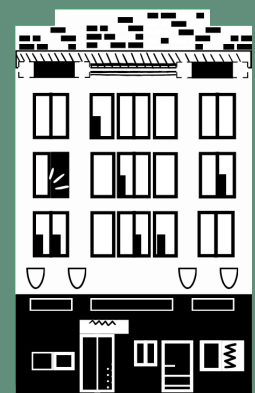
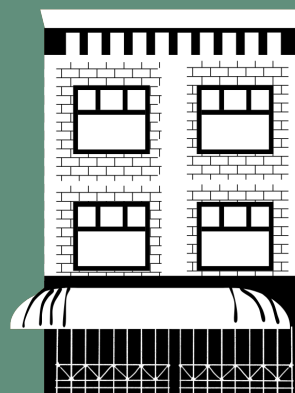
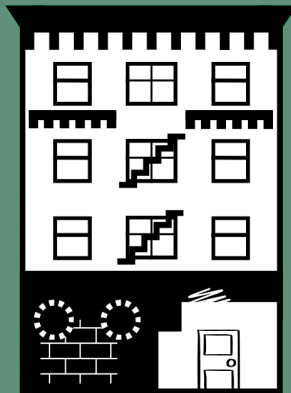
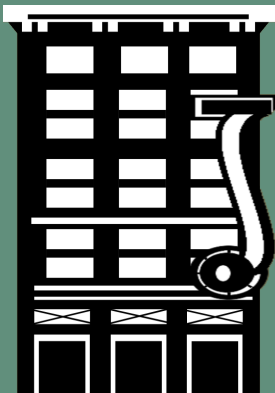
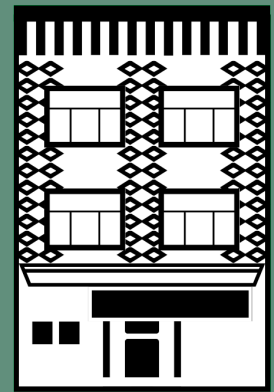
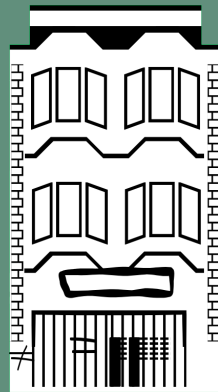
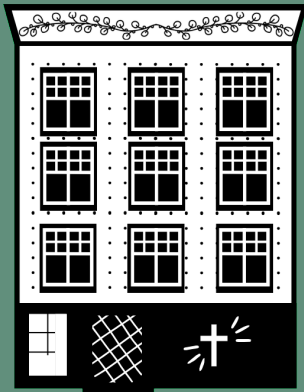
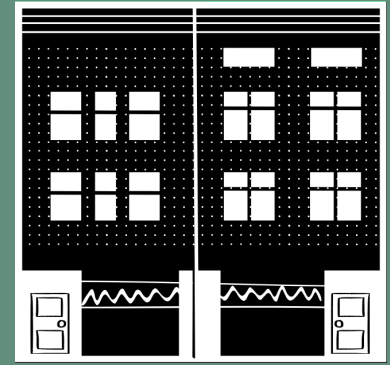
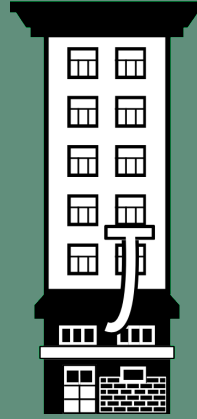
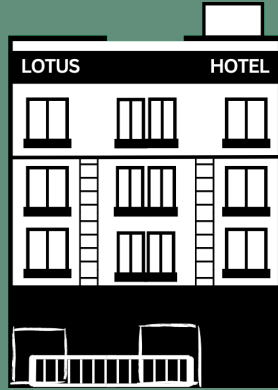


SRO COLLABORATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT



2024 - 2025



DTES SRO
Collaborative

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Message From the Executive Director

This has been an exciting and historic year for the SRO Collaborative. After years of organizing, we celebrated a major legislative victory with the reinstatement of the City of Vancouver's SRO Vacancy Control Bylaw. This bylaw has already slowed the closure of buildings and prevented tenants from being displaced and becoming homeless. On behalf of all us at the SRO Collaborative, I want to thank Rebecca Kantweg and Victory Square Law Office for their extensive pro bono work on the vacancy control policy as it wound its way through the courts. While there are still challenges ahead, this achievement is certainly a blessing for tenants in our community.

In terms of system change, the SRO Collaborative has played a pivotal role in building trust with landlords, tenants, and government officials. This year, we saw some progress in bringing these groups together to tackle SRO housing issues collectively. As governments move forward with decisions about SRO replacement, we will continue to work alongside tenants and our community partners, including the DTES Community Land Trust, to make sure that SRO replacement happens in a way that benefits the tenants.

Above all, our tenant volunteers remain the foundation of everything we do. Across dozens of privately-owned SROs, there are 125 tenants dedicating several hours per week to programs in outreach organizing, fire safety, cleaning and maintenance, extreme heat preparedness, overdose prevention and response, and grocery distribution. This year we also began planning new tenant-based initiatives in hot meals and vacancy control education. Beyond these building-based programs, we provided tenants with opportunities to connect, build capacity, and develop leadership skills through the SRO Degree, the SRO Crow, as well as Indigenous and Chinatown cultural programming. We continued to support the rebirth of the Gain Wah restaurant as a future food security hub centred around Chinatown seniors but available to all DTES residents.

Financially, we remained on target, raising half of our budget through grants to supplement our five-year grant from the BC Ministry of Housing (2023-2028).. I want to acknowledge the leadership of our Director of Finance, Strategy and Development Director, Tristan Markle, who has worked tirelessly to strengthen our financial systems, coordinate with our MNP bookkeepers and Merge accountants, and manage the Ministry of Housing's audit this year.

This was also a year of significant organizational development. With guidance from our change management consultant, Esther Hsieh, we introduced new contracts, a new pay grid with liveable wages, and clarified roles and responsibilities across the organization. We adjusted our leadership structure to create more balance and efficiency, and we are already seeing positive results. Recruitment for a Human Resources and Program Director remains ongoing, but in the meantime, we brought on a part-time contractor to support management, Russ Maynard, and are fortunate to have both Esther and Russ providing interim support.

Our board also completed an important stage of its development this year and is now in an excellent position in terms of compliance and governance. I want to congratulate the board for their commitment and hard work.

In short, this year we focused on strengthening our organization from within. Looking ahead, our priority will shift toward shaping the future of SRO replacement while ensuring the growth and sustainability of our tenant-based initiatives into new hotels. Together, we will continue to fight for dignity, safety, and community belonging for all SRO tenants.

