



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: 2016 July 14

SUBJECT: Project Watch Quarterly Update (March – May, 2016)

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.

The Project Watch Task Force was formed to address crime, disorder and violence occurring in and around several Edmonton hotels, motels, as well as rental accommodations (initially in West Division). Many of these locations were found to house numerous families and vulnerable persons 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. The current external agencies (not formalized) are City of Edmonton Development Compliance (co-coordinator for Project Watch and liaison for other City of Edmonton departments), Edmonton Fire and Rescue (fire prevention officers), Alberta Health Services (environmental health officers), Child and Family Services (caseworkers / supervisors), Alberta Works (caseworkers / supervisors) and Occupational Health & Safety (safety officers).

COMMENTS/DISCUSSION:

Project Watch Initial Inspection: "Motel" (Southeast Division), 2016 March 03:

- The initial request came from Project Watch partnering agency, Alberta Works, which has been using this location to house families/vulnerable persons on assistance.

- In consultation with Southeast Division, it was determined that police have had numerous calls for service to this location (Southeast Division also requested a Project Watch inspection of this location).
- The building is in poor condition with poor overall maintenance.
- The building is currently operating like a hybrid of an apartment (*Residential Tenancies Act*) and a motel (*Innkeeper's Act*).
- Orders/Action planned:
 - City of Edmonton (CoE), Development Compliance will be confirming that the motel, which is now operating as an apartment building, is not violating the permitted "use" of the property.
 - Child & Family Services (CFS) and Alberta Works will be following up with any child welfare concerns, as well as any individuals on assistance in poor living conditions and will attempt to re-locate them.
 - Alberta Health Services (AHS) will be issuing additional orders to repair insecure doors, broken windows, poorly maintained and non-functioning appliances and to remove screens screwed over top of windows (rendering them inoperable as fire exits). Orders for proper bed bug treatment will be issued as well (several of the occupants were self-treating).
 - Fire and Rescue Services (EFRS) has previously issued orders/violation notices regarding non-functioning and absent smoke alarms, as well as numerous fire safety concerns including what appears to be a non-functioning fire alarm system and blocked fire escapes.
 - Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) previously identified a ladder that was tied between rooftops with baler twine and will be issuing orders for it to be removed.
 - Southeast Division Community Liaison will be working with the owner on evicting problem tenants and ongoing monitoring for compliance to Project Watch violation notices and orders.

Project Watch Initial Inspection: "The Apartments" (Northeast Division), 2016 March 31

- The initial information came from Capital Region Housing regarding numerous safety concerns at "The Apartments" after they had inspected one of their client's suites, in February 2016.
- Almost simultaneously, Northeast Division advised that police had 133 calls for service in 2015 and had seen an increase in violent crimes in and around the area. Northeast Division advised that this was one of their most dense "crime and disorder" areas in the division and requested assistance from the Project Watch Task Force.
- In consultation with Alberta Health, it was learned that "The Apartments" had outstanding health violation notices for numerous health concerns including a collapsed sewer main to three buildings, broken doors and windows, as well as an outbreak of bed bug and cockroach infestations throughout the complex.
- The Project Watch Task Force, with the assistance of the Northeast Division Beat and Offender Management teams, inspected eight of 17 buildings.
- During the inspection, it was determined that the majority of the occupants housed at "The Apartments" were on varying levels of government assistance, including Homeward Trust, Alberta Works (AISH) and Capital Region Housing.

- It was also determined that there were several newly immigrated families housed at “The Apartments”, with many of them also on assistance.
- In several of the suites, the Project Watch Task Force members could visibly see the cockroaches moving throughout the rooms and hallways, including several of the main entryways into the suites. Environmental Health Officers noted this was likely due to overcrowding of the cockroach population. Alberta Health advised cockroaches are typically nocturnal and it is unusual to see them in the daytime.
- Throughout the complex, the Project Watch Task Force noted “gang” tagging, as well as numerous insecure doors and windows covered with plywood.
- Orders / Actions Planned:
 - AHS has issued orders to address the primary concern of the extreme outbreak of cockroaches and bed bugs. Alberta Health has issued orders to repair insecure doors, broken windows and to conduct a thorough clean-up of debris and garbage found throughout the property.
 - CFS and Alberta Works are working with families and individuals identified as “at risk”, due to the infestation of bed bugs and cockroaches, to help relocate them during remediation. Three emergency investigations for child neglect have commenced where there were no groceries or necessities of life in the home for the children.
 - EFRS issued orders / violation notices regarding non-functioning (or in many cases absent) smoke alarms and breaches in fire separations in the buildings.
 - OH&S has confirmed there are materials containing asbestos throughout the complex and therefore issued an immediate stop work order for any renovations, pending comprehensive testing and an asbestos abatement/management plan.
 - Northeast Division Beats and Offender Management teams will be working with the property managers to evict problem tenants and monitor compliance of Project Watch violation notices and orders.
 - CoE Development Compliance will coordinate general graffiti/site cleanup with Bylaw and CoE Community Standards.
 - The ownership group of “The Apartments” is currently consulting with the EPS Crime Free Multi-Housing (CFMH) Program to assist in providing a long-term solution to make “The Apartments” a safe environment for tenants and staff.

