

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

2. Housing is Healthcare

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. In Canada, the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and all residents of a province or territory are entitled, on uniform terms and conditions, to the publicly funded health services covered by provincial/territorial plans;
2. Every year hundreds of British Columbians are diagnosed with chronic conditions and diseases including cancers, organ, and stem transplants that necessitate specialized medical treatment requiring long term stays near, but not in hospital;
3. In 2022, there were 465 organ transplants in BC, 34% of those transplant patients were from outside of the Fraser and Vancouver Coastal Health Authorities, and 100% of those transplants occurred in Vancouver. Over the course of their treatment, the typical transplant patient is required to stay near, but not in hospital for three months; ¹
4. In BC, urban centres typically provide high acuity care for regional patients, and Vancouver with its major medical centres at BC Children's Hospital, Vancouver General Hospital and St. Paul's Hospital respectively provide complex and highly specialized treatment for the entire Province. High acuity cases and procedures like transplantation will often require patients to travel with very little advance notice or planning;
5. There exists significant challenges to securing accommodations near, but not in hospital for British Columbians needing to travel to Vancouver for specialized medical treatment. Challenges are variously exacerbated by: low vacancy rates and housing unaffordability; changes to short term rental legislation; hotel room shortages; and development related pressures in hospital adjacent areas like the Broadway Plan, Cambie Corridor, and new St. Paul's Campus. These challenges can create significant barriers to timely treatment, causing patients stress and anxiety. In some cases, patients are reported to forgo treatment for want of secure affordable accommodations;
6. In 2023, delegates overwhelming supported UBCM Resolution SR1 "Health Equity for Rural and Remote Communities" calling on the Province to:
 - Identify reasonable travel distances from each community to health care services and facilities, to ensure transparent, accountable, and equitable health care access for those living in rural and remote communities in BC;
 - Conduct a thorough policy review and reform to ensure equitable healthcare access for all residents of British Columbia, in compliance with the Canada Health Act; and
 - Collaborate with healthcare providers, patient advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to gather data, improve service delivery, and address systemic healthcare challenges in rural and remote areas;
7. Many jurisdictions with universal healthcare provide subsidies for travel and accommodation. Ontario, for example provides the Transplant Patient Expense Reimbursement (TPER) Program² and up to \$2,500/month for accommodation. Similar

programs have been replicated in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Nunavut, Yukon and Newfoundland and Labrador;

8. Many jurisdictions with universal healthcare provide subsidized accommodation options. Australia for example variously provides Medihotels³ and Red Cross Medical Accommodations⁴ with low cost accommodation, minimal patient supervision, and support and facilities for patients, a family member or carer, for self-caring patients including rural patients who require short-stay accommodation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to consider, in the course of area planning and regular re-zoning and permit applications, opportunities where density bonusing and similar incentives could stimulate the creation of housing and accommodations for patients needing to travel to major medical centres in Vancouver for longer-term specialized medical treatment near but not in hospital;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to share with relevant authorities in the Provincial Ministries of Health and Housing respectively, the substance of this motion and City's willingness to consider the needs of British Columbians requiring longer-term accommodations for specialized medical treatment, in our planning and permitting processes, especially in transit-oriented areas adjacent and proximate to major medical centres including BC Children's Hospital, Vancouver General Hospital and the new St. Paul's Campus.

AND FURTHER THAT the following be submitted to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association for consideration as a resolution at the Union of BC Municipalities 2024 Convention, with the above whereas clauses submitted as background:

Housing is Healthcare

WHEREAS every year hundreds of British Columbians are diagnosed with chronic conditions and diseases that necessitate specialized medical treatment requiring long term stays near but not in hospital, there are disparities in health outcomes between rural and urban patients;

AND WHEREAS residents of rural and remote communities in British Columbia requiring specialized medical treatment for complex care in urban centres face significant challenges including high travel and accommodation costs, the psychosocial impacts of healthcare away from home and community, the loss of income during treatment period, and increasingly limited availability of affordable accommodations, hotel rooms, or short term rentals;

AND WHEREAS the Province of British Columbia, reflected in its 2024 mandate, is committed to both improved health care for British Columbians when they need it, and attainable and affordable housing to deliver more homes for people faster:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UBCM advocate for the Provincial Government of British Columbia to alleviate the financial and logistical burdens associated with seeking specialized medical care far from home by developing and implementing comprehensive policies and programs to assist patients needing to travel for healthcare, and ensure that patients have access to affordable, comfortable, and convenient accommodations.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UBCM request the Province consider and implement ways to deliver and dedicate subsidized accommodations in and adjacent to large urban health centres specifically purposed for longer term specialized medical treatment.

¹ BC Transplant | 2022 Organ Donation and Transplantation Summary
<http://www.transplant.bc.ca/Documents/Statistics/2022-BC-Organ-Donation-Transplant-Summary.pdf>

² Ontario Health | Transplant Patient Expense Reimbursement Program Bulletin 2023
https://www.giftoflife.on.ca/resources/pdf/transplant/TPER_Background_January_2023_Final.pdf

³ Victoria Department of Health | Medihotels <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/patient-care/medihotels>

⁴ Australian Red Cross | Medical Accommodations <https://www.redcross.org.au/services/medical-accommodation/>