Wendy Pedersen
Founding Executive Director

Message From the Board Chair



Vacancy Control Town Hall (Left: Richard Schwab, Chair of SRO-C Board; Right: Ezra, SRO-C Tenant-Based Research and Policy Coordinator)

On behalf of tenants and the board of directors, I was ecstatic to get support from the City and the Province for SRO Vacancy Control. This policy made it much better for tenants who were worried about evictions related to rent increases. I'd like to thank all those involved in making this happen, including our staff who worked so hard to help tenants make it out to important events at Vancouver City Hall, the Provincial Court of British Columbia, and the Victoria Legislature. We all stood together through the sorrow of having it get defeated in court, only to have our spirits lifted when it was overturned by the Provincial Legislature in support of the city's bylaw. I'd also like to thank the City of Vancouver and the Province for their support over the years.

We had a fantastic second annual Gain Wah block party outside the Keefer Hotel, which was purchased by the Ministry of Housing for our partners, the DTES Community Land Trust. The block party is about community! Tenants regularly attend land trust meetings

with the Elders, and we learn a lot about the past and how it can be applied to the present.

For the solstice party at the end of 2024, the staff designed great SRO-C bomber jackets for our tenants, making all of us feel like we're on the same team.

On behalf of the board of directors, it's been a pleasant year with no major challenges or unfortunate surprises. We're happy to have COVID-19 far in our rear view mirror, but are saddened by the continual loss of many of our friends to the overdose crisis, and we wish that those in power could strive to do better to help people.

Richard Schwab
Board Chair

ABOUT US

Mission Statement

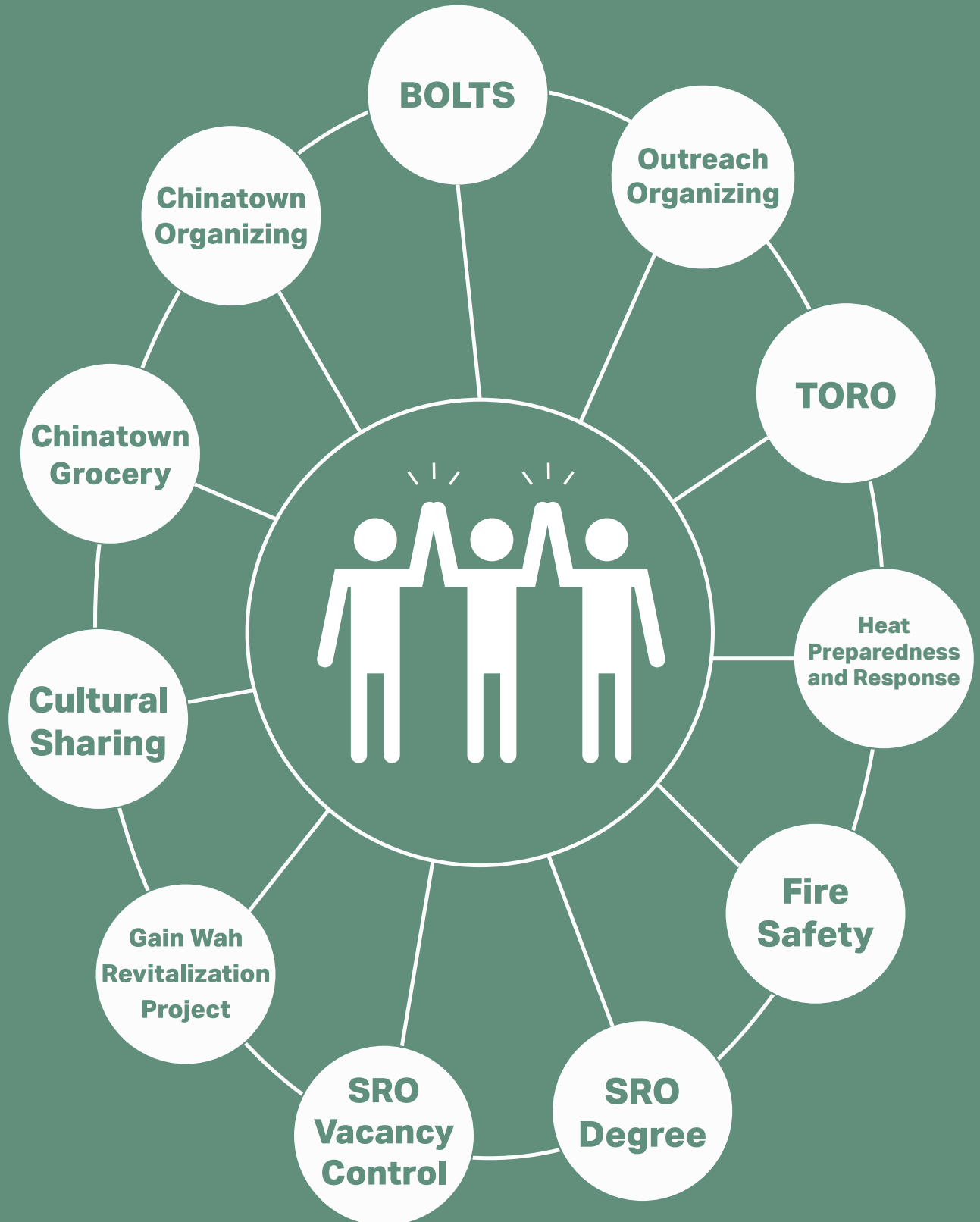
The Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society (SRO-C) is a non-profit organization working to improve habitability, affordability, safety, health and housing security for tenants living in privately-owned Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs) who are at risk of eviction and homelessness. We exist to amplify SRO tenants' voices and support their community organizing through tenant-based initiatives. Our long-term goal is to support tenants to eventually holistically manage, collectively own and redevelop their homes in ways that work for the SRO tenant community.

Vision, Values, and Approach

The SRO Collaborative sees tenants as active participants in their communities, sharing community responsibility and regaining agency to govern their homes. Our approach centers on community organizing, which is different from activism or traditional social service provision. Organizing at the SRO-C involves training SRO tenants to empower their neighbours, strengthen leadership, and build collective power in order to make changes that can improve tenants' lives. Our tenant-based initiative model delegates power back to the community and promotes long-term, sustainable solutions to housing problems in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

The SRO Collaborative is grateful to work on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

OUR PROGRAMS



Building Operations Led by Tenants in SROs (BOLTS)

BOLTS (Building Operations Led by Tenants in SROs) is a tenant-based initiative that helps improve habitability and prevent evictions in privately-owned SROs by supporting tenants to keep their rooms safe and livable. Tenant volunteers with some basic experience doing maintenance are trained to assist their neighbors with cleaning, minor repairs, and other habitability issues that could lead to eviction if left unaddressed. Because the support comes from fellow tenants, the program builds trust between neighbours while helping tenants stay housed.

