

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

### 2. Updating the Requirement for Members of Council to Rise to Speak at Council Meetings

Submitted by Councillor Bligh

#### WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is governed by the *Vancouver Charter*, and established by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia;<sup>i</sup>
2. British Columbia's system of government is based on the United Kingdom's Westminster tradition of parliamentary democracy – a government system with a long history dating back over 800 years to the 13th century;
3. Many rules, customs, and traditions have accrued to the British Parliamentary system over the centuries. For example, there is a longstanding practice whereby Members of Parliament must “stand” while speaking, unless they are unable to do so, and similarly they must “rise or half-rise” from their seats in order to catch the Speaker's attention;
4. Likewise, the Rules of the Senate of Canada (Chapter Six: Rules of Debate – Recognition in Debate / Recognition by the Speaker) states: “Senators wishing to speak shall rise at their assigned place and, when recognized by the Speaker, shall address the Senators.”;
5. Section 13 of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice (Rules of Order and Decorum) under the sub-heading of “Manner of Speaking” states: “Any Member who wishes to participate in the proceedings must stand and be in his or her designated place to be recognized and to speak...” with exceptions such as circumstance where a Member is unable to rise as a result of an injury or illness etc.;
6. Part 6 of the City's Procedure By-Law No. 12577 (Conduct of Council Members) under the sub-heading “Rules of conduct” for speaking states: “6.2 When questioning or speaking, a Council member must: (a) rise unless a disability prevents the Council member from doing so. Council members are not required to rise to speak at a standing committee meeting (section 5.7);
7. The City's Procedure By-Law is not immutable and has seen many updates and changes over time, including at the regular Vancouver City Council meeting on October 5, 2021, where Council formally approved an amendment to the By-law regarding electronic meeting and other amendments to allow for “electronic special, regular and committee meetings of Council” (By-law No. 13129);
8. The hybrid meeting model adopted by Council during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the expanded electronic meeting provisions of By-law No. 13129, has led to an inadvertent situation whereby Council members who are present electronically

at a regular Council meeting are not required to stand, while those members present in the Chamber are required to stand. Members of the public and those on Council have made noted of observable inconsistency;

9. Likewise, the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee has stated that the requirement to stand or rise at meetings is non-inclusive given that not everyone is able to stand to speak at a Council meeting. The requirement to rise to speak disadvantages those who are not able to stand;
10. By way of informal observation, most City Councils in Metro Vancouver do not require their members to rise or stand while speaking. Likewise, Vancouver Park Board Commissioners and Trustees of the Vancouver School Board do not stand while speaking. Seeking recognition to speak in the municipal sphere is typically achieved by an electronic means or by a simple gesture to speak;
11. The City of Vancouver and Vancouver City Council are committed to enhancing access and inclusion for all persons, including those with disabilities and those from the wide diversity of communities within our city. It is important that all persons are fully able to participate in City services and civic life on an equal footing, an objective that is reflected in the City's core values and commitments to advance truth and reconciliation, equity, diversity, and anti-racism, as well as to better understand and acknowledge the colonial legacies and functional artefacts embedded within the City's practices and traditions. Council and the City strive at all times to improve and work towards a fairer, safer, more inclusive city.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to prepare a suitable amendment to the City's Procedure By-Law No. 12577 to the effect that rising to speak at regular Council meetings shall be optional and at the discretion and preference of individual members of Council;

FURTHER THAT staff be directed to report back by the end of Q1 of 2022 on the specific history, circumstances, and reasons whereby members of Council have been – and are currently – required to rise in order to speak at regular Council meetings, with the intent being to document this information as a matter of civic historical and cultural interest.

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<sup>i</sup> As noted in the *Vancouver Charter's* Preamble section: "WHEREAS by the Vancouver Enabling Act, 1949, the City of Vancouver was authorized, without conforming with the requirements of the Standing Orders relating to Private Bills as to notices or fees, to apply to the Legislature for a Private Bill, to be known as the Vancouver Charter, to supersede and replace the said Vancouver Incorporation Act, 1921, and all amendments thereto:"