

PIVOT NEWSWIRE

Mass evictions by notorious slumlord prompt call for overhaul of BC's tenancy system

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Surrey - Residents of Kwantlen Park Manor apartment building who received eviction notices last month have joined forces with legal organizations and tenants' rights organizations to call on the province to strengthen protections against unfair evictions and other unscrupulous practices by landlords.

Gurdyal Singh Sahota's company, Waterford Developments, owns the Surrey apartment building and several properties, including the Pandora building in Vancouver, which garnered attention in 2007 when the roof caved in. In 2012, Sahota was fined an unprecedented \$115,000 by the residential tenancy branch for repeatedly failing to make necessary repairs to Kwantlen Park Manor. Residents and tenants' rights groups applauded this action, the first of its kind in the province. However, the fines were suspended five months later in return for finishing work on the property and offering tenants a settlement package - something that is already expected of landlords by law.

This eviction notice is the seventh for Kwantlen Park resident and former building manager Sue Collard. The six previous eviction notices were all set aside by BC's Residential Tenancy Branch. This latest round of eviction notices came just one week after the landlord unsuccessfully applied for a rent increase.

*"This case involves a landlord who has been allowed to continue collecting rents while neglecting the health, safety and rights of his tenants. This is a particularly egregious case, but it touches on a number of the key things we believe need to change to make BC's residential tenancy system fairer and more balanced" says Pivot lawyer Scott Bernstein. **"In the middle of this provincial election campaign, we are calling on all political parties to commit to ensuring the Residential Tenancy Act is equipped to protect tenants who are vulnerable to abuse."***

These issues, which include rent increases even where the property has been allowed to deteriorate, illegal "renovictions", and retaliatory action by landlords against who make complaints, are laid out in a new report entitled, **BC's Residential Tenancy System- 13 Recommendations for Change**. The report is a collaboration between, the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Community Legal Assistance Society, Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre,

Pivot Legal Society, West Coast LEAF and Active Manufactured Homeowners Association. All six organizations believe this case is a clear illustration of why BC's residential tenancy system needs to change.

*“As this case shows, landlord/tenant disputes aren't trivial,” says CLAS lawyer Jess Hadley. “A person's home, and her health and safety, are often at stake - and large sums of money can be involved, too. Right now in BC we simply don't have a process to resolve these disputes reliably and fairly. **Tenants deserve the right to present their story to a legally trained adjudicator and to have access to a system that allows them to appeal an unfair decision.** They deserve a Branch that uses its enforcement powers to penalize parties who flout the law. Our groups have put our heads together to create workable recommendations that would transform our landlord/tenant system for the better.”*

In the meantime, the residents are working with First United Church's advocacy program to fight their eviction notices.

Residents will be joined by ACORN BC, BCPIAC, Community Legal Assistance Society, Pivot Legal Society, TRAC and First United Advocacy for a press conference today, May 1, at 10am. Press conference will take place in front of their building at 12975 106 Ave, Surrey

The report, ***BC's Residential Tenancy System- 13 Recommendations for Change***, has been distributed to all MLAs in the province and can be downloaded from:
<http://bit.ly/10ebvB0>

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