Project Watch Inspection: “The Apartments” (Northeast Division), 2016 April 28

- This was a continuation of the original inspection of “The Apartments” conducted on March 31, 2016.
- The Project Watch Task Force, with the assistance of the Northeast Division BEATS and Offender Management, inspected the remaining nine of 17 buildings.
- In the previous inspection, numerous families were identified as relatively new immigrants to Canada and Aboriginal families staying at “The Apartments”. As a result, EPS’s Aboriginal Relations Detail and Equity, Diversity & Human Rights Section attended the inspection to assist.
- During the inspection, it became apparent to the Project Watch inspectors that little, if any, repairs had been completed from the initial inspection.
- The Project Watch Task Force noted there was still “gang” tagging, as well as some new tagging. Although a lot of the garbage on the grounds had been removed, used

syringes were found throughout the grounds, including hallways and stairwells of several buildings.

- Additional Orders / Actions Planned:
 - AHS has issued additional orders (now totalling over 300 AHS violations) addressing urgent infrastructure issues in several of the inspected suites, including water leaks, non-functioning appliances and in one case, a suite without a toilet.
 - CFS and Alberta Works continue to work with families and individuals identified as “at risk” for potential relocation, due to the infestation of bed bugs and cockroaches. An emergency apprehension of a five-month-old child and a nine-year-old child was conducted by CFS and the parents have been charged by EPS with “causing a child to be in need of intervention”, contrary to section 130 (a) of the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. (EPS File #16-66047 refers).
 - EFRS issued additional orders / violation notices regarding non-functioning or missing smoke alarms and breaches in fire separations in the buildings inspected.
 - Northeast Division BEATS and Offender Management are continuing to work with the property managers to evict problem tenants and monitor compliance of Project Watch violation notices/orders.
 - CoE Development Compliance is currently coordinating graffiti/site cleanup with Bylaw and CoE Community Standards. They are coordinating with the CoE Safety Codes Branch to inspect the balconies which continue to have structural issues.
 - The Property Managers for “The Apartments” have registered to attend EPS’s CFMH course. EPS CFMH coordinators are consulting with the property managers on requirements for “The Apartments” to become part of the CFMH program.

Relationships with External Agencies:

On March 8, 2016, Sergeant Kevin Fald, along with Dr. Tami Masterson, CoE; Brent Craig, and Rebecca Johnson, AHS, presented the Project Watch – Vulnerable Families and Housing presentation to O’Chiese First Nations, Metis First Nations and Bent Arrow, which was very well received. Constable Dale Brenneis then presented on the benefits of the CFMH program, which all three agencies wish to pursue.

Capital Region Housing has been actively working with the Project Watch Task Force to identify safe and unsafe locations being used to house vulnerable families/persons in Edmonton.

Alberta Works is consulting with the Project Watch Task Force on identifying safe locations, which will be utilized to temporarily house the homeless from Fort McMurray.

On May 31, 2016, in conjunction with Equity, Diversity & Human Rights Section, Sergeant Kevin Fald presented to RCMP, Edmonton Refugee Volunteers, REACH, Catholic Social Services (CSS), CSS Immigration & Settlement, CFS, AHS and the CoE Housing department on Project Watch’s collaboration in dealing with unsafe living conditions.

The CoE Development Services Branch has formalized a position for a Project Watch/Problem Properties coordinator. Brent Craig has been officially in this position since June 1, 2016.

St. Albert R.C.M.P. are currently consulting with the Project Watch Task Force / EPS CFMH regarding a multi-unit apartment complex (where the vast majority of the occupants are on assistance), that is derelict and an ongoing issue for crime and disorder in St. Albert.

Terms of Reference:

Formalization of Terms of Reference and Memorandums of Understandings are still in progress (drafts have been submitted and are being reviewed by external agencies). This process is overseen by EPS Investment Governance Section.

Upcoming:

It is anticipated that Project Watch will complete a third follow-up at "The Apartments" in the upcoming weeks, focusing on advocacy for the tenants. Project Watch will be ensuring tenants have adequate supports, safe housing and are providing the necessities of life to their children. EPS's Aboriginal Relations Detail and Equity, Diversity & Human Rights Section will be attending, in conjunction with Northeast Division BEATS, and Offender Management.

CONCLUSION:

To be received for information.

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Date: 16/01/14