In 2024–25, the BOLTS program expanded its scope and structure through several key developments, including onboarding new BOLTS crew members, launching a maintenance hotline, co-designing a new system for prioritizing job requests, and a “School of BOLTS” tenant education initiative. A new BOLTS Coordinator was hired in March 2025, bringing practical trade experience and a hands-on approach to working with the BOLTS crew. The program also strengthened its integration with the SRO-C’s other tenant-based initiatives, particularly the Fire Safety and Outreach Organizing programs.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- 7** BOLTS CREW MEMBERS
- 2574** TOTAL REPAIR & MAINTENANCE JOBS
- 535** UNIQUE TENANTS SERVED
- 131** EVICTION PREVENTION SERVICES
- 89** UNIQUE TENANTS SUPPORTED WITH EVICTION PREVENTION



BOLTS cont'd

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Minor repairs & maintenance
- Light cleaning in rooms & common areas
- Regular & periodic pest control
- Ongoing support for tenants with high eviction risk
- Routine fire safety checks in tenants' rooms
- Weekly 1-on-1 coaching meetings



STORY OF CHANGE

An SRO tenant with significant clutter in both their unit and the hallway received an eviction notice for violating the fire code, putting the tenant in immediate danger of losing their housing. A BOLTS crew member made several attempts to offer support, including help with cleaning and organizing, but the tenant resisted assistance. The BOLTS worker communicated their frustrations around this situation to the BOLTS Coordinator, and together they determined that a more wrap-around approach was needed. The BOLTS Coordinator and BOLTS crew member reached out to tenant volunteers from the TORO and DoubleO programs in the building, and together they developed a coordinated plan to re-engage the tenant. They approached with patience, offering practical assistance and breaking the work into manageable steps so the tenant felt less overwhelmed. This collaborative effort eventually built enough trust for the tenant to accept help. The eviction was withdrawn, and the tenant remained housed.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1. A New BOLTS Hotline is launched

The new voicemail hotline pilot was rolled out in two buildings as part of a broader effort to make it easier for tenants to access habitability support and report repair needs without relying on landlords. This pilot was part of a larger effort by program staff to design a new system for prioritizing and responding to job requests.

2. A stronger, more cohesive BOLTS

Staff strengthened BOLTS' internal structures by developing new onboarding and training systems that better support the BOLTS crew by providing more opportunities for skills-sharing and education, clarifying role expectations, and improving communication between staff, crew, and tenants.

3. Major improvements in cross-program collaboration

We have made big strides in cross-program collaboration this year, with BOLTS working more closely with the Fire Safety and Outreach Organizing programs. All three programs worked together to coordinate building-wide fire drills and provide tenants at risk of eviction with more wrap-around supports.

Outreach Organizing

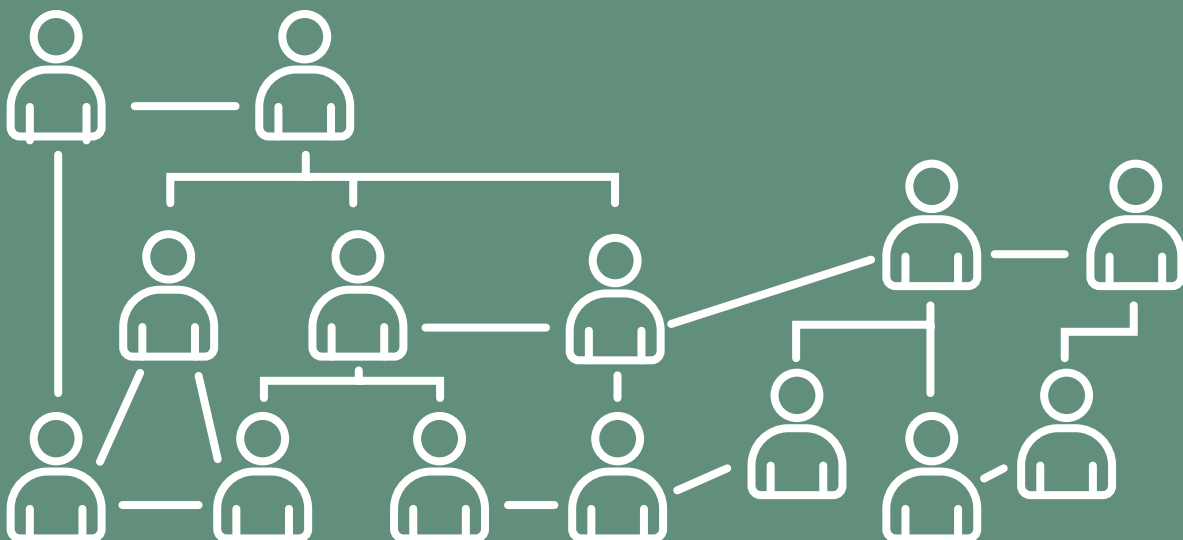
The Outreach Organizing (DoubleO) Program supports tenants to take on peer leadership roles in their own buildings, with a focus on strengthening tenant networks in and across SROs and increasing social and community integration. Each DoubleO tenant volunteer receives training and ongoing coaching from Outreach Organizing staff and is supported to welcome tenants who move into their building, identify emerging issues, connect neighbours to resources, prevent evictions, and organize around shared needs.

In 2024–25, the program operated in 12 SROs and continued to expand both in scope and structure. Staff introduced new systems for DoubleOs to set monthly goals, and began holding regular monthly meetings with all DoubleOs, which helped to stabilize and strengthen the department. DoubleOs organized building-wide events including seasonal BBQs and holiday dinners and mobilized tenants to attend several important community events, such as the SRO Vacancy Control Town Hall. The Outreach Organizing program substantially improved cross-program collaboration this year, routinely working with BOLTS, Firebolts, TORO to create more responsive, wrap-around support for SRO tenants, particularly around habitability

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- 13** DOUBLE OS
- 159** TENANTS ATTENDED BBQS/ SOCIAL EVENTS ACROSS 13 EVENTS
- 4** TENANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS, AVERAGING 10 DOUBLE OS IN ATTENDANCE
- 300** WELCOME KITS DISTRIBUTED TO NEW TENANTS

solutions, harm reduction, and aging in place. DoubleOs in several buildings were instrumental in launching new projects, including a cooling/ community room (“Jack’s Room”) at the Arlington, which became an important space to test out the tenant governance model the SRO-C has been developing over the last five years. The DoubleOs gave out 300 welcome kits to new people moving into their buildings.



