

MOTION ON NOTICE

5. **Back to Basics: Prioritizing Public Realm Maintenance and Cleanliness in Vancouver**

Submitted by: Councillor Kirby-Yung

WHEREAS

1. The maintenance and cleanliness of roads, street medians, and sidewalks, as well as the management of litter and litter receptacles in the public realm, are among the core – most basic – jurisdictional responsibilities of local governments such as the City of Vancouver;
2. Under the heading “Street and sidewalk cleaning and maintenance”, the City of Vancouver website states that “Keeping our streets, sidewalks, and green spaces safe and clean for everyone to enjoy is a City priority.”;
3. In recent years, the people who live and work in Vancouver, as well as visitors to our city, have noted and openly commented on a significant decline in the physical state and cleanliness of our city, offering up and reporting on numerous examples such as streets with potholes, overgrown street medians, and neglected sidewalks that represent a variety of safety hazards, and the increased amount of litter on sidewalks, overflowing garbage cans, and discarded food items that attract insects and other pests, all of which has resulted in the diminishment of basic civic pride and confidence in the day-to-day management of the City;
4. In July 2019, Vancouver City Council approved the 2020-2024 Budget Outlook, signalling the start of the annual budget process that seeks to align available funds with the priorities and service level expectations of the people who live and work in Vancouver;
5. The City of Vancouver regularly refocuses its spending in response to changes in service demands and priorities over time, and, when necessary and informed by feedback from the public, public consultation and other valued sources, the City makes new investments in emerging issues;
6. Residents and businesses in Vancouver are genuinely dismayed that while the taxes and fees levied by the City of Vancouver constantly go up, services appear to continually diminish, and that the city appears dirty and neglected from the perspective of basic maintenance and commonly accepted standards of cleanliness;
7. The majority of the funds to cover the cost of the annual City of Vancouver budget – i.e. the money the City uses to run the city – come from property taxes and utility fees collected from homeowners and businesses, as well as from renters through the rent paid to landlords;

- NOTE: Under the City of Vancouver 2019 Operating Budget, a median single-family home assessed at \$1,832,000 paid an estimated \$3,805 in total City of Vancouver taxes and fees in 2019 while a median business property assessed at \$618,000 paid an estimated \$5,512 in total City taxes and fees (this amount does not include Provincial taxes and fees collected by the City for the Province);
8. The people who live and work in Vancouver have a reasonable expectation that the taxes and fees they pay to the City of Vancouver will be used to appropriately maintain Vancouver's roads, sidewalks and street medians, and to keep them in a state of good repair and cleanliness, along with prompt attention to the removal of litter and attending to public litter receptacles in a timely manner;
 9. In 2017, Dillon Consulting Limited conducted a "Street Litter Audit" for the City of Vancouver at 108 pre-selected locations in the city and observed that the most common categories for large litter were cups (20%) and paper/fibre material (19%) while the most common categories for small litter were cigarette butts/debris (37%) and chewing gum (25%), with large litter items being equal to or larger than 4 square inches and small litter items being smaller than 4 square inches;
 10. The City of Vancouver website prominently lists "Improved street cleaning, including more litter and recycling receptacles" and "Cleaner parks with improved litter pick-up" as being among the many benefits derived from the City's annual budgets – notably stating that the benefits from taxes and fees paid to the City accrue "in your home, on your street, in your community, and throughout your city";
 11. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation plays a key role, and is a key partner of the City of Vancouver, in keeping the city's public realm clean and in a good state of repair, notably the city's traffic medians and shared spaces that the Park Board maintains for the City of Vancouver under a contract service arrangement;
 12. Gaining physical access to street medians has become increasingly difficult for the Park Board (e.g. Knight Street), as has access to the necessary financial resources to achieve a proper standard of maintenance;
 13. In 2017, the City of Vancouver implemented a new "Street Cleaning Utility fee" with the stated purpose to reduce illegal dumping and create cleaner and safer public realm spaces;
 14. The City's website states: "Garbage illegally dumped in a laneway – if not cleaned up promptly – attracts more garbage. Abandoned garbage can also cause health and environmental risks, sends a message that illegal activity is tolerated in our neighbourhoods and costs taxpayers over a million dollars a year.";
 15. The City's stated commitment to "Keeping our streets, sidewalks, and green spaces safe and clean for everyone to enjoy" as a City priority is best demonstrated through action and a jurisdictionally appropriate emphasis and

prioritization of maintenance and cleanliness standards in conjunction with the most prudent and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to elevate the priority given to the maintenance of the City's roads, street medians, and sidewalks, and that this be a key guiding element in the preparation of the City's 2020 Budget, with an aim to improve the state of good repair and safety and cleanliness of these assets, including direction to staff to take immediate steps to elevate the priority given to sidewalk repair and street litter removal and public litter receptacles in accordance with the reasonable expectations of the people who live and work in Vancouver for the public realm to be well maintained, safe and clean;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to bring forward as part of the 2020 Budget process the expenditures required to achieve the maintenance and cleanliness objectives noted above, including a proposed reallocation of funds from other City of Vancouver budget items of lesser public impact and effectiveness (noting that such reallocation of funds need not be restricted to the streets and sanitation portion of the City's Budget), that would not add to the total tax load imposed on the City's taxpayers through taxes and fees that are yet to be levied in the City's 2020 Budget.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back prior to the presentation of the 2020 Proposed Budget with an update on any and all impediments that may exist for the Park Board as it relates to its ability to fulfill the contracted maintenance of the city's street medians, including recommendations for how these impediments can be overcome in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report back prior to the presentation of the 2020 Proposed Budget on the "Street Cleaning Utility fee" implemented in 2017, a fee that sought to reduce illegal dumping and create cleaner and safer public realm spaces, including information on how the funds have been applied, results achieved, and an identification of areas where additional support is required to achieve the desired results, such that the level of safety and cleanliness in the public realm is fully consistent with the reasonable expectations of those who live and work and pay taxes and fees in Vancouver.
- D. THAT Council signal its ongoing commitment to the timely and sufficient maintenance and cleanliness of the city's roads, sidewalks and street medians to keep them in a state of safety and good repair, as well as the effective and prompt management of street litter and litter receptacles in the public realm, by directing staff to include language in the City's proposed 2020 Operating Budget that keeping our streets, sidewalks, and public spaces safe and clean for everyone to enjoy is a Council priority and among the core jurisdictional responsibilities of the City of Vancouver.

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