

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

1. Protecting Tenants from Real Estate Investment Trusts

Submitted by: Councillor Swanson

WHEREAS

1. Across Canada and the globe, government policies and financial pressures have shifted housing away from a necessity and human right into an asset and financial investment;
2. In Canada, this shift has included a transformation of smaller landlords to larger, investment-oriented companies, including real estate investment trusts (REITs);
3. As of 2017, REITs owned 20% of units in Canada; in BC they own 4%;
4. Studies show that REITs are deterred by tenant protections. In Manitoba, where rent control is tied to the unit in some buildings, REITs own 0% of units;
5. REITs' portion of the housing market locally and nationally continues to grow, exposing more tenants to landlords that are motivated to displace existing tenants in favour of wealthier ones who can generate the income expected for their portfolio. This process feeds gentrification, poverty, and homelessness;
6. In 2019, the Government of Canada adopted the National Housing Strategy Act (NHSA), which recognizes that housing is a fundamental human right;
7. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recently committed to ensuring secure and affordable housing for all by 2030;
8. Cities like Vancouver continue to bear substantial responsibility for addressing the housing crisis without sufficient resources from higher levels of government;
9. Cities like Vancouver must create innovative solutions to ensure that our residents' human rights are protected and to keep higher levels of government accountable to their commitments;
10. It appears that 10 Vancouver apartment buildings are now for sale in a portfolio that could be attractive to REITs;
11. REITs' have a tax advantage of not having to pay business tax as long as their taxable income is distributed to unit holders.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- A. THAT the Mayor write to the federal government on behalf of Council to:
 - i. Express concern at the growing share of units that REITs own across the country and their impacts on human rights, housing security and affordability for Vancouver residents;
 - ii. Ask that the federal government rescinds tax measures that facilitate REIT's getting control of more and more apartment buildings;
 - iii. Ask that the federal government take more measures to protect and reinvest in the existing rental stock, and to deliver more new non-market housing.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back, as part of ongoing work if possible, in Q2 2021, on the impact of vacancy control in protecting tenants from having their building taken over by REITs.

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