Outreach Organizers cont'd

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Weekly 1-on-1 coaching meetings
- Group meetings
- Peer support & referrals
- Outreach & mobilization
- Social & community integration
- Cross-department coordination
- Welcome kit distribution

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1. Enhancing and expanding the DoubleO program

The DoubleO program grew in both depth and breadth, expanding to four additional SROs with 13 tenant volunteers leading community-building initiatives. DoubleOs hosted building-wide BBQs, supported isolated tenants, and mobilized neighbors for fire safety drills, legal advocacy, and tenant organizing meetings. Notably, tenants in buildings like Arlington and Empress took major steps toward advancing tenant self-governance and collective decision-making.

2. Connecting with newly housed SRO tenants

DoubleOs played a central role in assembling and distributing 300 Welcome Kits (funded through SPARC BC) to newly housed or vulnerable tenants. These kits helped foster trust and peer support between long-time and new residents. In some buildings, Welcome Kits became a key entry point for DoubleOs to identify isolated tenants and connect them to additional supports.

3. Better support for aging tenants

Several DoubleOs initiated projects to support older tenants and those with mobility challenges. This included distributing personal care items, organizing access to portable commodes, and connecting tenants to care resources. These efforts are essential in order to prevent evictions for older residents (44% of tenants are 55+) and support dignity and aging in place.

STORY OF CHANGE

One of our DoubleOs and other tenant volunteers demonstrated how tenant-based support can transform a building's social fabric. In response to an aging tenant's surgery, they mobilized quickly by cleaning the tenant's unit, equipping the room with items needed during recovery, and coordinating hospital visits. The team later pooled funds to cover hospital cable service, ensuring their neighbor could recover in comfort and dignity. This DoubleO also led efforts to develop tenant governance for a tenant-run communal space supported by the SRO-C. Tenants co-created a values-based rulebook, planned building-wide social events like movie nights, and began building momentum towards cross-program coordination. These efforts have helped reduce isolation, strengthen networks of care, and increase tenant governance capacity. This SRO is now seen as a model SRO building, and demonstrates what becomes possible when tenants are supported to lead, organize, and care for one another.

Tenant Overdose Response Organizers (TORO)

The Tenant Overdose Response Organizers (TORO) program is the SRO Collaborative's longest-running tenant-based initiative, operating in 29 privately-owned SROs across Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. TOROs are tenants trained to deliver harm reduction support directly to their neighbors, including naloxone distribution, overdose response training, wellness checks, referrals to healthcare and cultural services, and information on safer drug use. TORO tenant volunteers play a vital role in overdose prevention and housing stability by building trust and providing consistent, culturally appropriate support to people who use drugs in their buildings.

In 2024–25, TORO increased its outreach capacity to record levels and began expanding into new buildings following mass evictions in several buildings where the program had operated for years. TOROs led over 3,300 harm reduction check-ins, supported VCH pilot projects including nasal naloxone distribution and pregnancy test strip access, and helped engage tenants for a pilot of the Lifeguard Lite overdose alert system at the West Hotel, successfully reaching the tenant participation threshold to advance the project. The team strengthened collaboration with Vancouver Coastal Health clinical staff, particularly the Overdose Outreach Team, and re-established cultural programming with support from the SRO-C's Knowledge Keeper. By year's end, TOROs had trained a greater share of tenants than any previous year and were working closely with other SRO-C programs to prevent evictions and reduce overdose risk across the SRO housing stock.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

35 TOROS

3383 HARM REDUCTION CHECK INS

52 HARM REDUCTION KIT MAKING DAYS

209 INSTANCES OF BUILDING-WIDE OUTREACH

5 IN-BUILDING NALOXONE & OVERDOSE RESPONSE TRAININGS

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Naloxone & overdose response training
- Harm reduction supply distribution
- SRO building outreach
- Peer support & TORO engagement
- Cultural programming
- Referrals to health & social services
- Community & VCH collaboration
- Tenant leadership development

TOROs cont'd

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1. Record-setting across the SRO stock

TORO staff and tenant volunteers completed 209 building-wide outreaches over the year—the highest total in the program’s history. This greater outreach capacity, achieved through strong staff retention and high peer engagement, enabled the team to connect with more tenants, identify unmet harm reduction needs, and deliver targeted support. TOROs now engage, on average, one-third of tenants in a building during outreach events, with peer leaders reporting stronger relationships and higher levels of trust with their neighbors than in previous years.

2. Expanded collaboration with VCH

This year marked a turning point in TORO’s collaboration with clinical care teams. TORO staff helped these teams connect with hard to reach tenants and access buildings that they had difficulty getting into. TORO also began distributing nasal naloxone and piloted pregnancy test strips in three buildings. The team delivered a well-received presentation to VCH’s Toxic Drug Response team and was increasingly seen as a trusted partner capable of advancing new harm reduction initiatives in the private SRO stock.

3. Tenant volunteer growth and leadership development

TOROs took on greater leadership in shaping programming this year. Tenant volunteers helped plan in-building training, develop outreach strategies, and create individualized support plans for fellow tenants. This hands-on approach deepened their relationships with neighbors and strengthened the impact of harm reduction efforts. TORO staff observed that tenant volunteers were more confident, outgoing, and committed than in previous years—attributes fostered by team-building events and a more collaborative, peer-driven program model.



STORY OF CHANGE

In years past, TORO staff bypassed a hotel thinking that the TORO program was not needed in it. But the unique needs in SROs can change over time, so they tried it again and met a tenant who had already been offering informal harm reduction support to their neighbors by distributing supplies, checking in on people who used alone, and responding to overdoses. Recognizing their leadership, TORO staff invited the tenant to join the TORO program. With guidance and training, the tenant officially became a TORO, gaining access to resources and a broader harm reduction support network. They now serve as a key peer leader in the building, trusted by both tenants and hotel management. Their formal role has amplified their impact, helping ensure more tenants receive naloxone training, access to supplies, and referrals to services. This highlights the importance of recognizing and elevating grassroots leadership already present in SROs and how TORO can formalize and strengthen these tenant-based networks of care.

Heat Preparedness and Response

The Extreme Heat Preparedness and Response Program was developed to reduce heat-related risks for low-income tenants living in Vancouver’s privately-owned SROs, where poor ventilation and aging infrastructure contribute to dangerously high indoor temperatures during summer months. The program trains tenant volunteers—called H2Os—to distribute water, conduct wellness checks, and regularly track indoor temperatures to alert tenants to dangerous conditions. Along with bottled water, it also provides tenants with cooling supplies and circulates flyers with the weekly forecast and tips on how to protect against heat-related illness. This work is essential for tenants living



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

31

**HEAT AND
HYDRATION
ORGANIZERS
(H2OS)**

98,532

**BOTTLES OF WATER
DISTRIBUTED TO
1,778 TENANTS**

684

**HEAT
VULNERABILITY
ASSESSMENTS**

268

**TENANTS RECEIVED
WELLNESS CHECKS**

in privately-owned SROs, the majority of whom face compounding health risks, lack accessible cooling spaces, and are often overlooked in formal emergency response planning.

