

NEWSLETTER



**COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AGAINST 105 KEEFER,
A STORY FROM A TRANS HOMELESS WOMAN,
& THE FIGHT AGAINST BALMORAL SLUMLORDS**

COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AGAINST BEEDIE LIVING'S 105 KEEFER PROJECT

Beedie Living's 105 rezoning application at the 105 Keefer site in Chinatown is a dominating market development that will undoubtedly accelerate displacement of Chinatown's low-income and immigrant community. What's also worrying is the project's proximity to culturally significant sites including the Chinese Canadian railroad workers and veterans, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, and the National Historic Site.

Imagine, instead, if this important site at the heart of Chinatown was used for secure and affordable homes and a thriving social space. A large chorus of residents and organizations from Chinatown, including Chinatown Concern Group 唐人街關注組 (CCG), are calling for this site to be acquired by

the government and used for social housing and intergenerational community space. Beginning on May 23, Chinatown residents, organizations, and community members packed City Hall to voice their opposition to the proposed condo development. Following a week-long public hearing at City Hall, Vancouver City Council deferred the decision on the rezoning application to June 13th, 2017. CCG and Chinatown Action Group (CAG) continue to call on Vancouver City Council to reject Beedie Living's rezoning application at the 105 Keefer site in Chinatown.

See below for quotes and photos from the rally and public hearing.



Seniors enjoy the rally against Beedie's 105 Keefer project & Dragon Boat Festival on May 22.



"We know that if this project is approved, only Beedie will benefit. We carry the history of resistance against racism and displacement." Jannie Leung, CAG organizer

"If Vancouver City Council approves the rezoning, they will have chosen corporate profit over the needs of Chinatown's low-income residents. Our fight is not over." Beverly Ho, CCG Organizer



CCG Organizer, King Mong Chan called the proposal “an insult, an absolute insult to our ancestors.”



“Rent at the proposed project will be \$700, which they say is affordable yet most people on welfare only have \$600 a month. “ -Jessica, CCG member



Mrs. Kong Tai, a senior who recalls the head-tax, said the development would be on an inappropriate site. “There is a monument for the Chinese on 105 Keefer, so many have died here but the City seems to have forgotten them.”



Nat Lowe, CCG organizer presented Vancouver City Council with a petition opposing Beedie’s project with over two thousand signatures.



Chinatown residents, organizations, and community members on the 105 Keefe site.

**CCAP ORGANIZER, LENE SON TO CITY COUNCIL:
"DO NOT TELL US YOU CARE
MORE ABOUT PEOPLE THAN
PROFITS - SHOW US."**

READ LENE'S SPEECH TO CITY COUNCIL ON 105 KEEFER

On May 23, the representative from BC Housing called \$700 for rent incredibly affordable. This is simply untrue for low-income people.

Chinatown and the DTES is one of Canada's poorest neighborhoods. With about 9,000-10,000 people on welfare and disability, most with only \$375 a month for shelter, and with about 4,000 seniors with about \$432 a month for rent or less, most residents have only about \$375-432 a month for shelter.

Many residents are already barely surviving as it is. Residents surviving on social assistance of \$610 and paying the average SRO rent of \$548 have only \$62 a month, or about \$2 a day, left for everything else including food, hygiene, laundry, transportation, etc. How will they pay \$700?

Whether it's 8 units or 25 units at safer rates, \$700 for rent is completely unimaginable for many residents. This development project does not help Chinatown and DTES residents.

Vancouver is in the middle of a housing and homelessness crisis. It is the worst it has ever been and gentrification plays a significant role. The 2017 Metro Vancouver homelessness count was just released. The count found a steep increase in homelessness across Metro Vancouver with 828 more people identified as homeless in 2017 compared to 2014, representing a 30% increase in homelessness and the highest number to date. In the City of Vancouver, there are now over 2,100 people who are homeless, an increase of almost 300 since last year. Low-income people across the city and province are continuously evicted and displaced by rising rents and gentrification. We don't need more luxury condos, we need social housing at welfare and pension rates now. Housing is a human right!

Additionally, Beedie's project would be an inappropriate use of a culturally sensitive site. The Keefer Triangle, the most culturally sensitive area in the neighborhood is named #2 on National Trust for Canada Top 10 Most Endangered Sites in 2016.

