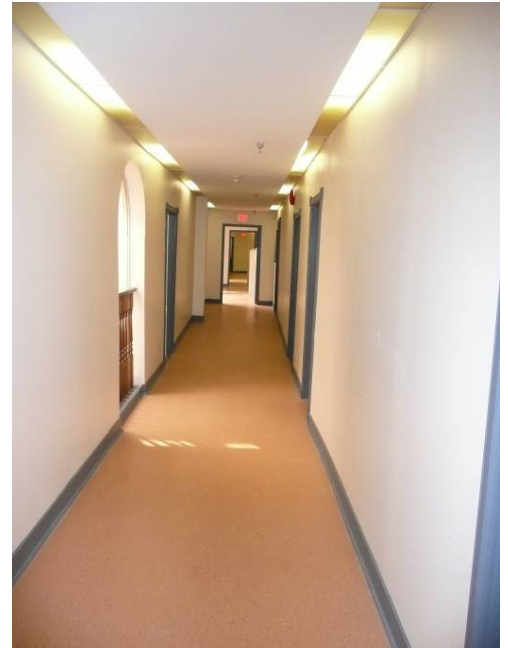
Renovations were completed recently at the Dominion Hotel, the Carl Rooms, and the Walton Hotel. All three buildings had been empty during renovations; there are now 155 newly renovated units for people who had been homeless or at risk of homelessness in Vancouver. Renovations were completed earlier this year at the Rice Block, and the Rainier, London, and Marr hotels. Over the summer months, we can expect to see renovations completed at the Beacon Hotel (the former Backpackers Inn), Cordova Residence, Orange Hall, Park Hotel, Roosevelt Hotel, and the Savoy Hotel.

"The work that BC Housing has done is a miracle," said Mark Townsend, Executive Director, PHS. "The completed buildings are beautiful and amazing. We move people in and they cry because they can't believe how good it is."

"Moving into a newly renovated room makes all the difference," said Janice Abbott, Executive Director, Atira Women's Resource Society. "It creates a sense of belonging in community; that you matter. And it can't help but improve your mental health and your outlook on life. A safe and clean physical space combined with having people around who care about you is life changing for many people. BC Housing's James Weldon and his team have done an amazing job of not only creating great buildings but also of being respectful of the needs of the tenants."

"The renovations have turned unsafe, ugly and non-functional housing into safe, secure, and attractive homes," said Karen O'Shannacery, Executive Director, Lookout Emergency Aid Society. "It is inspirational to see the tenants change from being suspicious and resistant towards Lookout and BC Housing and fearing their loss of housing, to being enthusiastic, caring about each other and themselves, and planning out how to keep their homes in the condition they are now in. Thank you to BC Housing's staff who saved the housing and turned them into homes for people who have few, if any, options. It was only through collaboration that this worked!"

Below: Photos from the Dominion Hotel taken prior to tenant move in.



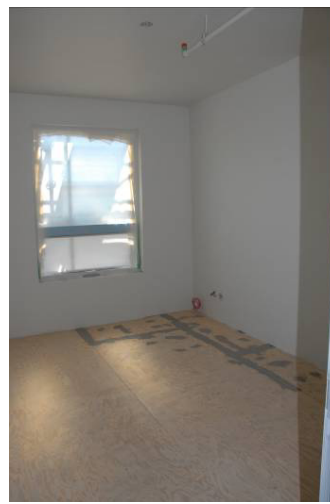


Below: A unit at the Carl Rooms taken before tenant occupancy.



Renovations are nearing completion at the Savoy Hotel. The walls have been straightened and the building has new electrical and plumbing systems. The new vinyl windows make the units much quieter and all units have new subfloors. The contractors stopped counting when they reached 42 different types of flooring in the building; one unit alone had nine different types.

"There was rot in parts of the building," remarked Site Superintendent Tony Medeiros, Scott Interiors and Renovations. "The worst was a 20-foot wide section on the fourth floor." Medeiros also noted the bearing wall in the Savoy's basement had to be rebuilt as it was deteriorating and became structurally inadequate. It was a solid wood wall on top of the dirt with no footing. Scott Interiors and Renovations repaired all structural and other areas of concern and coordinated inspections and approvals from qualified engineers.



Renovations are nearing completion on the Savoy Hotel. The photos above were taken May 29, 2009.

“In the two years we’ve spent on these renovations projects, we’ve gained many cost efficiencies,” said BC Housing’s James Weldon, who is in charge of the SRO renovations. “We’ve instituted strategic purchasing for all the furniture and are reviewing other opportunities for bulk purchasing. We’ve saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by having the knowledge of what the real costs are for things like flooring and electrical and making sure we did not pay more than a fair price.”

The government-owned SROs qualify for federal infrastructure funding and could potentially receive financial support for further renovations. This funding would go a long way to improve conditions of the buildings which have not been renovated beyond health and life safety upgrades.

It’s a SHR thing

As of May 31, the Supportive Housing Registration (SHR, pronounced “sure”) service has placed 348 people into supportive housing units on the Downtown Eastside. The overwhelming majority of those people were previously street homeless or living in shelters, including the HEAT shelters. Over 80 per cent reported addiction and/or mental health issues when assessed by SHR staff. Some had been homeless for as long as 10 or 15 years; others had been evicted recently but have multiple barriers which would have prevented them from finding a place to live. SHR is working to move those people who are most in need into housing.

SHR application forms can be mailed or dropped off at BC Housing’s Vancouver Coastal Region Richards Street office at 520 Richards Street, Vancouver, V6B 3A2 or faxed to 604-648-4279. It is important when faxing to send the complete application form. To save trees and the environment, you do not fax the cover page of the application booklet as this does not include any application information required by the SHR team. If you are faxing less than the complete application form (i.e. the supplemental or the release of information form), please ensure the applicant’s name is clearly indicated on the cover sheet and the page(s) being faxed.

For operators seeking clarification on the roles of BC Housing staff at the SHR office, Michael Anhorn, Manager, Supportive Housing, is responsible for SHR applications and assessments (getting applicants into housing); Catherine Talbott, Manager, Special Projects and Community Relations, and her team are responsible for all aspects related to property management, tenant relocations and relations with the SROs (tenants once they are housed).

Tenant relocations proceeding smoothly

The remaining eight tenants who had been living at the Orwell Hotel during renovations were moved temporarily to the Carl Rooms on June 1 after it was learned that it would be necessary to remove drainage pipe throughout the building.

On June 12, St. Helen's Hotel tenants who had been living on the west side of the building moved into the building's newly renovated units on the east side. Now that these relocations are complete, renovations will get underway on the building's west side.

In late June and early July, Park Hotel tenants who had been relocated to various hotels will begin moving back to their renovated units.

Over 600 tenants have been relocated during renovations at the government-owned SROs. "We've had very few issues, as a result of providing lots of support and open communication," said Catherine Talbott, BC Housing's Manager, Special Projects and Community Relations. "We've worked closely with people to meet their basic needs as well as to allay their fears about what would happen and to guarantee them the opportunity to move back to their home post-renovations."

Tenants return to the Walton Hotel

Prior to the renovations, Walton Hotel tenants shared common toilets and showers that were worn, difficult to clean and often not functional. An unreliable kitchen stove was shared between 51 tenants. If tenants plugged in a radio, they ran the risk of tripping a breaker. Some door locks weren't secure, there were holes in walls and the light wells were full of debris. It was a dark, smelly hotel that was impossible to keep clean and systems operational.

The tenants relocated as a group to Tamura House while their old units were gutted and reconstructed. They began moving back on June 18.

"I took the tenants on two tours of the building, so they could see what they'd be moving back to," said Karen O'Shannacery, Executive Director, Lookout Emergency Aid Society. "They were so excited and pleased to see the makeover! They met with the architect to choose the colours in the building. The improvements they're now enjoying include more safety (fire, door hardware and security system), working equipment so they can cook at home and amenity areas that give them leisure space not possible in a 10' by 10' room. It means a building that has been renovated to prevent bedbug infestations, reducing the upset and losses that brings."

The tenants have a large amenity area on the ground floor that includes a TV lounge, a library area and a community kitchen, where they will be able to plan and cook shared meals that save money, improve nutrition and renew budgeting and cooking skills. Thanks to donations, Lookout is able to provide tenants with two shared computers and a free tenant phone which most cannot afford otherwise. The tenants have pride in their home, which will give them a chance to develop a community within the building, in an environment that encourages and fosters the value of each person.

New support teams in place

Atira Property Management looks after the building operations at several of the government-owned SROs. Recently the property management teams have started working hand-in-hand with support services staff from non-profit operators. At the Carl Rooms and Marble Arch, PHS staff provide supports; at the Savoy and Hazelwood hotels, MPA staff provide supports.



Atira Property Management's Philip Smith and June Tait work at the Carl Rooms.



A Walton Hotel unit facing Hastings Street.



Common area kitchens are available on every floor at the Walton Hotel.

Carl Rooms' tenants grateful for their new homes

Tenants moved into the newly renovated Carl Rooms in May. Extensive construction work had required the building to be empty for several months. Here is what two of the tenants said about their new homes....

"I moved in around May 21. I lived on the streets for a couple of years and was staying at the New Fountain Shelter when I was asked if I wanted to apply for a room at one of the BC Housing SROs. You get used to being outside, but it's good to be inside now. It felt very good to come here. It's nice and clean; the staff are very nice. I had nothing when I came here but I got a cheque to buy some things. I used to be a carpenter. But I hurt my leg and was in a wheelchair for 17 months. Now I can't stand for very long. I'm hoping to take some computer courses." – Ivan

"I moved in a couple of weeks ago. It's fine; it feels safe, clean, comfortable. I was across the street at Grace Mansion, which is transitional housing, for two years. Before that I was in the shelter and transitional housing at Belkin House. And before that I was in treatment for drug and alcohol addictions. I needed to find a place to live, but I didn't have any references which made it hard to find anything. Here, I know it's permanent and I don't have to worry about being evicted during the Olympics. There's lots of security here and supports. All I want is to be quiet and peaceful." – Amos*

*Name has been changed.

Bedbugs be gone!

Research indicates that extreme heat (in excess of 40 degrees Celsius) will kill bedbugs, their eggs and their larvae. At the request of Lookout Emergency Aid Society, BC Housing funded testing in which a mattress was heated in a sauna at Kensington Community Centre. The test demonstrated that the sauna was able to raise the temperature of the mattress to above 40 degrees after less than half an hour.

Specifications are now in development for the creation of bedbug saunas for the government-owned SROs. The first are planned for the Walton Hotel and College Place. These rooms will be large enough to hold a mattress as well as clothing and other personal belongings that could be housing bedbugs.

While each unit is anticipated to cost in the area of \$10,000 including installation, the cost savings on annual pest control costs will be significant.

"The cost of combating bedbugs is huge both in terms of money for the replacement furnishings and the staff hours to treat rooms," said Karen O'Shannacery, Executive Director, Lookout Emergency Aid Society. "Treatment also comes at a high cost to the tenant with loss of access to their unit, and the demoralization that affects all of us. Lookout and many others have been desperately trying to find tools to reduce infestations and prevent recurrence. With the saunas, the bug and eggs from anything placed within it will be eliminated. We won't have to replace furniture or mattresses because they may be infested. We can 'de-bug' many items at the same time, reducing disruption for the tenant and for the staff. It means tenants don't lose treasured items such as photos and books. We are relieved that we now

have an effective system to control bedbugs, and very importantly, it gives us hope that no one will have to live with them again!”

Rainier Hotel façade getting a facelift

The Rainier graces the southwest corner of Carrall and Cordova. Built in 1907, the building is representational of the classical revival architectural style and exemplifies the multiple uses of early Gastown buildings and the evolution of the area. The Rainier is currently undergoing a facelift to restore the brick masonry, rehabilitate the upper cornice, paint the window trims, restore the lower cornice, and reconstruct the storefronts. This work, which has received a façade grant from the City of Vancouver, came about after the Rainier’s units were renovated and made available to women who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Scheduled sidewalk improvements as part of the City’s Carrall Street Greenway Project meant an existing areaway attached to the building had to be removed. Repairs to the basement beams, columns, drainage tile and exterior brickwork were also necessary to preserve the Rainier’s structural and environmental integrity. Existing space on the ground level is being adapted to provide lobby, office and tenant amenity space to assist PHS and Vancouver Health Authority to operate the building effectively. Renovations are also required to create four leasable and serviced commercial retail units on the ground floor. Potential revenue from the commercial space over 10 years is estimated at \$2.4 million.



Work is underway to rehabilitate the Rainier Hotel’s façade and to renovate its commercial space.

Storefront framing at the Rainier Hotel.



Demolition of the sheet metal cornice.



Repointed brick work.



An architectural drawing of the Rainier Hotel once the building's façade is restored. The City of Vancouver has given the project a \$100,000 grant for the façade work plus an additional \$50,000 grant to restore the original 1930s art deco-style neon sign.

VRCA members help spruce up Orange Hall SRO

About 40 members of the [Vancouver Regional Construction Association](#) participated in a special community event May 9 organized by its Under 35 Network: painting the common area walls and ceilings of the Orange Hall SRO. Benjamin Moore donated the paint required for the site's four floors of hallways and Cascade Distributors provided the brushes and rollers for the work.

VRCA President Keith Sashaw described the day as a fantastic experience for everyone involved. "Most of the group were project managers – not professional painters, so it was an opportunity to do something related to our field but substantially different from our day-to-day work. Everyone had a great time."

S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the non-profit operator of the Orange Hall provided VRCA volunteers with a light breakfast as well as a full Chinese lunch, which was also open to passers-by. Administrator Alice Choi presented the group with a plaque thanking the members for their contributions to the building's renovations.

Renovations at Orange Hall are expected to be completed in July.



S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s Alice Choi presents a plaque to VRCA's Justin Mattioli (left), chair of the U35 Network, and Fraser McIntosh, coordinator of the day's event.

Remediation of fire-damaged suites at the Washington Hotel

A fire at the Washington Hotel in February 2009 caused extensive damage to four units, public hallways, electrical services, internal finishes, and fire and life safety systems. An investigation determined the fire was caused accidentally inside a unit and the sprinkler system failed to activate due to water valve tampering.

Remediation work has now been completed and additional work has been scoped and tendered to repair the fire-damaged units. A qualified fire protection company has also been engaged to conduct a review of all BC Housing-owned and operational SRO buildings to ensure the fire alarms and sprinkler systems are in working order.

Partners in Action decals

SRO operators are seeing first hand the effectiveness of the Partners in Action program. The program is a partnership between the operators of the government-owned SROs, the Vancouver Police Department, and BC Housing. This partnership is designed to ensure the SROs are a safe, secure, and supportive housing environment.

As part of the program, Partners in Action decals are being displayed at each of the participating hotels. Those hotels currently being renovated will display the decals once construction is complete.

“The feedback I’ve had from front desk staff is that the decals are easy to see and are making a positive impact,” said Kim Stacey, Program Director, Vancouver Native Housing Society. “Provided the police are able to make their presence felt on the sites when needed, the program will be effective. It has made our staff feel supported.”

“The decals are effective in making people realize the SROs displaying them are being run as well as they possibly can be,” said Mark Townsend, Executive Director, PHS. “They indicate that the staff will not try to rip people off or charge them visiting fees or that illegal activities are allowed on site.”



A sample of a Partners in Action decal.

Tentative SRO construction schedule as of June 15, 2009

Hotel	Units ¹	Tenancy status	Non-Profit Operator	Renovation Status	Anticipated Completion Date
Arco Hotel	64	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	Pre-renovation	TBD
Beacon Hotel	40	Empty	PHS Community Services Society	UNDERWAY	July 2009
Carl Rooms	44	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Cordova Residence	34	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	UNDERWAY	July 2009
Dominion Hotel	63	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Drake Hotel ²	26	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Gastown Hotel	93	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	Pre-renovation	TBD
Hazelwood Hotel	112	Tenanted	Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
London Hotel ³	72	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Marble Arch Hotel	138	Phased renovation /partially occupied	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	UNDERWAY	Ph. 1: COMPLETE Ph. 2: July 2009 Ph. 3 & 4: TBD
Marr Hotel	29	Tenanted	Atira Women’s Resource Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Orange Hall	27	Phased renovation /partially occupied	S.U.C.C.E.S.S. ⁴	UNDERWAY	July 2009
Orwell Hotel	55	Empty	Vancouver Native Housing Society	UNDERWAY	October 2009
Park Hotel	50	Phased renovation /partially occupied	Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society	UNDERWAY	June 2009
Pender Hotel	40	Empty	Vancouver Native Housing Society	Pre-renovation	TBD
Phoenix Apartments ³	12	Tenanted	Atira Property Management	No renovations required	COMPLETE
Rainier Hotel	41	Tenanted	PHS Community Services Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE ⁵

The Rice Block	42	Tenanted	Atira Women's Resource Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Roosevelt Hotel	42	Tenanted	PHS Community Services Society	UNDERWAY	August 2009
Savoy Hotel	25	Empty	Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society	UNDERWAY	June 2009
Shaldon Hotel	54	Tenanted	RainCity Housing and Support Society	Pre-renovation	TBD
St. Helen's Hotel	86	Phased renovation /partially occupied	Coast Foundation Society ⁴	UNDERWAY	October 2009
Tamura House	110	Tenanted	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	Pre-renovation	TBD
Walton Hotel	48	Tenanted	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	COMPLETE	COMPLETE

¹ Unit numbers are best estimates of how many units there will be in each building post-renovations.

