

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services meeting on
December 10, 2025*

9. Affirming Vancouver's Commitment as a Sanctuary City

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver is a vibrant, inclusive, diverse, and welcoming city;
2. A Sanctuary City ensure local services are accessible to all residents, regardless of immigration status, and do not use municipal resources for federal immigration enforcement. These policies build trust, reduce fear, and promote community safety and inclusion;
3. In the United States, Sanctuary Cities are legal constructs, highly politicized and contested. In Canada, the concept of Sanctuary City is more symbolic and policy-based. Toronto was the first Canadian city to declare itself a Sanctuary City in 2013, followed by Hamilton (2014), and Montreal (2017), other Canadian Cities have adopted an Access without Fear Policy (London, Edmonton);
4. Vancouver City Council adopted the Access Without Fear (AWF) policy in 2016, ensuring that all residents, regardless of immigration status, can access City services without fear of detention or deportation. At that time, independence of parks, policing, and libraries precluded a declaration of Vancouver as a Sanctuary City, and the symbolic term was seen as possible confusing;
5. Since adoption of AWF, other Vancouver agencies and partners -including the Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation- have implemented similar policies, reinforcing a citywide commitment to equity, inclusion and access without fear. The Vancouver Police Department has adopted similar policies: VPD officers do not ask about immigration status of victims, witnesses, or complainants during investigations unless there is a legitimate reason to do so. The department aims to treat all individuals equally, regardless of immigration status, race, or language ability;
6. Current attitudes toward migrants in the United States have created heightened uncertainty and fear among immigrant and refugee communities. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is conducting mass raids in U.S. cities, arresting thousands and tearing families apart — creating fear and division under a policy of mass deportation condemned as a human rights violation. Against this backdrop, local sanctuary and access without fear policies are more crucial than ever;
7. The U.S. Consulate General in Vancouver hosts a law enforcement hub that includes officers from several U.S. federal agencies including ICE. While ICE

agents do not have enforcement jurisdiction in Canada (they cannot arrest or enforce U.S. immigration laws on Canadian soil) they do engage in information sharing, coordination, and joint investigations with Canadian authorities;

8. Vancouver will host international visitors and workers during FIFA World Cup 2026 (FWC26), presenting an opportunity to reaffirm our values of diversity, inclusion, and human rights on a global stage;
9. Toronto, as part of its FWC26 Human Rights Action Plan¹, intends to reaffirm its commitment to its status as a Sanctuary City, including access without fear, asylum processes, surveillance concerns, displacement of unhoused individuals, and human trafficking:

With regards to the City's status as a Sanctuary City, through adoption of the AccessTO policy position, Toronto became the first Canadian municipality to ensure that all residents, regardless of immigration status, can access City-funded services without fear of discrimination, or their personal information being shared with immigration authorities. The FWC26 Toronto Secretariat, in collaboration with the City's Newcomer Office, will align efforts to help decrease hardship to those new to the city and maintain the AccessTO mandate as part of our hosting responsibilities for FWC26;

10. Vancouver is expected to produce its own FWC26 Human Rights Action Plan in Q1 2026; and
11. As a primary distinction, Access Without Fear Policies offer practical, enforceable guideline for municipal service delivery, Sanctuary City is a political statement and broad commitment to express a commitment to welcoming and supporting residents regardless of immigration status.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council declare its commitment to being a Sanctuary City consistent with the existing policies and principles of the Access Without Fear program;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to review and report back on opportunities to expand and strengthen Sanctuary City status and AWF implementation within our FWC26 Human Rights Action Plan.

- B. THAT Council direct the Mayor write to the federal and provincial governments to advocate for policies that protect the rights and dignity of all residents, regardless of immigration status.

* * * * *

¹ FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Governance, Community Benefits Plan, Legacy and Program Advisory Framework
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-247473.pdf>