Vancouver has a longstanding history of colonization and white supremacy. This land we stand on is stolen.

Historically, Chinatown and the DTES have been a place where the most marginalized were pushed to. In resistance, these groups built strong thriving communities only to be threatened and eradicated by the same systems that pushed them there in the first place.

Hogan's alley and Vancouver's only black community was destroyed. And now, Vancouver's historic Chinatown is also at threat of being destroyed. From Hogan's Alley to Chinatown, many seniors and residents living in Chinatown and the DTES have lived through oppression orchestrated by the government. It's time that the City actively listen to those who are the most vulnerable in this city instead of those who hold institutional power and privilege such as these wealthy developers.

There are survivors of the Chinese Exclusion Act and head tax, survivors of colonization, survivors of racism and displacement who continue to face discrimination each day who have come here today to tell you to oppose this project. If you don't listen to the most vulnerable and marginalized people in the community, your formal apologies and public promises of reconciliation are empty and insulting. Do not tell us you care about being inclusive, do not tell us you care about Chinatown, do not tell us you care more about people than profits – show us.

I support CCG's demands which are

- 1) For the city to reject Beedie's 105 Keefer project.
- 2) No market housing at this site
- 3) For all 3 levels of government to acquire the 105 Keefer site
- 4) 100% social housing at welfare/pension/shelter rates
- 5) An intergenerational, multi-use community space, with an emphasis on seniors

MAKE IT SAFE AND DON'T DISPLACE ANYONE: BALMORAL RESIDENTS DEMAND ACTION



Make it safe and don't displace anyone. That's what about 80 folks at a town hall meeting, including some tenants from the 173 room Balmoral Hotel agreed governments should do at the decrepit hotel. The meeting took place in the Carnegie Theatre on May 27.

The two demands came after SRO Collaborative members Wendy Pedersen, Jack Gates and Sam Dharmapala discussed their many actions to improve buildings like the Regent and Balmoral Hotels owned by the notorious Sahota family. But the urgent issue of city plumbers sealing off all the bathtubs in the Balmoral for fear of a

rotting building structure quickly took over the meeting. On Friday night, May 26, city workers sealed off the hotel's bathtubs and said they were arranging for people to bathe at The 44 or at First United Church. City engineers, Sahota's engineers and a lawyer with possibly an engineer for the SRO Collaborative are scheduled to inspect the hotel again on Monday, May 29th.

The SRO Collaborative quickly organized some tenants from the Balmoral to attend the meeting already scheduled for the Carnegie Theatre on the evening of May 27.

At the meeting Regent Hotel tenant Jack told what he's learned by taking the Sahota's to the Residential Tenancy Branch and to court to try to get the building maintained properly. "They'll do anything they can to not do the work," Jack said about the Sahotas. "And the city won't enforce its laws." Jack says it helps to fight for your rights if you keep a record of everything that happens but some of his records were actually eaten by mice. Jack has had his door broken down with a shovel and been threatened with eviction 3 times but won each time.

Sam talked about a building in India that collapsed and how he worried that the Balmoral might collapse. He worked for the Sahota's for nine years. Sam organized some other workers to "stand together," he said. "If we stand together, we can change this." Then he was fired. His first project was the Balmoral basement which wasn't structurally sound. "The city was sleeping. It was hard to wake them up," said Sam. Finally some repairs were made there.

Others at the meeting talked about the lack of safety in the building. One woman said she had been assaulted there and saw someone stabbed in the hall.

The tenants plan to meet again to assess their options when they know the result of the city's inspection on Monday. The SRO Collaborative wants the province to acquire and fix the building without displacing tenants.

SAFETY AND COMMUNITY IN A CITY OF DANGER FOR HOMELESS TRANS WOMEN



I am a 43 year old transgender woman. As a child, I endured physical and verbal abuse, and was forced to act straight and masculine. If I walked a certain way or held my cup a certain way, I would be beaten by my father.

At 15 I ran away from home to escape the abuse. In order to support myself, I joined a gang, sold drugs, and worked as a sex worker. In the same year, I became addicted to drugs. Since then, I've never had a real home.

I was incarcerated for nearly 15 years in California, where I grew up. When authorities found out I was born in Canada I was deported to Vancouver. Once I arrived in Vancouver, I found a job but I was soon outed as being transgender and was fired. Without a job or money for rent, I was soon on the streets again.

