

SEREENA'S UPDATE

We thank everyone who has reached out for your support, and for your care and concern for the women who live at Sereena's. We are grateful.

Please know we are all good, or at least as good as can be considering the events of Saturday morning.

A fire started accidentally in a private room at about 3:30 a.m.; the sprinklers activated, the Vancouver Fire Department attended, and the fire was put out, or so we thought. Restoration was called, blowers/dryers installed to deal with the water from the sprinkler activation, and a call was made to re-energize the fire suppression system. Unfortunately, the fire continued to smoulder in some of the clutter in the original room and the fire re-ignited just before 8 a.m. Thanks to the quick thinking and action of staff on shift, some tenants, and the swift response by the Vancouver Fire Department, the fire was put out without causing irreparable damage to the building. All tenants and staff are OK. At 11 a.m. on Saturday morning we believed that it was possible for all women to return to their homes by the end of the day. Unfortunately, it was discovered soon after that the second iteration of the fire had breached a small section of the wall and roof and that an assessment and repairs would be required before women could go home. Women were able to be escorted into their rooms on Saturday to retrieve some belongings. Staff are currently on site and women can continue to return to Sereena's where staff can retrieve items for them, from their rooms. Thanks to Atira, City of Vancouver and BC Housing staff, all women were sheltered by end of day on Saturday. As of today we believe most women will be able to return home at the end of next week, barring any delays and or any discovery of structural damage, which has not been identified in our preliminary assessment. There are eight rooms that require extensive repair, four that were affected by the fire and four more by water from the sprinkler activation. They will take longer to re-occupy. We will work with those women to offer alternate housing either indefinitely, or until their rooms are ready for their return.

Sereena's is also home to SisterSpace, a women-only safe using space, which is temporarily closed. Women are being referred to SisterSquare until SisterSpace can re-open.