

MOTION

11. Urgent Actions to Combat the Growing Homelessness Crisis

At the Regular Council meeting on February 23, 2016, Vancouver City Council referred this matter to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities on February 24, 2016, to hear from speakers.

MOVER: Councillor Carr

SECONDER: Councillor De Genova

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver's homelessness crisis persists, with the highest ever homeless count last year in the Downtown Eastside (836 individuals living on the street or in shelters) and the city's overall homeless count only slightly decreasing by 57 in 2015 despite 615 new housing units being opened up that year with 458 specifically targeted for the homeless;
2. Vancouver's homeless count is likely to go up by hundreds in 2016 based on the rise in rents of Single-Residence Occupancy (SRO) units, fewer private SRO units being available at the welfare/disability/basic pension shelter rate of \$375 per month, and the loss of temporary housing, specifically the expiration in November of 2016 of the City's lease for the 157-room Quality Inn where many homeless people who had set up camp in Oppenheimer Park have been living;
3. Homelessness is also likely to increase even more with the potential conversion of SRO hotels and other affordable housing in Chinatown, Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside in anticipation of the demand for short-term stay accommodation associated with the move of St. Paul's Hospital from the West End to the False Creek Flats;
4. Solutions to the homelessness crisis depend on provincial and federal support which has been slow in coming, thus just 152 units of new social housing are opening in 2016 and 819 units are scheduled to open by next year, of which 176 units are currently targeted for the most vulnerable population--those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and only able to afford the welfare/disability/basic pension shelter rate of \$375 per month, with that number increasing depending on additional senior government support;
5. The ability of the City to formulate solutions to homelessness also depends on timely information, for example, regarding the numbers of people at risk of homelessness;
6. The City of Vancouver has offered the federal government 20 sites of city land worth \$250 million with a request for \$500 million over five years to build 3,500 units of social housing, and the Province has pledged \$355 million over five years to construct and renovate 2,000 units of affordable

housing, however it takes years to complete such housing projects and, because the level of affordability depends on contributions from senior levels of government, it is uncertain how many units will be targeted for Vancouver's homeless.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Premier Christy Clark, thank them for their commitment to tackle the issue of housing affordability and request that their efforts focus on the needs of the homeless and providing the funding needed to amplify the City's efforts to acquire, upgrade and build sufficient social and supportive housing to end the city's growing homelessness crisis.
- B. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Province requesting that:
 - a. the Province provides the City with data for the Vancouver area that can help the City better mitigate homelessness, including the numbers of people receiving rent supplements, children leaving care, people being released from prisons and hospital discharges of people with no fixed address.
 - b. the Province increase the number of rent supplements in order to meet the need of tenants at risk of homelessness to pay rents at income assistance rates and the need of landlords to receive rents that cover operating and maintenance costs.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to assess the short term need for housing to mitigate the growing homelessness crisis in 2016, and report back to Council within 2 months on specific mitigative actions, with options including those that will require senior government support to supply sufficient housing, estimated at a minimum of 500 units, at the welfare/disability/basic pension shelter rate of \$375 per month.
- D. THAT Council direct staff to provide ongoing data in the reports on housing and homelessness that identify how many units of social housing in the city are available at the welfare/disability/basic pension shelter rate (currently \$375 per month) and how many at HILs (Housing Income Limits) rates.

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