



April 21, 2020

City provides emergency support to extend hotel accommodation for people affected by apartment fire – advocates with community partners for more provincial funding

Residents affected by the apartment fire in Campbell River will be able to stay in temporary hotel lodging until the end of April, thanks to emergency funding provided by the City.

At the April 20 meeting, Council voted unanimously to provide up to \$15,600 to pay for food and accommodation for the tenants who lost their home and belongings earlier this month.

“We appreciate the strong leadership Mayor and Council are showing, especially because the pandemic has made everything more complicated in an extremely tight rental market,” adds Kristi Schwanicke, coordinator of the Coalition to End Homelessness. *“With the second lowest rental vacancy rate in the province in 2019, finding accommodation in Campbell River has been much harder in recent years. Then you add a pandemic and things get extraordinarily complex in terms of replacing documents, accessing technology and viewing available rentals. Fire evacuees simply need more time to find a place to live in these circumstances.”*

The City of Campbell River and local partners Laichwiltach Family Life Society and Sasamans Society have sent letters to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation requesting funding for people who need extended support until the end of May. Member of Parliament Rachel Blaney and local Member of the Legislative Assembly Minister Claire Trevena have also urged support for this local crisis.

Many of the residents identify as Indigenous and face increased barriers to accessing housing. Without an appropriate place to live, many of the residents may be at risk of homelessness.

“Indigenous values teach us that the well-being of community comes first; we put the emphasis on who we are as a collective, and community means coming together and taking care of one another.” said Lori Bull, executive director of Sasamans Society. *“The community of Campbell River has rallied together to support those displaced by the fire. We now need the Province and the federal government to support these residents till they find somewhere to live.”*

“Council greatly appreciates how hard everyone is working to help, and unanimously supported the funding necessary to provide food and accommodation for these community members until the end of the month because we recognize how many people need support, and the extra time required when such a large number of people have been displaced,” says Mayor Andy Adams. *“We are extremely grateful to all the organizations and community members generously working together. These are families, seniors, children, who have lost their home and belongings due to the fire and urgently need somewhere to live so they can rebuild their lives.”*

Provincial emergency support services paid for food, accommodation and basic supplies for the first week, and, in response to community request, extended support until April 25.

“We know everyone is working very hard for the best possible outcome for these people and are heartened to know that, already, at least 10 people have found suitable longer-term accommodation in four different homes,” adds city manager Deborah Sargent. *“Funding from senior governments to extend accommodation until the end of May will give those who need it more time to continue to work with organizations such as the John Howard Society and Sasamans Society to find suitable long-term housing.”*



How you can help:

- If you can provide long-term or short-term paid rental accommodation (up to three months) for any of the displaced residents, please contact the John Howard Society at 250-286-0611.

Financial contributions can be made through online donations:

- John Howard Society: www.jhsni.bc.ca and click Donate Now (please write Pacific West apartment fire in the message box)
- United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island: <https://www.uwcnvi.ca>
- Canadian Red Cross: www.redcross.ca/donate

Currently one of the most needed donated items are Rubbermaid style totes to assist with moving and storage. We are also seeking a grabber (for picking up items) and a walker with wheels. To donate items please contact Laichwiltach Family Life Society at 250-286-3430 to arrange drop off. Volunteers are working to ensure all items are properly sanitized to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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250-286-5740