In 2024–25, the Heat Preparedness and Response Program operated for 15 weeks across 41 SROs and Chinese Benevolent Society buildings, reaching nearly 2,000 tenants. In addition to the core program activities, we piloted a new communal cooling room in one hotel, as well as a new voicemail hotline for tenants to request assistance with water deliveries or information on local cooling resources. Our H2Os also conducted weekly indoor temperature tracking, revealing widespread unsafe temperatures inside private SROs. The program’s continued success highlights the importance of tenant-based strategies in reducing heat-related risks for those living in privately-owned SROs.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Weekly water and supply distribution
- Wellness checks
- Indoor temperature tracking
- Voicemail hotline
- Weekly 1-on-1 meetings
- Monthly group meetings

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1. A new cooling room pilot

In 2024, the SRO-C launched our first communal cooling room, with tenants deciding to name it in honour of a late tenant. The cooling room is equipped with a heat pump, filtered water, seating, and a kitchen area. Tenants developed shared rules for the space through a participatory process and managed its use collectively. This pilot demonstrates the potential of tenant governance in SROs and laid the groundwork for expanding the number of buildings with cooling rooms in the future.

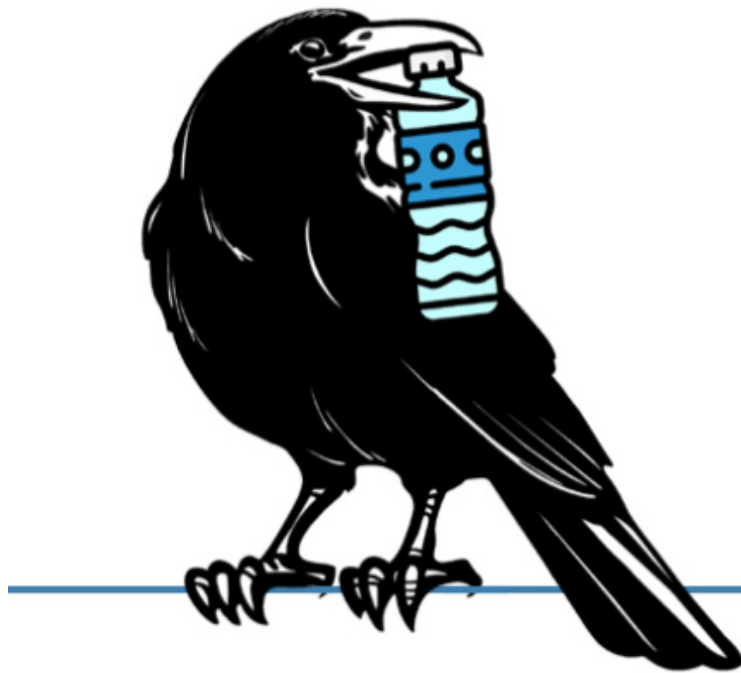
Extreme Heat Response cont'd

2. Groundbreaking temperature mapping in SROs

Tenant volunteers (H2Os) in 14 SROs conducted systematic temperature tracking twice weekly in three locations per building over 14 weeks. Their diligence and consistency produced a dataset that revealed unsafe indoor temperatures and demonstrated high reliability. A comparison with government outdoor temperature data showed a close correlation, reinforcing the validity of the tenant-generated dataset. The findings provide credible, building-level evidence of heat exposure risk in SROs and highlight the value of community-led data collection in local climate adaptation strategies.

3. Strong tenant engagement and leadership

The program onboarded 31 tenant volunteers (H2Os), including 22 tenants who were new to the SRO Collaborative. Tenants in 14 SROs received weekly one-on-one coaching, while tenants in another 17 SROs attended monthly group meetings. Many H2Os reported increased confidence, stronger connections with neighbours, and a deeper sense of responsibility in their buildings. Tenants in buildings newer to the SRO-C's tenant-based initiatives expressed interest in more frequent engagement, which the program could support with stable, long-term funding to expand staff capacity.



Fire Safety

The Fire Safety Preparedness and Response Program was developed to reduce fire-related risks in Vancouver’s privately-owned SROs, where aging infrastructure, overcrowding, and limited fire prevention measures create dangerous living conditions. The program trains tenant volunteers, called Firebolts, to conduct weekly fire safety patrols in their buildings, identify and report hazards, mobilize their neighbours to participate in annual fire drills, and help create building-specific emergency response plans. Firebolts are trained through a series of multilingual, literacy-friendly workshops and receive ongoing one-on-one coaching to support them in their roles. By equipping tenants with the knowledge and tools needed to take a more proactive role in fire prevention and to respond effectively in the event of a fire, this program plays a critical role in improving fire safety in SROs across the Downtown Eastside.

In 2024–25, the Fire Safety Program continued to grow, strengthening its programming in 10 SROs while expanding outreach to new buildings.

Firebolts led regular building walkthroughs, responded to fire-related incidents, and supported the coordination of fire drills to increase awareness and readiness among tenants. The program also refined its educational materials, improved emergency planning resources like the Tenant Emergency Plan binder, and incorporated fire safety content into the SRO Degree curriculum. Staff began adapting the program for expansion into Chinatown SROs and Benevolent Society buildings by translating materials, building relationships with tenants and caretakers, and exploring culturally appropriate models for delivering fire safety programming. As fire safety remains a pressing concern in SRO housing, this program complements the efforts of VFRS and the City of Vancouver to protect lives, prevent displacement, and strengthen community-based emergency preparedness.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Three-part multilingual Fire Safety workshop series
- Weekly 1-on-1 coaching meetings
- Building-wide fire safety surveys to identify vulnerable tenants
- Building-specific fire safety plans & evacuation maps
- Annual fire drills
- Distribution of periodic fire safety newsletters
- Weekly fire safety checks

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Tenant leadership in action

Firebolts demonstrated increased initiative and leadership throughout the year. For example, in one SRO, the Firebolt reported malfunctioning smoke alarms and advocated for battery replacements. In another, the Firebolt intervened when only a handful of tenants responded to an alarm, raising

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- 9** FIREBOLTS
- 397** WEEKLY FIRE SAFETY "PATROLS"
- 559** IN-UNIT FIRE SAFETY CHECKS
- 5** FIRE DRILLS

Fire Safety cont'd

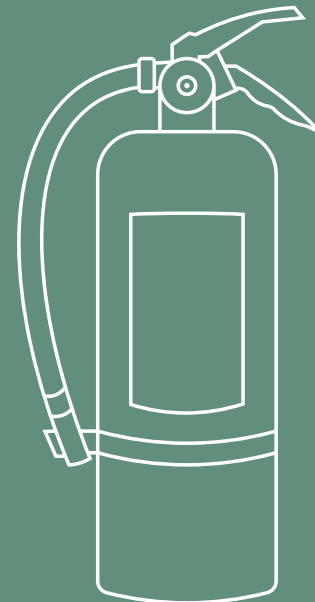
concerns and prompting plans to expand fire safety education in the building.

2. Increased engagement from tenants and building caretakers

Throughout the year, Fire Safety staff produced and distributed a series of flyers covering key fire safety topics such as extinguisher use, smoke alarms, and safe e-bike charging. These flyers were distributed to over 30 SROs with support from Firebolts, DoubleOs, and TOROs. Feedback from tenants and caretakers was positive—many buildings that had previously been difficult to engage began requesting more flyers, and some caretakers began posting them voluntarily. This suggests there is a growing interest in a tenant-based fire safety education and training initiative among both tenants and building staff.

3. A tailored approach for Chinatown

This year, staff from the Fire Safety and Chinatown Organizing programs worked together to begin adapting the Fire Safety program for Chinatown SROs. While most buildings were not yet ready for full program implementation, staff translated core workshop materials, developed a Chinese-language fire safety glossary, and met regularly to discuss cultural adaptations needed for successful rollout. These early steps helped build trust and awareness among tenants and laid the foundation for a culturally appropriate fire safety initiative in Chinatown in the coming year.



STORY OF CHANGE

One Firebolt organized a fire drill but faced barriers with tenant participation due to cluttered units and unclear evacuation plans. BOLTS crew members prepared tenants in advance, helped clear blocked exits and clutter, supported the Firebolts on the day of the fire drill, and flagged units with fire hazards to ensure those tenants received follow-up BOLTS support.

SRO Degree

The SRO Degree Program is a tenant-based education initiative that supports tenants to better understand their rights, prevent evictions, and improve living conditions. Through a 10-class workshop series, tenants learn about common maintenance problems, eviction self-defense, communication with landlords, and how to take collective action through tenant committees. The program is designed to be accessible and relevant, helping participants build leadership, advocacy, and community organizing skills. By connecting tenants to practical knowledge and resources, the SRO Degree Program empowers them to take a more active role in shaping their housing conditions.

In 2024–25, the SRO Degree program underwent a comprehensive redesign to improve accessibility, tenant engagement, and alignment with the SRO-C's other tenant-based initiatives. Staff gathered extensive feedback from tenants, program facilitators, and departmental leads, and began revising workshop materials to focus on practical, relevant content. The Nest, SRO-C's classroom space, was envisioned as a central resource hub offering printed materials, computers, and space for connection. Although no new classes were delivered after summer 2024, staff pivoted to planning for the redesign and completed the redesign in Spring 2025, with the aim of relaunching the SRO Degree in 2025 with a revised curriculum and structured calendar of activities and workshops.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

30

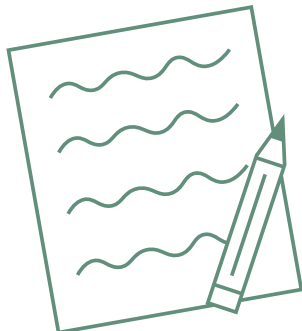
TENANTS TOOK
SRO DEGREE
CLASSES

13

TENANTS
GRADUATED FROM
SRO DEGREE

SRO DEGREE CLASSES

- Common Maintenance Problems
- Writing a Letter to Your Landlord
- City Inspections
- Taking Your Landlord to Housing Court
- Taking Leadership and Door Knocking
- Illegal Rent Increases and Landlord Backlash
- Food Safety
- Eviction Self-Defense
- Tenant Committees
- Review and Feedback



Chinatown Organizing

The SRO Collaborative’s Chinatown programming supports low-income, primarily Chinese-speaking tenants living in SROs and buildings operated by Chinese Benevolent Societies. The Chinatown Outreach Organizing Leaders (COOL) program aims to empower tenants to access support and services, build stronger relations among tenants, help them understand their rights, and begin to tackle problems in their buildings. All activities are delivered with language support in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Toisanese, and tailored to the social and cultural realities of Chinatown’s SRO residents.

In 2024–25, key developments included tenant participation in the reinstatement of Vancouver’s SRO Vacancy Control Bylaw and the citywide SRO Tenant Survey, where COOL tenants helped plan and interpret multilingual data. Tenants also participated in workshops on Indigenous solidarity, overdose response, and emergency preparedness, while developing cross-cultural understanding with Downtown Eastside tenants. Two annual events—the Gain Wah Block Party and Victoria legislature trip—highlighted Chinatown tenants’ under-recognized role in shaping housing policy in the neighbourhood. These capacity-sharing efforts laid the groundwork for future tenant-based initiatives and a vision for community-led programming and governance in Chinatown SROs, as well as the soon-to-be-redeveloped Keefer Rooms.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Monthly COOL meetings
- Cultural and educational workshops
- Community engagement:
 - Orange Shirt Day
 - MMIWG2S+ march
 - Keefer/Gain Wah Block Party
- Vacancy control education and mobilization

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Chinatown tenants instrumental in vacancy control advocacy

In May 2024, a large group of tenant volunteers from Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside joined the SRO-C team to travel to the BC Legislature in support of new legislation reinstating Vancouver’s SRO Vacancy Control Bylaw. Leading up to this victory, tenants participated in multilingual policy workshops and helped develop legislative recommendations. After the bylaw was reinstated, 40 Chinatown tenant volunteers attended a packed Vacancy Control Town Hall co-hosted by the City of Vancouver.

2. Chinatown tenants helped shape the 2024 SRO Tenant Survey

Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking tenants made important contributions to the 2024 SRO Tenant Demographic Survey conducted by the SRO-C. Eleven Chinatown tenant volunteers joined forces with SRO tenants from the Downtown Eastside to form a Tenant Advisory Committee. They helped design survey tools, supported outreach, and interpreted data through interactive, culturally grounded workshops. Their collective statement

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- 11** COOLs
- 12** BUILDINGS HOUSING AROUND 180 TENANTS
- 12** COOL MONTHLY GROUP MEETINGS

Chinatown Organizing Cont'd

was included in the final report, embedding Chinatown tenant perspectives directly into public policy planning processes involving their neighbourhood and community.

3. Cross-cultural solidarity

Chinatown tenants participated in Indigenous-led workshops and cultural events throughout the year, including drum-making and medicine pouch crafting. In addition, staff and tenants spearheaded the creation of workshops on the Indian Act, racism, and cultural sensitivity. This work deepened understanding across communities and helped tenant volunteers foster Indigenous-Chinese solidarity as part of a longer-term racial justice strategy.

