

photo by Heidi Stober



Calgarians get nekked for Espy's local #nakedespy event - page 2 story

City council's Suite Safety pilot program weighing in on conditions for Calgarian basement suite dwellers

By Carl BR Johnson

Basement suites in Calgary could soon be facing scrutiny due to the new Suite Safety Pilot Program being launched by the city.

The program was launched in mid-October after city council passed a motion to that effect in the spring of 2011.

"We want Calgarians to be safe," said Kevin Griffiths, Chief Building Official for the City of Calgary.

"Obviously, the possible loss of life due to unsafe building conditions is first and foremost on our minds."

Griffiths said that there will be 50 random suites selected

around the city for inspection, with inspections being conducted at a rate of approximately 10 suites per week.

"The selection process has been completed and we have already contacted most of the tenants," he said.

"At this point and time, we are about half-way through the 50-suite inspection process in this pilot."

This program was introduced to city council in the spring of last year and was championed by Ward 9 Ald. Gian-Carlo Carra, citing what he called, "a humanitarian crisis."

Carra's primary concern is for what he sees as a growing number of not-so-honest

landlords in the city.

"We have by some estimates, 60,000 illegal suites in the city of Calgary. Many of these people are living under a landlord that is a shady operator and the tenants, right now, just don't have any rights."

The City's Development and Building Approvals department is partnering with the Calgary Fire Department for this suite safety program and they'll be looking for both fire and building code violations.

At this point, the program is based upon consent and doesn't include any heavy-handed intentions to simply barge into any basement suite

the city pleases.

"We're looking for co-operation," said Griffiths.

"We want to make the opportunity available to these tenants to bring their suites into compliance."

When a suite has been randomly selected by the city, a letter is sent to the landlord.

The randomly selected suites are spread out evenly all over the city's quadrants and the landlord is "encouraged" to contact the city via the 311 phone system to schedule an assessment of the suite in question, which will take about an hour.

The fact that this is a "pilot" program suggests that it may soon become a part of

the city's building approvals process and Griffiths made it clear that his department does indeed want this program to be a permanent fixture within the city's bureaucracy.

"We're definitely going to be making recommendations to city council with this program as a go-forward policy and city council will have to make a decision as to how to deal with the situation of secondary suites based on our findings," he said.

Ward 2 Ald. Gord Lowe has countered that the program conflicts with existing bylaws and suggested that this approach to suite safety

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Suite Safety

is a good example of the government over-stepping itself.

"The difficulty I have with it (the suite safety pilot program), is that it flies straight into the face of the land-use

bylaws," said Lowe.

"The reason is, we should not be able to make sweeping changes to the way people use their homes without asking first.

"Our system should remain on a complaint-based system. If your neighbour complains about a code violation because of your suite, then fix it," he said.

Kamil Lalji, an associate broker with CIR Realty, who oversees the sale and rental of many secondary suites in Calgary for his company, said

that he isn't worried about a program like this because in the end, "it just doesn't have any teeth."

"The whole program of checking basement suites, in my opinion, is a waste of taxpayer dollars because they won't actually enforce anything," said Lalji.

"The chance of getting

audited is pretty slim, and even if one of my suites were audited, it wouldn't be that much different from a regular inspection."

"At the end of the day, I don't want this program to have any teeth, but I do understand the city's perspective in wanting to have a safer city."

photo by Carl BR. Johnson



Kamil Lalji isn't too concerned about the basement suites he owns getting inspected by the city.

Espy apparel store holds annual naked event for prostate cancer

By Sarah Sussman

While most men have been primping their moustaches for "Movember" this month, others are preparing to strip down to their skivvies for the annual #nakedespy event at the Inglewood-based unisex apparel store espy.

Entering its third year, #nakedespy was started by espy owner Megan Szanik, as a cheeky way to raise awareness of prostate cancer.

After her father was diagnosed with the disease, Szanik decided to combine her love of fashion with her desire to get the local community together to raise money.

"[It's a] fun, charitable event to raise money for the place that all of our dads, brothers, husbands, and boy-friends will go if they are diagnosed," said espy marketing co-ordinator Tianna Stevenson.

The result was #nakedespy.

On the day of the event, men line up outside the store in their underwear.

The first 100 guys in line to donate \$100 receive \$500 worth of clothing from the store, which features premium labels including Fidelity, GSUS, Bjorn Borg and more.

"It's a traffic stopping kind of event," said Stevenson.

"The point is to raise awareness about the importance of getting checked. And what better way to do that then ask a bunch of guys to get (almost) naked?" said Stevenson.

Billy Romeike participated in last year's event and is eager to strip down to his unmentionables once again this year.

"It supports a great cause and I can participate without having to grow a cheesy moustache," said Romeike.

"The free clothes are nice too, but really it's just an opportunity for me to get naked in public."

Last year, #nakedespy raised more than \$9,200 and saw special local guest Brett W. Wilson, who happens to be a prostate cancer survivor, as well as players from the Calgary Stampeders football team in their underwear.

This year, Stevenson hopes to see the event raise at least \$15,000, but believes that the true value of the event lies in raising awareness.

"If stylish clothing and guys in their undies can raise awareness for prostate cancer and encourage men to get tested, then it's a success."

For more information, and details about the #nakedespy events, visit their site.

Locally designed app helps to beat lineups with new GetQ'd app

By Nichola Cordato

New local app GetQ'd promises that you will never have to wait in line again.

The latest buzz in the Calgary and Edmonton app world puts you and your friends in line at the hottest

venues without ever having to actually line up.

The app launched on Nov. 15th for the Apple app store and for Google play.

Founders of the free app Lucas McCarthy and Andy Dion said they developed the app in the interest of not only

customers, but businesses as well.

"From my experience in both working and engaging in the hospitality industry, the most common complaints are usually about wait times," said McCarthy.



by Nichola Cordato

Locally designed app will help you beat the loathsome lineup tradition everyone hates.