

Planning and Housing Committee Consideration on April 30, 2019

PH5.6

“Vital Service Disruptions in Apartment Buildings”

Recommendations of report provided by;

Mr. Mark Sruga, Director of Municipal Licensing and Standards

Comments: from Julie Rahier Property Manager for GH Capital Corporation

Goal: To Do It Better

Catalyst for Report:

1. **260 Wellesley Street East** – ESA due to water leak and water entering the main electrical room required disconnection / turn off for safety.
2. **650 Parliament Street** – cannot be mentioned as per Fire Chief as the inspection is on going and not concluded. Should be stricken from record.

FACT OF CONSTRUCTION:

Electrical rooms and plumbing have been found to share the same space. Many electrical rooms either have drains or water supply running through them... or are located in close proximity to water supply. Simply stated this is how the buildings were built and in some events still are. There is very little consideration given to operation and service when installing and creating the electrical and plumbing spaces used to service Apartment Buildings, Condos or Commercial properties.

Practical Statement of Fact:

Owners and Operators have a mutual economic and social interest in maintaining their Apartment Buildings. Any disruption of a Vital Service affects and threatens their income from their clients and the security of the capital asset. Not to mention that 1 event is enough in any Owner or Operators lifetime. Hence “emergency shut down notices” to clients/tenants occur often as they are preventing a VITAL SERVICE from causing a full catastrophe that would result in a full building shut down affecting all residents for a long duration of time.

Recommended Methodology for Change:

Option 1: as per the report - effect and enact more codes

Amendment #1 is effective.

Amendment #2 - #3 can be seen as redundant as they are already covered by various Acts, Regulations, Codes, Bylaw etc.

Option 2: engage in a deeper discussion and consultation based on the events and using that event to secure meaningful change by establishing a Task force and a Committee comprised of the very people who are engaged and affected by these events daily. Provide recommendations that look at VITAL SERVICES in their entirety and not just electrical.

Key Players should be:

Committee/task force / round table of experienced hands on Landlords, Managers, Service Providers, Representatives of the Ontario Building Department, City By Law and Standards, Fire Department, ESA, Engineers, Tenant and Landlord Associations etc. who can discuss best methods to creating plan for **“Vital Service Disruptions in Apartment Buildings”**. **As this issue will require more players and time to effect a meaningful resolve. The discussion is Vital...**

In some regards, the very same plan must be already in place for the City of Toronto when their **Vital Services are Disrupted to the City and citizens of Toronto**. Sharing similar plans and modifying it to fit the Apartment Building model would be more efficient.

Suggested Goals of the Task Force:

Step 1. - Create a chart of how the Disruption of all and any of the Vital Services affects inhabitants and Owner/Operators . ie: structure damage, no toilets, no heat, no hydro and side effects.

Step 2. - Create a chart on all the emergency support and personnel required in re-establishing the Vital Service for all and any Vital Service. ie: operation side and comfort side to the clients

Step 3. - Define how long a Vital Service can be disrupted before causing damage and harm, set a limit considering weather and environmental factors ie: winter season with -15 temperatures required quicker engagement

Step 4. - Education and Certification of Apartment Building Superintendents

- Would require creating a more robust education and training system dedicated to this type of demand that does not exist in our current environment
- A joint effort for the province and the municipality

Step 5. - Look towards technology and software to effect meaningful preventative steps.

Notes: If and where possible, engage in technology and software to detect water, hydro fluctuations, mechanical failure etc. (note these items are becoming more robust in delivering a reliable response, but the technology still needs to be enhanced and wi-fi and transmission through concrete is still inhibited)

Step 6. – Look towards technology and software to effect a positive Communication Strategy on initial event

Step 7. - Look towards technology and software to effect a positive Communication Strategy in the event of a Vital Service Disruption that is in effect for more than 24 hrs clients (tenants)

Step 8. Vital Services Tenant Handbook (electronic, hard copy) – tools to assist in the education of tenants

Comments Regarding Key Concerns raised in the report:

a) Raised concerns about the state of good repair of aging infrastructure

- The element of good repair is already considered in the various Regulations, Acts and by-laws both provincially and municipally
- **Define “state of good repair” which definition is implied in this statement?**
- **How is this definition being used in conjunction to this report?**
- **One can only assume that after the failure / defect would that specific item no longer be in a “state of good repair”.**
- **Note:** pipes do burst, water does leak... mechanical equipment does fail.... Even when in a good state of repair....
- **Consideration:** intensification and density have contributed to the demand on the infrastructure supplied by city and then individually through highrise living (includes condos). Large capital improvement and output continue to be instigated, but time is also required to fully realize the investments being made by all and to see the greater improvement.

- **Consideration:** shortage and decline of qualified and capable 24 hr site Superintendents / Building Managers that are required to be on site to avoid or minimize the catastrophe
- The simplest and most efficient way to avoid a catastrophe is to “shut down” the service that has caused the issue
- Yet most personal are not able to do that

b) Effective communication and providing support to tenants (clients)

- **Consideration:** most Owner/Operators already engage in collecting voluntary contact list for clients who need additional support. In many instances the information is also added to the existing Fire Code Protocol for Non-Ambulatory to include all those with health conditions and those that need assistance.
- Technology is critical in the process of improving communication. IT, APPS and AI technology will improve communication. However, the development of same is still in its infancy.
- Challenges, IT, APPS and AI rely on smart phones and computers, there are still many clients and tenants in our community that use a landline or are not tech savvy, although more apps can provide a robo style message by landline... but that is saying that the infrastructure is in place to deliver those messages and the information being provided is coming to the provider in a timely way