



**British Columbia Association of  
CHIEFS OF POLICE**

July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

The Honourable Ravi Kahlon  
**Minister of Housing**  
P.O. Box 9010 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2  
E-mail: [HOUS.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HOUS.minister@gov.bc.ca)

*Via Email*

Dear Minister Kahlon,

**RE: Single Access Egress Stair Design**

The BC Association of Chiefs of Police (BCACP) strongly supports the opinion shared by the Fire Chiefs of British Columbia (FCABC) that a single access egress (SES) system is not the ideal path forward for building design in our province and that additional consultation is crucial.

The BCACP Board of Directors has reviewed the Jensen Hughes report on Single Egress Stair (SES) and the accompanying discussion document and note that several key points warrant serious consideration by the Province.

In the report, there is extensive thought and discussion around fire safety. There is mention of ensuring SES access is wide enough for emergency equipment to move up while people are evacuating, and a statement is made that having a sole SES stairway would reduce the risk of break and enters. However, there is no discussion of other public safety or emergency situations outside of fire safety which poses deep concern for the BCACP.

Similar to the FCABC and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the BCACP and senior police leadership has concerns from a policing and public safety perspective. SES buildings could negatively impact police agency's ability to respond to calls. The suggested increase in stair width, from 1100mm to 1500mm, is not a realistic width for police to ascend with basic equipment while members of the public are evacuating. If police deploy with specialized equipment, this will create further challenges.

The belief that a sole SES stairway would make buildings more secure is debatable. Building security is more dependent on the quality of locks and doors than the quantity of them. To use the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) as an example, so far this year, the VPD has responded to over 11,000 Priority 1 calls such as domestics disputes, assaults, weapons, and suicidal persons. These are all calls that could potentially occur in an SES building. The VPD's response to these types of calls in an SES building could be



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affected by a limited ability to approach a unit covertly or safely; increased time required to effectively contain or approach a unit if the SES layout creates a tactical disadvantage; and an inability to evacuate people in the building if the SES is occupied or within range of a suspect.

In situations requiring BCEHS support that also involve an element of violence, police are tasked with ensuring safe access for paramedics. Having fewer options to move between floors safely could limit the ability to get medical treatment to people in distress and create critical delays for injured first responders and members of the public.

The Economic Analysis in Appendix A of the Jensen Hughes report is still forthcoming. However, given the potential for SES buildings to negatively impact the police's ability to respond to calls, adopting such a design does not appear prudent when viewed through a public safety lens, regardless of the economic analysis.

In conclusion, it is essential that we prioritize comprehensive public safety over the perceived benefits of a single egress stairway system. The BCACP is strongly urging further consultation and reconsideration of the SES design to ensure the safety and security of all residents and first responders in British Columbia.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fiona Wilson".

**Deputy Chief Fiona Wilson**  
President  
BC Association of Chiefs of Police