

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on February 26, 2025.

3. Temporarily Pausing Net-New Supportive Housing Investments in Vancouver to Prioritize Replacing Existing Stock and Promoting Regional Equity

Submitted by: Mayor Sim

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver has long taken a leadership role in providing supportive housing, recognizing that safe, stable, and dignified housing is a fundamental necessity for individuals facing homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use disorders;
2. Despite representing only 25% of the regional population, Vancouver is home to over 77% of the region's supportive housing and more than 67% of its shelter spaces, pointing to a significant resource gap regionally for people wishing to remain in their home communities and be able to access local support services;
3. Vancouver's current low-income housing stock includes aging Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings which are rapidly deteriorating and often failing to meet basic standards of safety and dignity;
4. Many of the city's SROs (those with and those without direct supportive services) are plagued by hazardous conditions such as broken elevators, unsanitary environments, garbage accumulation, and infestations, leaving residents in unlivable circumstances that compromise their well-being, signaling an urgent need to replace aging, unlivable SRO units with new supportive housing;
5. For the purposes of this motion, supportive housing refers specifically to low barrier supportive housing for individuals experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and with severe mental health challenges and/or substance use disorders, including 24/7 on-site support services. For clarity, this motion does not refer to Social Housing where occasional supports are provided to ensure households maintain their tenancies;
6. Although there is no firm estimate of how many SRO buildings in the city currently fail to meet the basic standards of safety and dignity, the number is known to be significant and threatens to push even more people into homelessness. For example, VFRS reported 326 structure fires in SRO buildings last year, and the DTES figures prominently among the six neighbourhoods in the city at the highest risk in an earthquake;
7. The Province has recognized that Vancouver cannot address these crises alone and has committed to a comprehensive response plan for the DTES, including investments in mental health and addiction recovery services. In 2022, Premier Eby stated: "The crisis in the Downtown Eastside is well beyond what the city of Vancouver can take on, on their own;"

8. Supportive housing is meant to provide stability, care, and a path forward, and although Vancouver continues to invest in supportive housing, there is an urgent need for other municipalities to step up and share in the responsibility of providing housing and care for those in need across the region;
9. In addition to an urgent need to replace the city's aging SRO and supportive housing stock, there is a parallel need to replace the city's Temporary Modular Housing (TMH) units with permanent, quality, purpose-built supportive housing, to ensure safe, dignified living conditions for Vancouver's most vulnerable residents;
10. A more balanced, regional approach to supportive housing would allow individuals experiencing homelessness to access stable housing in their own communities, closer to family, cultural connections, and local services, rather than being displaced to Vancouver; and
11. By prioritizing the replacement of unsafe, unfit, or temporary housing in Vancouver with dignified, livable homes, and by urging a fairer regional approach, Vancouver can ensure that those suffering the most receive the safe, stable housing they desperately need.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. That Council direct staff to temporarily pause any City contributions of land or funding for homelessness response supportive housing developments—except for projects focused on replacing existing SRO buildings or TMH projects—until progress is made in increasing the supply of homelessness response supportive housing across the region;

FURTHER THAT this temporary pause does not encompass nor impact:

- Any City-supported supportive housing projects currently in-stream or that have already received funding confirmation from senior government or the City;
 - Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) projects associated with the delivery of Road to Recovery continuum or health-care related housing or residentially based health care such as complex care housing or long-term care;
 - Future proposed supportive housing projects that represent a replacement of existing supportive housing projects, including any density added to existing supportive Housing sites;
 - Supportive housing for seniors, women and families, and youth ageing out of care;
 - Social Housing where occasional supports are provided to ensure households maintain their tenancies; and
 - Any applications received by the City within 6 months of passage of this motion.
- B. THAT Council confirm for the provincial and federal government that its priorities for new homelessness response supportive housing investments in Vancouver are to accelerate the replacement of unlivable SROs, and temporary modular

housing, until meaningful progress is made in increasing supportive housing stock across the region;

FURTHER THAT Council request the Mayor write a letter to the provincial and federal governments urging them to increase investments in mental health care, addiction recovery, to address the root causes of homelessness and suffering.

- C. THAT Council direct staff to work with BC Housing to enhance and accelerate the STEP (Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways) program to support people who are in Supportive Housing but are able to live independently to transition into Social or rental housing so as to enable those Supportive Housing units to be assigned to people experiencing homelessness who are in need of that Supportive Housing.
- D. THAT Council direct staff to report every two years on homelessness and supportive housing development across the region, ensuring accountability and progress, and offer support to the Province in working with other municipalities to expand regional supportive housing options.

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