



## EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

### REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: July 4, 2017

SUBJECT: Project Watch Quarterly Update (April – June, 2017)

---

#### RECOMMENDATION(S):

That this report be received for information.

#### INTRODUCTION:

This report will summarize and update the current status of the Project Watch Task Force (PWTF).

The PWTF was formed to address crime, disorder and violence occurring in and around several Edmonton hotels, motels, as well as rental accommodations. Many of these locations were found to house numerous families and vulnerable persons, including vulnerable workers in derelict conditions. In response to this situation, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) has taken the lead in forming an integrated team (not formalized) to address these concerns city wide.

On April 24, 2015, subsequent to a Project Watch presentation provided by Chief Knecht to the Edmonton Police Commission (EPC), EPS was requested to provide quarterly updates on the status of Project Watch, going forward.

#### BACKGROUND:

In January 2016, EPS formalized a position for the Project Watch Coordinator within Collaborative Policing Section. In June 2016, the Project Watch program was moved to Coordinated Policing Division/Integrated Community Safety Branch. The current external agencies are the City of Edmonton (CoE) Development Compliance, Edmonton Fire and Rescue (EFRS), Alberta Health Services (AHS), Child and Family Services (CFS), Alberta Works and Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S).

#### Summary:

In this quarter the PWTF conducted eight new initial inspections of rental accommodations which consisted of apartment buildings and two residences. Two follow-up inspections were conducted of apartment buildings that were non-compliant with outstanding PWTF orders and violation notices. The majority of all occupants in the buildings inspected were vulnerable persons on assistance. Three infants were rescued as a result of neglect concerns (during three different inspections) including exposure to methamphetamine. Several families had to

be relocated to safer housing as a result of dangerous living conditions needing additional supports including food, toiletries and transportation. One of the apartment buildings under investigation by Project Watch was the subject of a recent fire. All occupants of the building were safely evacuated from the building which is completely destroyed. PWTF external partners are currently working with the occupants to ensure they are safely re-housed.

#### **Inspection Details Conducted in April – June 2017:**

##### **1. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Apartment Building, 2017 April 6**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by a housing worker from Hope Mission.
- In consultation with West Division, it was determined that police have had numerous calls (most of them involving violence, weapons and drugs) for service to this location.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - There was a heavy street gang presence in and around the building.
  - The housing worker advised that the owner of the building was refusing to adequately repair any safety concerns in and around the building.
  - There were unauthorized occupants living in the storage rooms of the building.
  - There was evidence of drug use (syringes) found in the common areas and the storage rooms.
  - There was no “smoke free” egress in the building in the event of a fire.

##### **Orders/Action planned:**

- AHS issued an order for the immediate repairs to the front and rear doors of the building and a cleanup of the storage rooms. Unoccupied suites have been closed pending a full inspection by AHS prior to re-occupying. The majority of the suites had issues with non-functioning appliances and holes in the walls. There was extensive mould in the laundry room and broken windows throughout the building. AHS issued orders for all safety concerns to be remediated.
- Alberta Works is currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports and investigating several clients for abusing their supports.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning smoke alarms and are currently investigating why the building does not have an adequate “smoke free” escape in the event of a fire.
- OH&S has also issued an order for a hazard assessment for asbestos containing materials, an eyewash station for the building (as per the WHMIS requirements for onsite cleaning supplies) and a “sharps” container for syringes/needles.
- The West Division Community Liaison Team will be monitoring the building for any “found ins” illegally occupying the insecure building and ongoing monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

- The CoE will be following up with Community Standards for enforcement regarding garbage, debris and graffiti found throughout the property.

## **2. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Apartment Building, 2017 April 13**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.
  - AHS noted that the building was in a state of disrepair with both entrances to the building insecure with numerous broken windows and holes in the walls.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - The main floor interior walls and exterior walls were heavily tagged with street gang graffiti including the main apartment signage.
  - There were blood stains on the staircase from a recent aggravated assault in the building.
  - There were used, discarded syringes found in the common areas throughout the building and it appeared that unauthorized occupants were living in the boiler room.
  - EFRS noted that almost all smoke alarms in the building were either missing or non-functioning with all fire doors damaged or improperly installed.

