

MOTION

5. Ensuring All Vancouver Residents Can Comply With Public Health Guidance

At the Council meeting on April 28, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on April 29, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Swanson

WHEREAS

1. COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health emergency;
2. Dr. Bonnie Henry, the Provincial Health Officer, has directed British Columbians to practice physical distancing and to “stay at home as much as possible” in order to slow the spread of COVID-19;
3. The City’s 2019 Homeless Count identified 2,223 residents as homeless, and these residents will likely be unable to follow Provincial health directives without additional assistance because they have no homes;
4. Mayor Kennedy Stewart has called upon the Provincial and Federal governments to provide “additional shelter capacity/temporary housing for up to 3,000 people currently unable to self-isolate”;
5. The Provincial Government and Provincial agencies, including BC Housing and Emergency Management BC, have significantly more flexibility in obtaining resources and, therefore, are better positioned than the City to address the housing needs of City residents during the COVID-19 crisis;
6. To date, the Provincial Government and Provincial agencies have not secured enough housing to allow for Vancouver’s homeless population to practice appropriate physical distancing and self-isolation;
7. There have been numerous COVID-19 outbreaks in congregate settings like prisons and long term care facilities;
8. Shelters are congregate settings where people have even less chance to self-isolate than people in prisons and nursing homes because they do not have private rooms or even cells with toilets;
9. There have been COVID-19 outbreaks in shelters in the US with large numbers of people testing positive even when they have few if any symptoms;
10. The continued use of shelters as spaces for people who are homeless increases risk of COVID-19 transmission among people who are and are not homeless;

11. Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction has a list of 92 people living in Oppenheimer Park who want to move indoors; and
12. The BC Hotel Association estimates that 60 per cent of hotels in British Columbia have closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, indicating that there are enough empty rooms to address the isolation needs of City of Vancouver residents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council urge the Province of British Columbia to acquire hotel rooms as soon as possible to offer to all unhoused people in Vancouver so they have the same opportunity for self-isolation as people with homes.
- B. THAT, if the Province is unwilling to take this action, the City itself will acquire hotel rooms for unhoused people and work with BC Housing and Coastal Health to provide supports so unhoused people have the same opportunity for self-isolation as people with homes.

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