



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: April 11, 2017

SUBJECT: Project Watch Quarterly Update (January – March, 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 monthly 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).

Inspections Conducted in January – March 2017:

1. Project Watch Follow-up Inspection: Southeast Division Motel, 2017 January 12

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency Alberta Works/AISH.

- In consultation with Southeast 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.
 - Several of the occupants were being used as vulnerable workers for dangerous repairs and renovations to the building.
 - Throughout the investigation it was learned that the motel was violating its intended use of the property by operating as an apartment building/rooming house.
 - AHS/EFRS have already issued numerous violation notices and orders for safety concerns as well as non-functioning appliances. There continues to be numerous fire safety concerns as well as mice and bedbug infestations.
 - This was an initial inspection for CoE (Development Compliance) and OH&S.

Orders/Action planned:

- The CoE's (Development Compliance) has issued immediate fines and orders for misuse of the property. This is an extremely complex investigation as parts of the building have been given permits to operate as an apartment, with other parts of the property (two residential houses) permitted to be rental accommodations. CoE believes that the building was never given an actual permit to operate as a motel. Their investigations are ongoing.
- AHS continues to monitor and enforce their safety concerns while the property is still in operation.
- Alberta Works is currently working with all remaining occupants to relocate them to safer accommodations, due to the likely closure of the building.
- OH&S found evidence of substantial renovations taking place using vulnerable workers. A full hazard assessment request order was issued for sampling for asbestos containing materials.
- The Southeast Community Crime Management Team (CCMT) members will be monitoring the building for any further crime and disorder issues in and around the building, including ongoing monitoring for compliance to outstanding safety concerns.

2. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Downtown Division Apartment Building, 2017 January 19

- 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, active water leaks as well as an infestation of bed bugs and mice.
 - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - The main floor interior walls and exterior walls were tagged with gang graffiti. Several of the suites had broken appliances and heating issues.

- Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
- There were used, discarded syringes found in the common areas throughout the building.
- EFRS noted that the building was in violation of a Fire Code STANDATA mandating a smoke-free egress in the stairwells.

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.
- Alberta Works is currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning smoke alarms and has issued an order to address the outstanding STANDATA violation.
- 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 Downtown 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.

3. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Northwest Division Apartment Building, 2017 January 20

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by the PWTF external agency AHS-Environmental Health.
 - The main entrances to the building were insecure.
 - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - There was a major infestation of bed bugs, cockroaches and mice.
 - The building had several extensive water leaks.
 - Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
 - There was extensive drug and gang activity in and around the building.

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 including a request to have an engineer assess the ongoing water leaks.
- CFS initiated several investigations for child neglect. 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.
- 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 of a West Division Motel, 2017 February 8

- A follow-up inspection (previously inspected by the PWTF) was conducted at a west end motel; which is currently housing vulnerable families waiting for housing.
 - The focus of the inspections were to ensure compliance to any outstanding violation notices, ensure that each facility is providing a safe environment and that the occupants are safe with adequate supports. The PWTF has a limited supply of basic toiletries to provide vulnerable persons as needed.
 - It was the general feeling of the Project Watch inspectors that the motel’s overall cleanliness and maintenance was beginning to decline.
 - During a previous inspection, it was noted by the PWTF that the vulnerable families were in need of basic toiletries for the children and parents.
 - Project Watch has asked for Alberta Works to ban the use of this motel due to the lack of monthly rates, non-functioning appliances, mice infestation and an overall poor treatment of the occupants.

Additional Orders / Actions Planned:

- CFS and Alberta Works will continue to work with families and individuals needing further supports and working with their case workers to get them properly housed. CFS had to conduct an apprehension of children (the mother had outstanding warrants).
- The PWTF provided toiletry bags for vulnerable families including colouring/activity books and crayons for the children. Every vulnerable family in the motel was in need of basic toiletries.

5. Project Watch Initial Inspection: West Division Apartment building 2017 February 9

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by a follow-up support worker from Jasper Place Wellness Centre.
 - The building was poorly maintained with active water leaks, bed bugs and mice infestation.
 - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - The building had several extensive water leaks.

- Many of the smoke alarms were not working in the building.
- There was extensive drug and gang activity in and around the building as well as numerous violent calls for service.

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 including a request to have an engineer assess concerns that the front wall of the building is sinking (significant sloping on the floor and foundation cracks).
- CFS initiated several investigations for child neglect. 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.
- CoE issued notices to the owner to clean up massive piles of garbage stockpiled at the rear of the building. CoE arranged for a safety codes officer to assess the structural concerns with the balconies (several of them appear to be rotten), including the foundation of the building that appears to be sinking.
- OH&S has issued an order for an asbestos hazard assessment as there are several suites (heavily damaged by neglect and occupants) that will need substantial renovations. OH&S has also issued an order for onsite sharps containers for staff to deal with the large quantity of used syringes found throughout the building.
- The West 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 March 8**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by a follow-up support worker from Jasper Place Wellness Centre.
 - The occupants on the lower floor of the building had raw sewage backing up into their suites.
 - There were used syringes found in and around the building.
 - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - There was an infestation of bed bugs in the building.