### Orders/Action planned:

- AHS issued an order for the immediate repairs to the front and rear doors of the building and a cleanup of all the syringes in the common area. Unoccupied suites have been closed pending a full inspection by AHS prior to re-occupying. There were extensive violation notices and orders issued to the owners to address all safety concerns including water leaks, non-functioning appliances as well as a lack of adequate heat in many of the suites.
- Alberta Works/AISH are currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports. One of the occupants on AISH was being exploited by street gang members that were using her suite for parties and to house unauthorized occupants. She has been relocated to safer housing. Another AISH client appeared to be a "hoarder" with over 5' of bags of rotten garbage accumulating in one of his rooms. AHS and AISH will be working together to provide additional supports and monitoring.
- CFS has initiated several investigations with regards to children at risk for neglect concerns including drug use by the parents and or guardians. Investigations are ongoing.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning smoke alarms and has issued violation notices to address all fire safety concerns including the insecure/damaged fire doors.
- OH&S has also issued an order for a hazard assessment for asbestos containing materials, an eyewash station for the building (as per the WHMIS requirements for onsite cleaning supplies) and a "sharps" container for syringes/needles.

- There were several unauthorized (homeless) persons found staying in the building during the inspection. Alberta Works/AISH is currently assisting them in finding adequate supports and shelter. The PWTF provided toiletry bags to numerous occupants who were in need.
- The West Division Community Liaison Team will be monitoring the building for any "found ins" illegally occupying the insecure building and ongoing monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.
- It should be noted that during one of the follow-up inspections of this location, a male who was accessing the building was arrested with outstanding criminal warrants and was in possession of offensive weapon and break in tools.

### **3. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Northwest Division Apartment Building, 2017 May 11**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.
  - Both the main entrances to the building were insecure.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - There were unauthorized occupants living in the storage rooms.
  - The building had several extensive water leaks.
  - Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
  - There was extensive drug and street gang activity in and around the building including numerous violent calls for service.
  - One of the main exit doors could not be opened from the inside in the event of a fire.

#### Orders/Action planned:

- AHS issued a violation notice for the immediate repairs to the front and rear doors of the building and a general cleanup of the common areas.
- CFS will be following up with an open CFS investigation involving a mother who is allegedly actively doing prostitution in her suite. Investigations are ongoing.
- Alberta Works and AISH have identified a number of clients who are falsely claiming this address as their residence. They are following up with the occupants to ensure they are receiving adequate supports and safe housing.
- EFRS has issued a violation notice for the owner to replace several missing and or non-functioning smoke alarms, including expired fire extinguishers.
- The Northwest Division patrol member (in charge) will be monitoring the building for any "found-ins" illegally occupying the insecure building and monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

**4. Project Watch Follow-up Inspection: West Division Apartment  
2017 May 11**

- The request for Project Watch to re-inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency Child and Family Services. The initial PWTF inspection of this location was on October 8, 2016.
  - CFS had recently attended the building for a child apprehension.
  - The building had several broken windows with debris and garbage in and around the building.
  - Several of the suites in the building had been previously closed by AHS for water leaks, windows boarded up, missing flooring and mould. The owner was in violation of the AHS order by re-occupying the closed suites.

Orders/Action planned:

- CFS conducted an emergency apprehension of a two month old infant and two siblings (ages 9 and 10) for child neglect and evidence of drug abuse in the suite. The baby had been exposed to drugs and was wearing a diaper that had been left on long enough that it had fused with her skin. The baby was transported to hospital and investigations are ongoing.
- AHS-Environmental Health has confirmed that closed suites have been re-occupied in contravention of their orders. Investigations are ongoing.
- PWTF will be conducting a full door to door inspection of the entire building at a later date.

**5. Project Watch Follow-up Inspection: Northwest Division Apartment  
2017 May 11**

- The initial request for Project Watch to re-inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.
  - The building was in breach of several outstanding AHS orders.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
  - There was extensive drug and street gang activity in and around the building (including new street gang tagging) as well as numerous violent calls for service.

Orders/Action planned:

- CFS conducted an emergency apprehension of a one month old infant for child neglect and evidence of drug abuse in the suite. The father of the child was associated to a street gang and had extensive street gang tagging inside the suite. The father admitted to recent methamphetamine use and did not even know his baby's name. The baby had been exposed to drugs and was substantially underweight from malnourishment. The baby has been taken to hospital and investigations are ongoing.

