

## **Renter Services Grant Summary of Events:**

**September 2019** - VTU general membership voiced concerns but ultimately voted in favour of applying for the City of Vancouver [Renter Services Grant](#). The conditions set by membership were that an ad-hoc advisory committee consisting of 6 VTU members was to consult with the Steering Committee during the application process, and that the VTU membership must vote whether or not to accept the grant if it gets approved by the City.

**October 2019** - Steering Committee submits an application for the grant. The proposed project was for VTU to hire a full time staff person to put on a Tenant Organizing Summer School that would train and educate renters on how to organize their building or neighbourhoods and their rights as tenants, working with organizations like Chinatown Tenants Organization.

**March 2020** - the City of Vancouver meets with two steering committee members, saying we got the grant but that we would only get \$40,000 of the ~\$95,000 we applied for, and there was a condition being put on the grant: "Quarterly payments contingent on program update of work accomplished to the satisfaction of the Managing Director of Homelessness Services and Affordable Housing Programs." At the end of the meeting, there were vague references to VTU putting out factually incorrect information about renters rights, but it was not the centre of the conversation, nor was much importance placed on it

**July 2020** - the General Membership voted to accept the grant, though many members voiced concerns about whether or not the City would use this as a way to control VTU

**August 2020** - VTU informs the City of Vancouver that we accept the grant.

**September 2020** - VTU submits relevant paperwork to get the money flowing.

In the intervening period, we do not hear anything from the City on the grant, but VTU is in contact with the City trying to ensure the Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy was being implemented fairly at [Broadway-Carolina](#).

**December 2020** - VTU receives a letter from Celine Mauboules, the Acting Managing Director, Homelessness Services & Affordable Housing Programs, putting further conditions on the grant, saying they will only disburse the first \$10,000 upon us signing and agreeing to these conditions:

The disbursement of subsequent grant instalments will be based on assessment of whether or not your organization acts in compliance with the grant condition and will be contingent upon work accomplished to my satisfaction, including:

- Communication from VTU to the community is responsibly and factually accurate;
- VTU contacts City staff to confirm accuracy of information that will be provided to community, including tenants;
- All interactions with City staff, tenant relocation specialists, applicants, landlords and other partners be done in a respectful manner with the focus being on facts;

- Should VTU take issue with the actions of City staff, that you refrain from sending accusatory email to staff directly and instead reach out to me with a summary of your concerns and supporting evidence so we may investigate; and
- VTU provides updates and/or reports to [renteroffice@vancouver.ca](mailto:renteroffice@vancouver.ca) on the progress of your funded project's proposed outputs, as outlined in the 2020 Renter Services Grant proposal approved by City staff. Updates will be due on the following dates:
  - March 31, 2021 (prior to 2nd quarterly instalment, if all terms are met)
  - June 30, 2021 (prior to 3rd quarterly instalment, if all terms are met)
  - September 30, 2021 (prior to 4th quarterly instalment, if all terms are met)

**December 2020** - Lillian (VTU Treasurer) met with City of Vancouver Staff (Jennifer Hales) to discuss this. They communicated that the reason for the quarterly payments was because in the past VTU has put out factually incorrect information and has been unprofessional to City staff and others. They were unable to provide details about the factually incorrect information and could not provide a first or second-hand account of when VTU members had been unprofessional to others, but specifically said that VTU correspondence with City Staff regarding the implementation of the Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy at Broadway-Carolina was unprofessional and the reason for this follow up letter. Since Lillian was the person corresponding on the TRPP for Broadway-Carolina, and knew for a fact she had been entirely professional the whole time, and in fact the City had been unprofessional to her, she brought this up. Again, the city staff were unable to speak to the specifics. The meeting ended agreeing that the City would compile a list of concrete examples of factually incorrect information and unprofessional behaviour. Lillian asked what the second bullet point meant, and the City said they wanted VTU to check with the City before we send out any information, not just regarding projects funded by the grant. Lillian communicated to the City that the membership needed to decide, but it was likely they (membership) would find this condition unacceptable.

**January 2021** - VTU receives the examples from the City, none of which are actually examples of "factually incorrect" information, though one was a typo (something was incorrect in one part of the website but correct in other places), and we could not substantiate their claim of unprofessional behaviour (they said a VTU member was silent while tenants who were displaced got upset at the inadequacy of the TRPP implementation, and that a VTU continually asked for the name of the person implementing the TRPP).

**March 5, 2021** - Lillian and Aissa (Steering Committee members) meet with Jennifer Hales and Celine Mauboules to discuss the examples. We demonstrated that their examples of factually incorrect information were actually different interpretations of various City policy or typos, and assured them that, while we could not substantiate their example we had just created a new working group specifically focused on orienting new volunteers at VTU. They communicated the necessity to have a clear line of communication between VTU and the City. Lillian and Aissa communicated that they could contact the Treasurer email directly. Lillian and Aissa also asked if the City expected that VTU would get all communications approved by the City and they were not direct about answering this question. Lillian and

Aissa said we would communicate this to our GM and get back to them. It is worth noting we did feel as though it was possible to remove the new grant conditions.

**Steering Committee Recommendation:** We think the City's response clearly and swiftly brought to fruition the concerns that were voiced by the General Membership, and do not recommend accepting the grant with these conditions since it has already made our already difficult relationship with the City even more acrimonious. The concerns that this would become a way for the City to control VTU are very real, and may put VTU in a difficult position if we come to rely on this funding.

**The proposal:**

Be It Resolved That if these additional grant conditions are removed, VTU will accept the Renter Services Grant.

Be It Further Resolved That VTU reframe the original proposal to be in line with the goals coming out of the visioning process, not hiring a staff person but continuing to do organizing training, organizing buildings, and focusing on building neighbourhood chapters.