

Ward 13, Toronto Centre
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West
2nd Floor, Suite A5
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Tel: 416-392-7903
Fax: 416-696-4300
Councillor_wongtam@toronto.ca

April 30, 2019

Planning and Housing Committee
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Council Members,

Re: PH5.6 Vital Service Disruptions in Apartment Buildings

In January 2019, City Council adopted MM2.26, "Holding Landlords Responsible for Property Maintenance and Improving Crisis Communications in Emergencies." City staff were directed to review the function and performance of the City's emergency response to the incident at 260 Wellesley Street East, specifically as it pertains to crisis communication and emergency management for high-rise and other types of evacuations, especially for vulnerable persons, and to report the outcomes to the Executive Committee no later than second quarter of 2019.

The dual incidents at 260 Wellesley Street East and 650 Parliament Street have brought two concerns from tenants of those buildings that should inform the City's response to future incidents. First, there is no framework on how and when landlords should communicate with tenants during periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services. Second, there is no standard for how landlords should accommodate tenants, especially those that require special supports, during such an emergency situation.

My recommendations below requests that City staff explore the feasibility of requiring landlords, through the City's RentSafeTO program, to have an emergency communication plan and emergency preparedness plan to both clarify a landlord's responsibility and tenant expectations during extraordinary events similar to the incidents at 260 Wellesley Street East and 650 Parliament Street.

The recommendations have been reviewed by Municipal Licensing and Standards staff, who suggest that they be reviewed as part of their report to Executive Committee through MM2.26.

Recommendations:

City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, in consultation with Toronto Fire Services, to review the following items to be brought forward to the Executive Committee as part of the report back on MM 2.26, "Holding Landlords Responsible for Property Maintenance and Improving Crisis Communications in Emergencies" on the feasibility of implementing the following:

a) Requiring building owners/operators under the RentSafeTO program to develop a communications plan for tenants during periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services, which includes:

- i. measures to communicate with tenants with updates, including e-mails, text messages, robo-calls and other technologies that allow updates to be provided directly to tenants;
- ii. monthly updates on restoration and construction schedules for evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services that exceed 7 days;
- iii. a survey of tenant needs during periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services that exceed 7 days;
- iv. daily communication during the first seven days of periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services;
- v. weekly communication for periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services that exceed 7 days, up to 30 days;
- vi. a minimum communication every two weeks or twice per month for periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services that exceed 30 days;
- vii. a meeting with tenants for periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuances of vital services that last more than 3 days;
- viii. monthly meetings with tenants for periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuances of vital services that last more than 30 days; and
- ix. the creation of a public website for tenants that:
 - a. collects and publishes all notices between the landlord, government agencies and tenants during the periods of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services; and,
 - b. allows tenants to register information and direct how best to communicate with them during a period of evacuation or temporary discontinuance of vital services.

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b) Requiring building owners/operators under the RentSafeTO program to develop an emergency preparedness plan for tenants during periods of temporary discontinuance of vital services, which includes:

- i. provision of notices from the landlord in common areas, stairwells, elevators, and hand delivery to tenants;
- ii. provision of drinkable and potable water during periods where water has been discontinued;
- iii. provision of blankets during periods where heat has been discontinued between September 15 and June 1;
- iv. provision of light snacks and warm meals during periods where electricity and/or gas has been discontinued;
- v. provision of on-site security during periods where electricity and/or gas has been discontinued, including regular check-ins with tenants; and
- vi. supports to tenants who may require additional assistance, including but not limited to additional food, water, check-ins and temporary accommodations, including those with temporary vulnerabilities.

c) Requiring building owners/operators under the RentSafeTO program to develop an emergency preparedness plan for tenants during periods of evacuation, which includes:

- i. provision of temporary accommodation, including hotel rooms or rent-supplemented units, to tenants who may require assistance during periods of evacuation, including those with temporary vulnerabilities, within 24 hours of an evacuation order;
- ii. provision of temporary accommodation, including hotel rooms or rent-supplemented units, to tenants within 48 hours of an evacuation order;
- iii. provision of measures to accommodate tenants to access their units temporarily for a minimum of one hour two-weeks after an evacuation order and every 3 months afterwards; and,
- iv. creation of a tenant assistance office to assist tenants with temporary housing and associated costs during the period of evacuation.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
Ward 13, Toronto Centre