- Alberta Works and AISH have identified a number of clients who are falsely claiming this address as their residence. They are following up with the occupants to ensure they are receiving adequate supports and safe housing. The PWTF provided a number of toiletry bags to occupants who were in need as well as colouring books to children.
- EFRS has issued a violation notice for the owner to replace several missing and or non-functioning smoke alarms.
- AHS-Environmental Health will be escalating their orders (recommending fines) for all outstanding breaches to their existing orders.
- The Northwest Division CCMT members will be monitoring the building for any “found-ins” illegally occupying the insecure building and monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

**6. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Apartment  
2017 May 18**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by a West Division CCMT Member.
  - There were numerous calls for service with the vast majority of them violent in nature to the location.
  - There was an obvious sinking of the structure of the building with over a 6” drop in the floor in places.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - There was extensive street gang tagging in and around the building.
  - Both the front and rear main doors were insecure.

Orders/Action planned:

- CFS conducted an emergency apprehension of a one year old. There is no birth record for the child and obvious signs of child neglect. Investigations are ongoing.
- AHS issued orders for the insecure front and rear doors to immediately be repaired. There were extensive water leaks and structural concerns including sinking floors and door frames that were twisting on all floors. There are extensive orders and violation notices that have been issued including a request to have an engineer assess the structure of the building. Investigations are ongoing.
- Alberta Works/AISH is currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports. It should be noted that none of the occupants interviewed were properly reporting their address to Alberta Works. Alberta Works/AISH are conducting investigations into possible abuse of benefits by several of the occupants.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning and absent smoke alarms, as well as numerous fire-safety concerns. The fire alarm system was not functioning and the owner was required to have it repaired before the days end.

- The West Division CCMT members assisted with the arrest of an unauthorized occupant who had outstanding criminal warrants. They will be monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

**7. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Rental Accommodation  
2017 June 2**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by the Child at Risk Response Team.
  - There were numerous young children living in the residence with their mother(s) that were on government assistance.
  - There was a heavy street gang presence in the house with a number of unauthorized occupants staying there.
  - Both toilets in the residence were not working and overflowing.
  - There was evidence of drug use throughout the house including used syringes.
  - There was human feces on the walls and evidence of several water leaks.
  - It was suspected that the water coming into the house is contaminated and not safe to drink.

Orders/Action planned:

- CFS and AISH determined that the mother is on dialysis and two of her six children are also disabled. The family has been relocated to safer accommodations and additional supports are being provided. Another child was apprehended for a child neglect concern. The child and his mother were staying in the residence without authorization. A total of seven children were rescued from the residence. There were a number of "homeless" that had been identified as staying in the residence. The PWTF is currently working on finding housing for these individuals (some were on already on assistance and it was a matter of connecting them to their caseworkers). Investigations are ongoing.
- AHS has closed the residence as "unfit for human habitation". The residence was in a state of extreme neglect. Investigations are ongoing.
- CoE will be conducting follow-up investigations with what appear to be illegal suites in the basement and additional development compliance concerns including inappropriate storage on the property. Investigations are ongoing.
- The Northwest Division CCMT members will be monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

**8. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Northwest Division Rental Accommodation  
2017 June 27**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.

- This was a well-known problem property associated to street gangs.
- All of the occupants were on government assistance.
- There was no power to the residence.
- The front decking and railing system was rotten and appeared to be collapsing.
- The residence was infested with mice.
- There was mould throughout the house and numerous safety codes concerns including a lack of insulation in the ceiling.

Orders/Action planned:

- AHS will be issuing an order for the owner to address all outstanding AHS concerns. The residence currently has no power. Investigations are ongoing.
- The Northwest Division CCMT members will be monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

**9. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Apartment  
2017 June 29**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.
  - There were numerous calls for service with the vast majority of them violent in nature to the location.
  - AHS-Environmental Health has already closed one of the suites as "unfit for human habitation).
  - Some of the occupants in the building were on government assistance.
  - Problem tenants have already been evicted and there appears to be substantial renovations in progress.

Orders/Action planned:

- AHS has already issued orders for the one of the suites (now vacant) that had numerous health and safety concerns including water leaks. Investigations are ongoing.
- Alberta Works/AISH is currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning and absent smoke alarms.
- Overall the rest of the building was well maintained and clean.