² This City-owned building is being used for tenant relocations. It will be replaced with a new building managed by RainCity Housing and Support Society.

³ Five-year renewable lease.

⁴ Atira Property Management is managing this building until renovations are complete, at which time the non-profit operator will take over management.

⁵ Residential renovations are complete. Renovations to the commercial are expected to be complete by August 2009.

Streethome Foundation website features "We are all the key" film

Streethome, a community-based foundation working to ensure that all Vancouver citizens have access to safe, decent and affordable housing by 2015, has produced a short film entitled "We are all the key." You can view the film from the foundation's website at www.streethome.org.

Streethome believes there are two sides to the homeless story. On one side is the story of people and common decency. This side of the story focuses on the human right of people to have access to safe and decent housing in a civil society. The other side of the story is about common sense. Studies from various cities show that taxpayers pay anywhere from \$55,000 to \$135,000 a year for someone who is experiencing homelessness.

EMERGENCY SHELTER PROGRAM

HEAT shelter report

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson created the Homeless Emergency Action Team last December to identify immediate action steps the City and its partners could take to get homeless people off the streets and into safe and secure housing over the winter months.

Five shelters, funded by the City, the Province and Streethome Foundation, and operated by PHS Community Services Society, RainCity Housing and Support Society, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, and First United Church with assistance from Lookout Emergency Aid Society, were opened, and gave shelter to an average of 433 people per night over a three-month period. The shelters accommodated people with shopping carts and pets and provided refuge for some of Vancouver's most street entrenched homeless people. The success of the initiative led to the City and the Province agreeing to extend operations of the HEAT shelters until June 30, 2009.

HEAT members identified three key next steps:

1. Extend the shelters opened through the HEAT initiative to April 30, 2010;
2. Develop a blueprint to implement the City's Homeless Action Plan by 2015; and,
3. Develop a Civic Engagement Strategy aimed at involving Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness at the neighbourhood level.

The City of Vancouver's April 27, 2009 report can be accessed [here](#).

SPCA works to support pets in shelters

One of the reasons the HEAT shelters have been successful is because they allow people with pets. A homeless person who has a pet usually has a very strong bond with the animal. The unconditional love that pet gives is tremendously important to someone who does not have a network of friends or family who they can trust or count on for support.

The BCSPCA has offered critical assistance to the HEAT shelters. Kim Monteith, Animal Welfare Supervisor, dropped off crates when the shelters first opened and also brings food by whenever she can. Kim also visits homeless people in drop-in centres and squats to offer a helping hand with animal care.

“Some shelter operators worry that pets are unruly, aggressive, dirty and not house trained,” said Monteith. “These animals are actually very well socialized. Otherwise they would be targeted by police and animal control.”

Monteith also credits the HEAT shelters with keeping many pets safe and warm over the past winter. “These shelters helped many animals who would otherwise have had to stay outdoors in the cold. Many of the pet owners have been working with outreach workers to find permanent housing, which will also benefit the animals.”



Photo credit: Kirsten Bole, [Feeding Pets of the Homeless](#)

WHO'S WHO

Vancouver's Community Non-Profit Partners

Sixteen 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 and Atira Property Management	www.atira.bc.ca 604-331-1407	SRO Operator (566 Powell Street; Arco Hotel; Carl Rooms; Cordova Residence; Dominion Hotel; Drake Hotel; Gastown Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel; London Hotel; Marble Arch Hotel; Marr Hotel; Park Hotel; Rice Block; Savoy Hotel); 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)
Coast Foundation Society	www.coastmentalhealth.com 604-872-3502	SRO Operator (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	Homeless Outreach Program (Grandview)
Lookout Emergency Aid Society	www.lookoutsociety.bc.ca 604-255-0340	SRO Operator (Tamara House; Walton Hotel; College Place Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Yukon Shelter; Lookout Downtown Shelter)
MPA Society	www.mpa-society.org 604-482-3700	SRO Support Services (Savoy Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Kitsilano)
PHS Community Services Society	604-683-0073	SRO Operator (Roosevelt Hotel; Rainier Hotel; Beacon Hotel); SRO Support Services (Carl Rooms; Marble Arch Hotel; Park Hotel)
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 Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada	www.salvationarmy.org 604-299-3908	Emergency Shelter Program (Belkin House; The Haven; The Beacon; Crosswalk)
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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