



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 12, 2008
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Meeting Date: September 30, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Managing Director of Social Development

SUBJECT: Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Report on Housing and Homelessness

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the FCM report on housing "Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness", January 23, 2008.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council's priorities are to maintain and expand housing opportunities in Vancouver for low and modest income households with priority being given to families with children, seniors on fixed incomes or in need of support, SRO residents, and the mentally ill, physically disabled and others at risk of homelessness.

Council's housing policies reflect that housing and homelessness should be addressed by partnerships, with senior levels of government taking the lead and the City being a junior partner. Policies related to the role of the Federal Government as expressed in the Homeless Action Plan urge the Federal government to take a number of actions on housing and homelessness such as increased funding for subsidized housing nationally and provincially, including sufficient funding to create at least 800 units per year in Vancouver; implementing tax changes to encourage the private sector to build more rental housing; maintain and

expand the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program; and maintain a national homeless funding program.

PURPOSE

This report recommends Council endorse the 2008 FCM report on housing and homelessness. A copy is on file with the Housing Centre and it can be accessed online at:

[http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/FCMReport\(Jan2008\).pdf](http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/pdf/FCMReport(Jan2008).pdf)

DISCUSSION

Earlier this year the Mayors of Vancouver and London, as co-chairs of the FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus working group on housing, released the report "Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness". This report is the most recent document produced by FCM in advocating federal and provincial action in collaboration with municipalities to resolve housing and homeless issues. The Metro Vancouver Board of Directors endorsed the recommendations in the Plan and has asked its member municipalities to also consider endorsement. The Plan was developed in conjunction with FCM's CMHAN (Canadian Municipal Housing Action Network), a committee which has political and staff representation from Canada-wide municipalities, including Vancouver. The City has supported the work of this committee since its inception, including providing funding for advocacy and research activities.

The Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing housing and homeless needs in our country. The document is on file at City Clerks. Its priorities are to:

1. preserve and enhance existing assets
2. reduce homelessness and the number of people needing housing
3. expand the supply of affordable housing necessary to meet existing and future need

Major concerns highlighted in the report are the pending expiration of current federal housing and homelessness programs (Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Federal Housing Trust Fund, Aboriginal Housing Trust Fund, Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program) and reductions in federal operating subsidies to social housing (average reduction 2008-2013 is \$100 million annually increasing to \$265 million per year thereafter).

The Plan identifies five targets:

1. End chronic homelessness in 10 years:
Create 20,000 new transitional supportive and permanent affordable housing opportunities (2,000 per year) and provide appropriate support to stabilize underlying issues that contribute to chronic homelessness (e.g., mental health and addiction).
2. Expand the stock of affordable non-market housing by 15 per cent of total annual housing starts each year:
A growing population creates new households, and an estimated 15 per cent of these new households will need affordable housing. This means 25,000 to 30,000 new households in need per year. This goal aims to create enough new permanent affordable housing to stabilize housing need. This housing can include new construction and acquisition/preservation of existing market units.
3. Reduce the backlog in core housing need by 25 percent over 10 years (35,000 households per year):

This will use a variety of approaches, including rental assistance and assisted home ownership, as well as new construction or acquisition/preservation, to expand the number of affordable non-market units.

4. Preserve and modernize Canada's existing social housing stock at the rate of 20,000 units a year and renew existing subsidies:
One-third of existing social housing stock (220,000 units) is at risk because of age or loss of subsidies. This goal will ensure they are retained and modernized and that expiring subsidies are renewed to ensure the units remain affordable.
5. Extend and revise the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to improve conditions in existing private (homeowner and rental) stock to rehabilitate 10,000 homes annually:
This would continue to assist low-income owners and people with disabilities to rehabilitate existing homes and help private landlords (including rooming houses) to bring rental properties up to minimum standards while preserving affordable rents.

The priorities in the Plan are consistent with the City of Vancouver's own efforts and policies. The proposed annual targets for various types of housing, such as transitional and supportive housing may be too low to meet the needs of Vancouver, Metro Vancouver and other major urban centres. The FCM report suggests a national target of 2,000 units a year whereas the City of Vancouver's need alone has been identified as close to 400 units per year. Metro Vancouver has suggested that these targets be viewed as minimum thresholds to be achieved and that FCM review and update their targets annually or as new information becomes available.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

CONCLUSION

The FCM document is part of continuing efforts by municipalities to urge the Federal government to renew its funding commitment and to take a leadership role in developing a long-term strategy working with provinces and municipalities. It is recommended that the City, similar to the Board of Directors of Metro Vancouver, endorse the FCM report "Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness", January 23, 2008.

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