QUOTES

增加了對DTES的理解，增加了對原住民的了解。給自己大樓的房客提供了更多資源提升居住條，鄰居互相聯繫更多了。向租客講其應有的權益。身為COOL的成員，主動幫助大樓裡面的租客事情，實實在在的工作。

"Gained a deeper understanding of the DTES and the Indigenous community. As a COOL, "I connected resources for the tenants in my building to improve living conditions, helped strengthen our networks, and shared information with tenants about their rights. These are concrete, tangible outcomes."

增加了对其它cool大楼的了解。

"Have more knowledge about other COOL buildings."



Chinatown Grocery Program

The Chinatown Grocery Program (CGP) works alongside SRO tenants to provide culturally appropriate foods to approximately 180 linguistically isolated Chinese and Vietnamese seniors living in 12 SROs and Benevolent Society-owned buildings. Every week, Chinatown tenants pack grocery boxes and distribute them in friendly visits while helping connect isolated seniors to community, social, and health supports as needed. Several times a year, CGP also sources and distributes seasonal grocery hampers, with culturally appropriate cooling foods and drinks in the summer and festive treats for the Lunar New Year. The CGP responds to the community's unique needs, including access to healthy and affordable foods that cultivate a sense of belonging, and reflects Chinatown tenants' cultural tastes and preferences.

Over the next few years, the Chinatown Grocery Program will work in partnership with the Gain Wah Revitalization Project to support the transformation of the Gain Wah restaurant—an integral part of Chinatown's heritage for over forty years—into a social enterprise and food sovereignty hub that will also eventually serve as the base of operations for CGP.

QUOTE

派菜計劃很好，現在蔬菜價格升高，我們的派菜計劃有很大幫助。以前鄰居不太認識，因為派菜（互相每週聯絡）大家更熟悉了。

"[CGP is] helpful. With the rising price of vegetables, this program has been a great help. In the past, neighbors didn't know each other very well, but because of the grocery program we have become more connected with one another."



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

5

**CHINATOWN
SENIORS PACKING
AND DISTRIBUTING
GROCERIES**

130

**GROCERY HAMPERS PER
WEEK**

180

**SENIORS RECEIVE
GROCERY HAMPERS**

Cultural Sharing Program

Launched as a new initiative in 2023, the SRO-C's Cultural Sharing Program was built from the ground up to create safe, welcoming spaces for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants to connect with culture, community, and healing practices. Programming emphasizes trust-building, small group settings, and accessibility, with workshops and events designed to foster belonging and collective care. While primarily geared toward Indigenous tenants, the program has also engaged non-Indigenous tenants, reflecting the broad appreciation of cultural activities such as drum and rattle making. The medicine bundle workshop in particular resonates with SRO tenants, who learn about various traditional medicines and their significance in holistic healing, carrying the medicine bundles they make with them through the day as sources of strength and hope. Meals and refreshments are provided at each gathering, which for many tenants may be the only meal they have that day.

In the coming year, SRO-C will expand the variety of workshops offered and invite Elders and Knowledge Keepers to share stories and teachings, including those from residential school survivors. Staff are also working on further integrating cultural programming with other tenant-based initiatives at SRO-C, ensuring that Indigenous culture and teachings remain a central part of building tenant leadership, resilience, and community connection.



KEY ACTIVITIES

- Drum & rattle making workshops
- Medicine bundle making workshops
- Cedar & sage picking trips
- Cultural & educational visits with Elders
- Friendly visits for tenants in hospital or experiencing isolation
- Participation in community events (MMIWG2S+ march, Orange Shirt Day, Indigenous Peoples Day)
- Periodic cultural trips to Musqueam, Stanley Park, and Cache Creek



Cultural Sharing Program cont'd

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Deepening relationships with host Nations

This year, staff deepened connections with Musqueam Elders and hosted tenants for cedar picking and cultural sharing. The SRO-C’s Cultural Sharing Program Coordinator traveled to Cache Creek with several SRO-C staff to build relationships with his nation, Secwépemc, and planned future tenant trips for sage picking and land-based learning for Indigenous tenants in 2025–26.

2. Supporting MMIWG2S+

At the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG2S+) march, staff and tenants stepped in to fill a gap in organizing by providing sandwiches, bannock, and drinks at Oppenheimer Park, prioritizing Elders and families.

3. Celebrating culture and people

For Indigenous Peoples Day, the program organized a meal and celebration at Japanese Hall featuring a pow-wow jingle dress dancer, which was widely embraced by tenants and community members.



PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

3 WORKSHOPS PER MONTH (AVERAGE 12 PARTICIPANTS EACH)

SMALLER WORKSHOPS (5–6 PARTICIPANTS) TAILORED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIFIC ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

ONGOING ONE-ON-ONE CULTURAL SUPPORT AND FRIENDLY VISITS



STORY OF CHANGE

Tenants who were initially hesitant to join cultural workshops began to open up after building trust with staff and facilitators. The consistent format of small, welcoming sessions, combined with the provision of food and culturally-grounded activities, has encouraged many to return regularly. For some, these gatherings have been a first step in reconnecting with their culture or finding community after long periods of isolation. One tenant described the workshops as a source of calmness and stability, noting that the medicine bundle they carried gave them hope on difficult days.

FOOD SECURITY



Gain Wah Revitalization Project

The Gain Wah Project began in Spring 2023 after the closure of the Keefer Rooms SRO building and Gain Wah restaurant due to a fire in September 2022. In 2023, the Ministry of Housing purchased the Keefer Rooms building and designated the Downtown Eastside Community Land Trust (DTES CLT) as its future operator. The DTES CLT safeguards property from the private market, providing affordable housing and community spaces that support neighbourhood prosperity. The Gain Wah Project builds on the legacy of a restaurant run by multiple generations of working-class Chinese restaurateurs since 1981. Although the previous owner has retired, he supports preserving the space for current and future residents of Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside. Re-opening the Gain Wah restaurant will address food insecurity in the neighbourhood by offering affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals for low-income residents while strengthening

local food systems and contributing to the economic viability and development of the DTES and Chinatown.

The Gain Wah Revitalization Project is led by a steering committee, primarily coming from the Chinatown community, who are committed to restoring Gain Wah as a legacy business and affordable cultural food asset. The SRO Collaborative is administering the start up project for this space but eventually the steering committee will transform into an independent non-profit that will manage the social enterprise there. The future Gain Wah may also support the SRO-C's Chinatown Grocery Program, which has served 180 food-insecure Chinatown seniors on a weekly basis since 2020, as well as the development of a community kitchen and hot meal program for tenants in years to come.

POLICY CHANGE



SRO Vacancy Control

The introduction of the SRO Vacancy Control Policy in Vancouver was the result of years of tenant organizing and advocacy led by the SRO-C and our partners. In 2019, Vancouver City Council began exploring municipal mechanisms to address rent increases in single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, which serve as housing of last resort before homelessness for many low-income tenants. By December 2021, the City approved and enacted the SRO Vacancy Control policy using its business licensing powers. This limited rent increases between tenancies in designated SRO buildings, shifting the burden of enforcement away from individual tenants and toward proactive oversight by the City.