**10. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Downtown Division Apartment Building,  
2017 June 29**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was from a worker from Housing First-Homeward Trust.
  - Both the main entrances to the building were insecure.
  - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
  - There were unauthorized occupants urinating in the common areas.
  - Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
  - There was extensive drug and street gang activity in and around the building including numerous violent calls for service.

**Orders/Action planned:**

- AHS issued a violation notice for the immediate repairs to the front and rear doors.
- Alberta Works and AISH have identified a number of clients who are falsely claiming this address as their residence. One of the occupants on assistance has a diagnosed mental illness and is a "hoarder". There were substantial concerns with the state of the suite and her ability to take care of herself. AHS and AISH will be assisting the occupant with additional supports.
- EFRS has issued a violation notice for the owner to replace several missing and or non-functioning smoke alarms, including expired fire extinguishers.
- The Downtown Division BEATS will be monitoring the building for any "found-ins" illegally occupying the insecure building and monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders. Investigations are ongoing.

**PWTF Project Outcomes:**

**1. West Division Apartment Complex**

- The initial Project Watch inspection of both locations was conducted in November, 2014. The following is a summary of the initial concerns identified by Project Watch at both locations:
  - The complex was responsible for numerous police calls for service, namely violence, weapons complaints and drug complaints.
  - The buildings were in complete disrepair with an extensive infestation of cockroaches, bed bugs, mice and ants.
  - The location had outstanding AHS concerns with multiple suites closed as "unfit" for habitation for safety concerns including raw sewage backing up into suites.
  - The majority of the occupants were on government assistance.
- With group enforcement, including orders and violation notices from EFRS, OH&S and by AHS, the owner(s) listed the apartment for sale. The new ownership group has been working closely with the PWTF and has completed substantial renovations and is

currently in compliance with all outstanding PWTF orders and violation notices. The ownership group provided a tour of the complex for the PWTF and plans to participate in the EPS Crime Free Multi-Housing Program going forward.

- There has been a substantial reduction in not only police calls for service, but a notable reduction in the severity of crimes that had been occurring at the apartment. The renovations are quite remarkable and the PWTF was extremely pleased with the work so far.

## **2. Child and Family Services Project Watch Outcomes January 2017- Present:**

- PWTF External Agency Child and Family Services provided the following statistics with regards to vulnerable families on assistance identified in problem properties during inspections:
  - From January 2017-Present, the PWTF has assisted 168 families.
  - Six children (including three infants) were rescued by the PWTF for child neglect concerns including drug, alcohol and violence (over and above the unsafe housing conditions).
  - Several families were relocated to safer housing and assistance was provided to almost all families. PWTF advocated with caseworkers, provided additional supports, transportation, toiletries and activity bags.

### **Relationships with External Agencies:**

On June 8-9, 2017, the PWTF attended the 7 Cities Conference on Housing and Homelessness. There were several interagency presenters and experts speaking on housing vulnerable populations, advocacy and collaboration.

On June 28, 2017, Project Watch was presented to Edmonton Fire Rescue Services (EFRS) and Safe Housing Branch. In attendance were Fire Prevention Officers, Fire Marshals, Captains and Deputy Chief Croome. There were discussions on collaboration and outcomes.

### **Terms of Reference:**

The formalization of the Terms of Reference and Memorandums of Understandings are still in progress. The final draft of the MOU has been submitted for a legal/FOIP review. This process is overseen by EPS Investment Governance Section.

### **Upcoming:**

The PWTF will continue to identify and conduct joint inspections of problem properties housing vulnerable persons and workers. Project Watch currently has several ongoing investigations of apartment buildings and a motel.

Project Watch will be ensuring safety compliance, as well as accountability for occupants and owners. Project Watch will continue to monitor previously inspected properties for compliance and ensure the safety of occupants and in some cases conduct re-inspections as needed.

**Written by:** Sergeant Kevin FALD, Project Watch, Coordinated Policing Division  
**Reviewed By:** Inspector Teri UHRYN, Policing Innovation Branch  
**Approved by:** Superintendent David VEITCH, I/C Coordinated Policing Division *David Veitch*

**Chief of Police:** 

**Date:** JUL 10 2017



Kevin Brezinski  
Deputy Chief of Police



2017-07-04