

## MOTION

### 8. Defining Social Housing Consistently and Transparently in the City of Vancouver

At the Council meeting on May 26, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on May 27, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

#### WHEREAS

1. *Social Housing* is defined by the City of Vancouver *Zoning and Development By-Law* as rental housing in which at least 30 percent of the dwelling units are occupied by households with incomes below housing income limits, as set out in the current Housing Income Limits (HILs) table published by BC Housing; which is owned by a non-profit corporation, non-profit co-operative association, or by or on behalf of the City, the Province of British Columbia, or Canada; and which is secured by a housing agreement or other legal commitment; <sup>1</sup>
2. On March 15, 2014, Social Housing in the Downtown Eastside and elsewhere was re-defined by amendment after but not subject to the public hearing process; <sup>2</sup>
3. The Province of BC, through BC Housing, defines *Social Housing* as owned by a not-for-profit organization, a co-op or a government. Rents are subsidized (usually by the government) making it possible for people with lower incomes to find housing they can afford. Household income must be below certain limits in order to be eligible; <sup>3</sup>
4. The Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia bilateral 10 year Social Housing Agreement (June 2018) defines *Social Housing* as housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations and housing co-operatives or housing owned directly or indirectly by provincial, territorial or municipal governments or district social services administration boards and further distinguishes *Social Housing* from Affordable Rental, Affordable Homeownership, Transitional Shelter or Other Supportive Housing, and specifically commits support to 34,491 Social Housing Units, of which 20,427 are low-income; <sup>4</sup>
5. For purposes of census data, Statistics Canada defines *Social Housing* as “non-market rental housing” (for example, where housing allocation and rent-setting mechanisms are not entirely dictated by the law of supply and demand); <sup>5</sup>
6. The English language and urban studies variously define *Social Housing* as any rental housing that may be owned and managed by the state, by non-profit organizations, or by a combination of the two, usually with the

aim of providing affordable housing. Social housing is generally rationed by some form of means testing or administrative measures of housing need;<sup>6</sup>

7. The City of Vancouver definition of *Social Housing* is inconsistent with the standard definitions employed by the Province, Government of Canada Agencies and the English-speaking world; and
8. When attempting to understand housing targets or determining the merits or public benefits of a rezoning or development application, Vancouverites may be confused or misled by the term *Social Housing* as defined by the City of Vancouver and applied to the entire project, not just the percent or portion of non-market affordable rental or co-op housing.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to review the definition of *Social Housing* across City regulations, and consider alternatives that refer specifically and only to non-market affordable rental or co-op housing.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back with a proposed new definition of *Social Housing* and an inventory of current housing that meets this new definition of *Social Housing*.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report back on the process needed to implement any new definition of *Social Housing* in City regulations.

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1. City of Vancouver - Housing Vancouver Strategy  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20171128/documents/rr1appendixa.pdf>
  2. City of Vancouver – Standing Committee of Council on City Finance and Services, 2014  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20140312/documents/cfsc20140312min.pdf>
  3. Government of British Columbia Housing Glossary  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/affordable-and-social-housing/housing-glossary>
  4. CMHC-BC Social Housing Agreement 2018  
<http://www.bchousing.org/publications/CMHC-BC-Bilateral-Agreement-April-2018.pdf>
  5. Statistics Canada  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4610002401>
  6. Caves, R. W. (2004). *Encyclopedia of the City*. Routledge. p. 610. ISBN 9780415252256.

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