



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: November 28, 2023
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Meeting Date: December 13, 2023
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services

FROM: General Manager of Development, Buildings, and Licensing, and
the Chief Building Official

SUBJECT: Plumbing, Sprinkler and Mechanical Updates to the Building By-law

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, various miscellaneous amendments to the Building By-law as generally described in this report and as set out in Appendix A.
- B. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment amendments to the Building By-law as set out in Appendix A.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report recommends three quick-win amendments to the Building By-law which can be implemented immediately to help reduce building cost, increase reliance on professionals and harmonize selected plumbing by-law requirements with the National Plumbing Code:

- *Plumbing*: harmonize with the national and provincial standard for backflow preventer requirements on private property, to protect the City's water supply
- *Sprinklers*: eliminate the requirement for a sprinkler permit for minor repairs, helping to also reduce the sprinkler permit backlog
- *Mechanical*: better match the cost of a mechanical permit to the review and inspection effort required, by reducing the cost of mechanical permits prepared by registered professionals.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

Council has the authority under sections 306 and 330 of the [Vancouver Charter](#) to make by-laws for regulating the installation of plumbing facilities, for fixing standards for plumbing facilities, for protecting the health of inhabitants and for preventing and prohibiting insanitary conditions.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

The report proposes three amendments to the Building By-law which can be implemented immediately to help reduce building cost.

Discussion

1. Plumbing: backflow preventers on private property

To protect the City's water supply, buildings must provide appropriate means of preventing backflow. This report seeks to harmonise City requirements with the national and provincial plumbing codes. Removing differing requirements between local construction codes helps to decrease industry uncertainty and construction cost.

2. Fire sprinklers: minor repairs

Currently a fire sprinkler permit is required for any type of work on a fire sprinkler system, including minor repairs. Conversely, plumbing and mechanical systems do not require a permit for a minor repair, replacement of a valve and other smaller items which do not change the plumbing or mechanical system. This report seeks to eliminate the sprinkler permit requirement for the replacement of a valve or sprinkler head, or to complete a repair. This will aid in reducing the sprinkler permit backlog and will allow City resources to be allocated more effectively.

3. Mechanical permits: cost

[Mechanical permits](#) were launched on June 1, 2022 to streamline the installation of heating and cooling systems. In 2023, this entirely on-line program has automatically issued over 2,000 permits. This report seeks to establish a more equitable pricing system. Fewer City resources are required to review and inspect installations which are designed by a registered professional, and this report seeks to establish a maximum fee.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report's recommendations.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

