



## Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission

Komihana a te Karauna hei Tiro tiro i ngā Whare i Horo i ngā Rūwhenua o Waitaha

21 September 2011

Peter Mitchell  
General Manager Regulation and Democracy Services  
Christchurch City Council  
PO Box 73016  
CHRISTCHURCH

Dear Mr Mitchell

### 246 High Street

The Commission of Inquiry is inquiring into the failure of the building at 246 High Street (the Building) in the 22 February 2011 earthquake. We have obtained the Council file in relation to the Building and also in relation to 152 Hereford Street (Link Centre).

Would you please provide the following information, if possible by **30 September 2011**:

1. My understanding is that in the 22 February 2011 earthquake bricks and other building material fell from the Building on to the roof of the adjacent building - the Link Centre at 152 Hereford Street causing the roof to collapse. Council files would seem to confirm this but I would appreciate your confirmation that this is the Council's understanding of events.
2. In the "Events" summary on the Council file it is noted that on 27/9/2010 the Building was deemed safe. However there does not appear to be any documentation on the file to support this.
  - (a) Could you please confirm the date, nature and result of any inspection made following the 4 September 2010 earthquake and provide a copy of any documentation relating to that.
  - (b) Was there any follow up inspection before the inspection noted on the file on 27/12/2010? If so, please provide details.
3. The "Intra RFS" record on the Council file notes on 13/9/2010 that the:

*"Building has been upgraded to Yellow on Saturday, specifying the parapet is dangerous."*

  - (a) Was the Building upgraded from a green placard to a yellow one? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain the Intra RFS noting.

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15 Barry Hogan Place, Addington, Christchurch  
PO Box 14053, Christchurch Mail Centre 8544

- (b) Was damage to the parapets noted by someone from the Council at any stage? If so, please provide details.
  - (c) If an inspection was carried out on 27/9/2010 was the noting on 13/9/2010 taken into account? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain why not.
  - (d) Given that the Building collapsed onto the adjacent building in the 22 February 2011 earthquake, please explain what inspections were made between 4 September 2010 and 22 February 2011 to ensure that the exterior structure including parapets did not pose a danger to the public or any adjacent buildings. If any such inspections were made, please provide details. If they were not, please explain why not.
4. On the Council file there is an email enclosing a Traffic Management Plan dated 15/9/2010 which notes:
- "The gates have been put up around the site because it is unsafe. The crane is going to be there next Monday".*
- (a) To what was this email referring? Please provide details of how and why the site was unsafe.
  - (b) Did it relate to the noting on 13/9/2010? If so, please provide details.
  - (c) Please provide details of any assessment that was carried out on the Building as a result of this email. If no assessment was carried out please explain why not.
5. The "Intra RFS" record on the Council file notes that on 17/9/2010 a notice was to be served.
- (a) What was the notice referred to? What did it relate to? Please provide a copy of the notice and any relating documentation.
  - (b) Did the notice relate to the noting on 13/9/2010? If so, please explain how.
  - (c) What was the result of this noting on 17/9/2010? Was the notice actioned? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain why not.
6. The "Intra RFS" record on the Council file notes that on 27/12/2010 the Building was assessed and declared safe to enter.
- (a) Was this an assessment as a result of the Boxing Day earthquake?
  - (b) There does not appear to be any documentation supporting that assessment. Please provide a copy of the same.
  - (c) Did this assessment involve a structural assessment of the Building? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain why not.

- (d) At any stage prior to the 22 February 2011 did the Council initiate any structural inspection of the Building? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain why not.
- (e) Did the Council receive any structural report on the Building from anyone else at any stage prior to 22 February 2011? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain why this was not required.

**Structural Integrity of the Building prior to 4 September 2010 earthquake**

1. What was the status of Building in terms of the Council's earthquake prone policy prior to the 4 September 2010 earthquake? Was it deemed to be an earthquake prone building? If so, please provide details. If not, please explain.
2. Please explain how the Council's earthquake prone policy had been applied to this Building.
3. Please explain how any structural strengthening work carried out on the Building prior to the 4 September 2010 earthquake impacted on the structural integrity of the Building and its status in terms of the earthquake prone policy.
4. There is a letter on the Council file from John Taylor, Senior Building Control Engineer to S K Balthrop dated 19 March 2003 which notes:

*"Further to your enquiry, and in recognition of the substantial strengthening work already completed to the ground floor, Council agrees not to invoke the agreement requiring completion of the work till at least 31 May 2008".*

- (a) Could you please explain the effect of this letter and why the work that had been agreed was not required to be completed until 31 May 2008.
- (b) Please explain what occurred in relation to the Building and the proposed work after 31 May 2008. If further work was completed, please provide details. If not, please explain why this did not occur and the stance that the Council took in relation to it.

The above information is requested pursuant to the Royal Commission's powers of investigation under s 4C Commissions of Inquiry Act 1908.

Yours faithfully



Mark Zarifeh  
Counsel Assisting  
Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission