

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

4. Assessing Vacant Lands to Support Housing For BC's Most Vulnerable

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Property taxes are calculated by applying a City-determined mill rate against a Province-determined assessment and land-use classification;
2. Owners of vacant land are incentivized to reduce their property taxes by changing temporary use and assessment, for example by adding a community garden to be re-classified as a (lower-taxed) Class 8 Recreational;
3. Properties assessed as Class 3 Supportive Housing integrate long-term housing units with on-site supports for persons who were previously homeless or persons who are at risk of homelessness; are subject to special valuation rules by the provincial government that reduce the assessed value of the property to a nominal amount; and have received funding from the government or a regional health board;¹
4. On February 9, 2022, Vancouver City Council approved the report Creating a Tiny Shelter Pilot Project.² The report identified that the target population for THV [Tiny Home Village] met the definition of Class 3 but would “depend on the availability of BC Housing or Vancouver Coastal Health Authority’s funding to the pilot project”; and
5. Tiny Home Villages have been successfully deployed on vacant lots in other jurisdictions as part of a strategy to shelter and triage homeless as a pathway to permanent housing and better access to health and services.³

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the following resolution be submitted to the 2022 LMLGA and UBCM for consideration at their respective policy conventions, with the three footnotes supplied as background:

WHEREAS sadly thousands of British Columbians are homeless, sleeping in shelters, tents, and encampments. Many jurisdictions in Canada and down the West Coast have successfully triaged their homelessness crises with temporary tiny shelter type villages, as a transition to more permanent housing;

AND WHEREAS BC Assessment classifies property according to its use, and local governments apply a mill rate to the respective classification to determine taxes. Owners of vacant land are incentivized to reduce their property taxes by changing temporary use and assessment, for example by adding a community garden to be re-classified as a Class 8 Recreational;

AND WHEREAS properties assessed as Class 3 Supportive Housing integrate long-term housing units with on-site supports for persons who were previously homeless or persons who are at risk of homelessness; are subject to special valuation rules by the provincial government that reduce the assessed value of the property to a nominal amount; and have received funding from the government or a regional health board:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That UBCM request the BC government to work with local governments to develop and fund an incentive for more readily and rapidly repurposing vacant land as temporary Class 3 Supportive Housing, to support the creation of emergency or ad-hoc housing or shelter with on site supports as a short-term use, and including tiny homes, navigation centres, portables, and/or modular housing.

1. BC Assessment: classifying supportive housing property
<https://info.bcassessment.ca/Services-products/property-classes-and-exemptions/classifying-supportive-housing-property>
2. Vancouver City Council Standing Committee of City Finance and Service:
Report – Creating a Tiny Shelter Project
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20220209/documents/cfsc3.pdf>
3. CNN These tiny homes in Los Angeles off the city's homeless a new lease on life
<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/26/us/homeless-tiny-home-villages-los-angeles/index.html>

* * * * *