On the streets, my safety is constantly threatened. Every day, I am harassed and people yell transphobic slurs at me. I've been raped and beaten in the streets. I am also diagnosed with Hepatitis C, which gives me chronic fatigue. It makes it difficult for me to stay awake, leaving me vulnerable on the streets.

Shelters are not safe for transgender people. There aren't any trans-dedicated shelters available for transgender people. Many women's shelters are trans-exclusionary and force me to go to the men's shelters where it is dangerous for trans women and

puts me at risk of assault and abuse.

At the women's shelters that do allow me to stay, I still face transphobic abuse, bullying, and harassment and I do not feel safe. Living in an SRO is also dangerous and not an option.

At the Ten Year Tent City I feel safe
On the street, when you're by yourself you're always a target. At the tent city I feel safe and have a sense of security. The tent city is gated, there's 24 hour security and I haven't had my things stolen once since I've been there whereas on the streets, things are constantly stolen and I am at risk for transphobic violence each day. 10 Year Tent City is trans inclusive and I sit on the council, which is women-led. I feel supported by the other campers on site. Once, when a stranger approached the tent city and started to harass me, all the other tent city campers surrounded me, protecting me and asked the man to leave. On the streets, no one sticks up for you, they just watch you get beat up.

The tent city has a strong community. Everybody at 10 Year Tent City works together and we each volunteer for different shifts such as security, kitchen, cleaning, conflict resolution, and council. We have rules at tent city such as no violence, no stealing, and everyone pitches in to make sure it's a clean and safe place for all.

We have access to water, food, washrooms, and first aid equipment on site. Narcan training is available to everyone at tent city. There was only one overdose at tent city, which was quickly attended to by Maria and tent city residents. If the man was alone on the streets he could have died.

Fire safety personnel have told us they are happy with everything. When they provide us with feedback, we follow through with their instructions immediately to ensure the tent city is safe. Each time the waste collectors come, they thank us for keeping the tent city clean and for helping them load the garbage.

If I got back on the street, I will not make it. As a transgender woman diagnosed with a chronic illness, it is life threatening to be on the streets or in shelters where I am always afraid and at risk for violence. I need a safe place to get treatment. I need a safe place to live.

CARNEGIE COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT | 11:15 AM EVERY FRIDAY

The Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) is a project of the board of the Carnegie Community Centre Association. CCAP works mostly on housing, income, and land use issues in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver so that the area can remain a low income friendly community. CCAP works with english speaking and Chinese speaking DTES residents in speaking out on their own behalf for the changes they would like to see in their neighbourhood.

Join us on Fridays 11:15 am for our weekly volunteer meetings! Downtown Eastside residents who want to work on getting better housing and incomes and stop gentrification are welcome to attend. Lunch is provided!

CARNEGIE AFRICAN DESCENT GROUP | 11 AM EVERY TUESDAY

The Carnegie African Descent Group (CADG) is pleased to invite you to a weekly lunch gathering at the Downtown Eastside Neighborhood House. Come, cook, talk and enjoy African dishes with us. The lunch will take place every Tuesdays, from 11:00 am till 1:30 pm. The group has the same mandate as CCAP, but with particular focus on issues that Black and African Descent community members experience. DTES community members who identify as Black and or as of African Descent are welcome to the lunch. For more information, contact: lmugabo75@gmail.com

唐人街關注組 | CHINATOWN CONCERN GROUP

— 大多數是唐人街華裔居民
— 加麗基社區中心協會屬下的其中一組
— 我們看到華埠現在變化很快。華埠越來越不像華埠，而在華埠的華人社群將被邊緣化。所以我們組織一起，透過開會、討論及行動來保護唐人街
— 我們關心華埠的未來可負擔性及想見更多低收入房屋及長者屋在唐人街
關注組組員領袖每週會開小組會來討論我們的項目、華埠消息和建立我們對社區事件的分析。我們歡迎有意參與關注組的人士來一齊參與這些小組會。詳情請聯絡我們。小組會主要用廣東話舉行，有時候會用普通話翻譯。chinatownconcerngroup@gmail.com | chinatownconcerngroup.wordpress.com
加麗基社區中心 — 401 緬街 『緬街圖書館』二樓，溫哥華，卑詩省，V6A 2T7 加拿大

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