The policy was challenged by landlords and ultimately quashed by the BC Supreme Court in 2022. In response, the SRO-C and our partners launched a coordinated legal and community organizing campaign to reinstate SRO Vacancy

Control. This effort included a participation as an intervenor at the BC Court of Appeal, widespread tenant mobilization, and direct advocacy to the provincial government. In May 2024, the Province of BC passed enabling legislation that restored the City's SRO Vacancy Control Policy. This marked a major policy victory for tenants and a precedent-setting example of municipal vacancy control in Canada.

Following the reinstatement of the SRO Vacancy Control policy in May 2024, the SRO-C shifted its focus to tenant education around the new policy. The organization convened a large Tenant Town Hall in June to brief residents on the policy's provisions and its implications for rent stability, with participation from City staff. Tenant volunteers began distributing multilingual educational materials, hosting literacy-friendly workshops, and helping their neighbours to understand how to monitor and support the policy.

SRO Tenant Survey

The population of tenants living in SROs is excluded from most census data¹. To fill this gap in knowledge, the City conducted demographic surveys of SRO tenants in nonmarket and private SROs in 2008 and 2013. In 2024, the City of Vancouver partnered with the SRO Collaborative Society to conduct a representative and statistically significant survey of the tenants living in SRO buildings in order to establish an updated socio-demographic, economic and housing profile of SRO tenants. The Survey report will be available publicly for use and access by SRO tenants, building owners and other interested parties. Survey data will be used by the City for general policy and planning purposes and as part of the work to develop and inform an intergovernmental SRO Investment Strategy. The SRO Collaborative will also access the survey data in an ongoing way to assess and address community needs, including the design of tenant-based initiatives.

SURVEY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey was developed jointly by the City of Vancouver, the SRO Collaborative, and a Tenant Advisory Committee of 23 tenant volunteers, with input from BC Housing. A large number of survey questions were designed to be comparable with key questions from the 2008 and 2013 SRO Tenant Surveys, in order to enable analysis of changes or trends over time. Some new questions were added, including questions drawn from the SRO-C's 2019 SRO Habitability Survey and questions intended to help inform the SRO-C's tenant-based initiatives.

Between January and March 2024, the SRO-C's Outreach Team knocked on nearly 4,000 doors across 143 buildings designated under the SRA Bylaw, with the aim of achieving a randomized sample of 10% of tenants in each SRO building. Tenants were invited to a Survey Cafe where they participated in a one-hour interview in a supportive environment. Measures to promote

equitable access to participation included language accessibility, physical accessibility supports, and attention to tenant's mental wellbeing. Tenant privacy was protected throughout the survey process, including ensuring that data was disaggregated from any personally identifying information. In total, 908 tenants from 133 SROs completed the survey, representing 94% of all open SRO buildings in Vancouver.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **If we lose SRO housing, homelessness in Vancouver could double:**
 - We heard from tenants that SROs are a first step out of homelessness for many people, but also that without the SRO rooms they would be back on the street;
 - Over 60% of tenants moving into the SRO stock are coming from homelessness;
 - And 70% of tenants said they would be homeless if they lost their current housing;
 - That means that if we lose this stock of privately-owned SROs, we would see about 3,000 tenants become homeless.
2. **Rents in SRO Buildings are increasing, pushing more tenants into homelessness:**
 - Over 80% of tenants rely on income assistance or old age pension as their primary source of income;

¹ SRO tenants are not included in census data collected in the long form and/or applied to only private households, which includes data relating to Indigenous identity, race, culture, immigration, housing, employment, or income. Tenants are included in the total population counts and basic demographic data (ex. age)

SRO Tenant Survey cont'd

- 63% of market SRO tenants on assistance pay more than \$500 in rent, which means they're trading off between rent, and food or medication;
 - The average market SRO rent has increased 46% in the last 10 years, while the income assistance rent went up 33%;
 - When Vacancy control was quashed by the courts for two years (in 2022 and 2023) we saw average SRO rents go up by 33% or over \$200.
- 3. Building conditions in SROs vary widely, but SRO tenants have strong community connections and want to be part of the solution:**
- Some buildings are in good shape, some in okay shape, and some in bad shape. We need different solutions for buildings in each of these categories;
 - Nearly three-quarters (73%) of tenants we interviewed are interested in volunteering to help improve their building;

- Nearly four in ten tenants reported speaking with at least ten neighbours each week, and one in five said they spoke with twenty or more;
- Tenants do more than talk, they rely on each other. Nearly six in ten tenants say they have a neighbour they can count on for help with food, errands, or mental health support.

NEXT STEPS

The 2024 SRO Tenant Survey closes a critical information gap by providing current data on tenant demographics, living conditions, and housing pathways. Its findings are being used by the City of Vancouver for policy development and planning, and will also inform the Intergovernmental SRO Investment Strategy being developed by the City, Province, and Government of Canada. For the SRO Collaborative, the data will support the design of tenant-based initiatives and strengthen advocacy for protections such as vacancy control, improved habitability, and long-term investment in the SRO stock.



IN MEMORIAM



A committed member of his community, David Collicott was an on-the-ground champion of the harm reduction movement, saving lives and building a network of care and trust amongst his neighbours, family and friends. It is through people like David that positive change is effected, and the SRO Collaborative and the Downtown Eastside community that knew him learned much about what it means to have care and love for those around you through his practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Aboriginal Front Door Society
 Balanced Supply of Housing, UBC
 Carnegie Community Centre
 Carnegie Housing Project
 Carnegie Outreach
 Centre for Climate Justice, UBC
 Downtown Eastside Community Land Trust Society
 First United Church Advocacy
 Gain Wah Steering Committee
 Heart of the City Festival
 Heart Tattoo Society
 Network of Inner City Community Services Society
 Overdose Outreach Team

Overdose Prevention Society
 Powell Street Festival Society
 Social Planning and Research Council of BC
 Tatos Kitchen
 Together Against Poverty Society
 UBC Learning Exchange
 Vancity Community Foundation
 Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre
 Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
 Victory Square Law Office LLP
 Watari Counselling and Support Services
 Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FUNDERS

BC Housing
 BC Ministry of Housing
 Bing Ho
 Canadian Red Cross
 City of Vancouver
 Community Housing Transformation Centre
 Health Sciences Association
 Heritage Canada
 Law Foundation of BC

Real Estate Foundation of BC
 Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy
 Social Planning and Research Council of BC
 Susan Seto Legacy Fund
 United Way
 Vancouver Coastal Health
 Vancouver Foundation