Orders/Action planned:

- AHS issued a violation notice for the immediate repairs to any non-functioning appliances, missing and broken windows, and proper pest control for a bed-bug infestation in the building.
- 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, as well as numerous fire-safety concerns.
- The West Division CCMT members will be monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.
- The CoE will be following up with what appears to be illegally occupied suites, violating the intended use of the property.

**7. Project Watch Initial Inspection: Southwest Division Apartment
2017 March 30**

- The initial request for Project Watch to inspect this location was by an occupant (on assistance) that was living in the building.
 - There was a recent home invasion where a firearm was discharged through an apartment door into a suite containing children.
 - The building overall was in disrepair with several suites with active water leaks and mould.
 - Several of the balconies were saturated with water and appeared to be rotten.
 - There were used syringes found in and around the building.
 - Most of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - There was an infestation of bed bugs and mice in the building.

Orders/Action planned:

- AHS issued orders to address the balcony structural concerns and active water leaks/mould.
- CFS conducted an emergency apprehension of two young children (mother had outstanding warrants) for child neglect and evidence of drug abuse in the suite. Another investigation of child neglect (different suite) is ongoing.
- Alberta Works and AISH have identified a number of clients who are falsely claiming this address as their residence. They are currently working with the occupants to confirm they are receiving adequate supports.
- EFRS has issued violation notices regarding non-functioning and absent smoke alarms, as well as numerous fire-safety concerns. Of note, EFRS requested the dangerous

goods team to attend and remediate the large quantity of used syringes found in and around the building.

- The Southwest CCMT members assisted in an arrest in the building during the inspection and will be monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.
- The CoE will be following up with Safety Codes Branch for an inspection of the balconies that appear to be unsafe.

PWTF Project Outcomes:

1. Southeast Division Apartment Complex and a Motel

- The initial Project Watch inspection of both locations was conducted in October, 2016. The following is a summary of the initial concerns identified by Project Watch at both locations:
 - Both complexes were responsible for numerous police calls for service, namely violence, weapons complaints and drug complaints.
 - The buildings were in complete disrepair with clear CoE violations of the intended use of the property, safety codes concerns and permit violations.
 - Both locations had outstanding AHS concerns with six suites closed as “unfit” for habitation in the apartment building.
 - The majority of the occupants were on government assistance.
 - OH&S identified that at both locations vulnerable persons on assistance were being used to conduct dangerous renovations at both locations.
- With group enforcement, including orders and violation notices from EFRS, OH&S and by AHS, the owner listed the apartment for sale. With regards to the motel, it is the intent of the owner to demolish the building for newer multi-floor senior’s complex.
- With regards to outstanding CoE concerns, three CoE departments (Safety Codes Branch, Development Compliance and Community Standards) are currently working together to hold owners accountable for violations. All three departments will be working with Project Watch going forward as needed and will be working towards coordinating resources, enforcement as well as information sharing.
- Updates regarding CoE outcomes at both locations will be provided on the next quarterly report.

Relationships with External Agencies:

In February, 2017, Superintendent Veitch and Sergeant Fald presented to Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. Bill Sweeney. Mr. Sweeney is currently working on organizing an ADM working group to specifically work with Project Watch going forward. There will be an update on this initiative on the next quarterly report.

In February, 2017, Superintendent Veitch attended the first Residential Living Initiate working committee on behalf of EPS and the PWTF. The focus of the group (there has been several meetings to date) was on better coordination and support between agencies/departments for problem properties. There were discussions on governance and resource allocation between Project Watch and CoE Problem Properties. This group will be meeting monthly.

In March, 2017, the PWTF hosted an interagency training day and Fentanyl awareness workshop at the ALERT West Campus building. The event was well attended with representation from AHS-Environmental Health, OH&S (Edmonton and Calgary), CFS, Alberta Works/AISH, EFRS, EMS, CoE (Safety Codes, Community Standards and Development Compliance) and SCAN (Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods). There were several interagency presenters and experts speaking on Fentanyl exposure, process, treatment and remediation. The PWTF will be conducting this type of interagency cross training regularly going forward.

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:

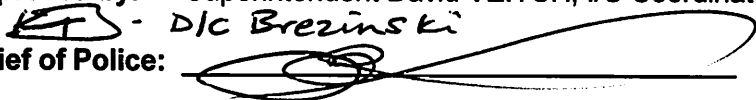
The PWTF will continue to identify and conduct joint inspections of problem properties housing vulnerable persons and workers. Project Watch currently has several ongoing investigations of apartment buildings and a motel.

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.

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