



March 24, 2020

Lindsay Milburn
Senior Planner – Housing Policy
Sustainable Planning and Community Development
City Hall - 1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC, V8W 1P6

via email: lmilburn@victoria.ca

Dear Lindsay,

As you may know, the Fairfield Hotel is a 62-unit single room occupancy building which currently provides deeply subsidized housing for 49 people in Victoria. This building is not sufficient to meet the needs of its existing residents, and so we recently announced our intention to end our operation of the building. We are in the process transitioning individuals who require and agree to more suitable accommodations. Pacifica has been very clear that the building is unable to appropriately house an at-risk population, and this is particularly important given the heightened risks presented by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Currently, residents share only 4 bathrooms (8 toilets in total) and these facilities lack functioning sinks for handwashing. Also, there are only 6 bathtubs and 1 shower that residents share for hygiene purposes. We have made hand sanitizer available, but among other challenges we face, the lack of functioning sinks limits the ability for proper hand washing during this pandemic. These conditions heighten the risk of community transfer of COVID-19 to our residents, Pacifica staff, and the greater community. Pacifica believes the health and safety risks are unacceptable during this pandemic. Many residents have complex health conditions that put them at even higher risk of contracting and spreading this virus.

Further, like all other employers, Pacifica has a legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for our employees. Despite our best efforts to provide information and supplies to help keep our staff safe and healthy, we remain extremely concerned that the Fairfield Hotel is not a safe and healthy work environment for our employees.

We are asking for immediate help to reduce or eliminate the risk presented by the lack of necessary infrastructure for basic hygiene at the Fairfield Hotel during this pandemic.

The situation at the Fairfield Hotel is urgent, and an immediate response is required to prevent COVID-19 from spreading throughout the building, including to staff, jeopardizing further community spread.

Pacifica has identified a potential 47 within our existing properties that, with support, we can make available to Fairfield Hotel residents. With funding to ensure the units remain at the same subsidy as available at Fairfield, we can significantly improve the living conditions and limit the risk of the spread of this virus for all residents and the wider community. Any balance from those available units can also be made available for others in the community who are in immediate need of affordable housing.

To help us address this issue and utilize these units, we are requesting the following immediate support:

- emergency approval from the Coordinated Access and Assessment Committee to immediately move 4-6 current residents into space available in other Pacifica buildings where we can provide more suitable living conditions and support services, while at the same time reducing the risk of transmission by increasing physical distancing in the building.
- VIHA to assist finding appropriate housing for an additional 4 or so residents with acute needs that are beyond the scope of what can be provided by Pacifica.
- emergency funding from BC Housing to support with the temporary relocation of the remaining residents at Fairfield to other available units within Pacifica buildings.
- BC Housing to work with Pacifica to ensure the balance of the available units (not required for residents at Fairfield) can be made available to those who need them.

From the City of Victoria, we ask that Pacifica be allowed to use the funds previously assigned to keep the Fairfield Hotel operational as we undertake the emergency relocation of our tenants. Any balance of these funds can then be returned to the City.

We believe that it is our legal and collective moral obligation to deal with the crisis situation as soon as possible for our residents, our staff, and the wider community, and I look forward to working with you to address this crisis at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carolina Ibarra', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carolina Ibarra, BA, MSc
CEO
Pacifica Housing