

UBC MONEY FOR DISPLACED

Lawyers raise concerns after UBCO offer money to displaced residents

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Photo: Contributed

UPDATE 3:18 p.m.

A lawyer representing residents of Hadgraft Wilson Place in a class-action lawsuit over impacts of the downtown UBC Okanagan campus construction says the payment offered is a good first step but he has significant concerns.

Adam Bordignon with Napoli Shkolnik Canada represents some individuals and businesses displaced by the construction of the UBCO Project at 550 Doyle Avenue in Kelowna.

"The concern is with the urgency of the situation. They (the residents) have until August 15 when their temporary accommodations are going to expire," says Bordignon.

In a joint statement from Westpoint Law Group, FH&P Lawyers, and Napoli Shkolnik Canada they listed a series of concerns on behalf of their clients.

Chief among the concerns is a desire to ensure that the temporary partial offer achieves its objective of providing temporary relief and helping displaced residents find housing accommodations in the short term.

Bordignon says he hopes residents are approached directly and he is concerned that some residents have mental disabilities and are unable to manage their affairs.

The other issues include:

- The offer is made on a per-unit basis as opposed to a per-resident basis. This means that residents who are single parents or who have multiple dependents or adults will receive the same amount as those in single occupancy units.
- The offer's ability to provide meaningful relief, given the limited supply of affordable and accessible housing options in Kelowna.
- The offer does not assist those with mobility issues that cannot find accessible housing.

Bordignon says the offer may also affect the disability benefits of some Hadgraft Wilson Place residents and he urges those that do not have direct legal representation to obtain legal advice.

"We will continue to put pressure on UBC to ensure that these concerns are addressed and that all displaced residents of Hadgraft Wilson Place are able to obtain safe, affordable, and accessible long-term housing," says Bordignon.

Residents are now being housed at the Okanagan College's student residences in Kelowna, but that arrangement will end on Aug. 15.

Bordignon says, "due to the urgency of this situation, we have contacted the Premier's office and the Ministry of Housing to ask for assistance in securing safe and affordable housing options for these displaced residents. Despite our appeal, neither the Premier nor the Minister of Housing has yet to respond to our call to action."

ORIGINAL 9:27 a.m.

Residents of Hadgraft Wilson Place who have been seriously impacted by the construction of a new [UBCO development in downtown Kelowna](#) will be getting more assistance.

UBC Properties Trust is offering new assistance to residents from Hadgraft Wilson Place, the housing project operated by the Pathways Abilities Society and a building adjacent to the UBCO Downtown construction project.

Each household is eligible to receive financial support of \$12,000 to help tenants who have been displaced and face unexpected costs associated with renting and moving into new accommodations.

Eligible tenants were informed about the new financial support on July 2 by Pathways along with detailed instructions on how to receive payment.

"The lives of this group have been enormously impacted by the evacuation of their homes and the uncertainty that followed," says Dr. Lesley Cormack, principal and deputy vice-chancellor for UBC Okanagan. "We have been working hard with other stakeholders to be able to offer this support, and I am relieved it is on the way."

The financial package is an interim measure to offer help to affected residents but does not prevent them from advancing legal claims in the future. [Multiple class action lawsuits have been filed.](#)

The email from UBC indicates that financial aid was determined in consultation with a variety of stakeholders and is set to become available to residents shortly.

UBC Properties Trust has also begun shoring work in the Hadgraft Wilson Place parkade and while it's still too early to say when the building can be occupied again, UBC is encouraged by the recent pace of progress.

"Our priority has always been getting displaced residents back into their homes quickly, safely and prudently," says Dr. Cormack. "This new financial assistance is a welcome development, but there is still much work to be done and that is where our focus will continue to be."


The City of Kelowna says this additional relief for evacuated residents comes at a critical time. "City staff will continue to work with the team involved in stabilizing and assessing HWP to get people home as soon as possible. This support will provide needed relief for residents while further work takes place."

UBC Properties Trust says that progress made so far has been possible thanks to everyone working together.

"While this situation has been very difficult for the residents, I am heartened by the way our broader community stepped up to help," Cormack said.

"The City of Kelowna, Okanagan College, Pathways, BC Housing and the provincial government are all at the table and singularly focused on finding long-term and pragmatic solutions that benefit both residents and the community at large."

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