

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION**

*For consideration at the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting  
on January 21, 2026*

### **2. Tools for Tenancies: Closing the Gap by Enforcing Accountability and Adding Conditions to Licensing Landlords in the City of Vancouver**

Submitted by: Councillor Fry

#### **WHEREAS**

1. Vancouver is a city of renters, with renters making up the majority<sup>1</sup> (about 55%) of households;
2. As Vancouver further increases the amount of rental housing stock, small-scale mom-and-pop landlords, homeowners, and small investors are gradually being replaced by corporations, real estate investment trusts, and property management companies. New, purpose-built rentals in multi-family properties are typically owned by larger investment firms or institutional landlords;
3. The Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) provides a provincial framework for tenancy rights, but enforcement gaps remain at the municipal level, particularly around property standards, licensing, and proactive compliance. RTA cases are adjudicated by the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB);
4. The RTB operates primarily on a case-by-case basis, applying its decisions to the specific tenant and landlord involved in each dispute—not broadly across an entire building or landlord operation;
5. Despite the role of the RTA/RTB, other municipalities, such as New Westminster, have implemented business licensing requirements for rental properties to ensure minimum standards of maintenance, accountability, and enforcement;
6. Vancouver's existing business licence by-law does not currently include robust provisions for rental housing operators beyond short-term rental licensing, and nothing explicitly for multi-family property landlords;
7. Although most multi-family property landlords are professional and ethical, the City of Vancouver has seen increasing reports of sophisticated practices by unethical landlords that exploit existing loopholes to undermine tenant security and well-being, such as harassment, unauthorized surveillance, illegal suite

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<sup>1</sup> City of Vancouver 2021 Census Housing Data (October 2022)

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2022-10-14-city-of-vancouver-2021-census-housing-data.pdf>

conversions, bad faith evictions, evasive sub-tenancy programs, and unlawful short-term rental operations. Examples include:

- a) **Unpermitted and unsafe subdivision of units.** Multiple buildings are engaging in the practice of installing temporary partition walls to subdivide a unit into multiple and often short term rented units. One building, an un-sprinklered older tower owned by a prominent REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) prompted concerns that the cardboard partition wall was a fire risk “One grease-fire and this place is going to light up like a haystack.”<sup>2</sup> In at least two instances, 24 hour advance notice of a city inspection allowed the landlords to remove the partitions and evidence;
- b) **Harassment and unauthorized surveillance.** In one building, multiple tenants reported covert camera installations in hallways and common spaces—some disguised as smoke detectors—without notice or consent. Footage was allegedly used in eviction proceedings. Tenants described this as harassment and privacy invasion;<sup>3 4</sup>
- c) **Pattern of “bad-faith” eviction attempts.** In July 2023, the BC Residential Tenancy Branch ruled a landlord acted in bad faith when they tried to evict a tenant under false pretenses of needing a live-in caretaker. The eviction notice was quashed after findings that the landlord instead re-let the apartment at a higher rent.<sup>5</sup> In late 2024, tenants in the same building reported another attempted wrongful eviction, with the RTB granting an interim order halting the eviction. Reports noted false information and ongoing harassment tactics;<sup>6</sup>
- d) **Evasive sub-tenancy programs.** Increasingly, landlords and property managers are using “head tenancies” which effectively deny sub-tenants protections and access to dispute resolution.<sup>7</sup> While sub-tenancies have a legitimate role, especially in demolition clause housing, they should not be a vehicle for landlords to absolve themselves of responsibility to tenants of the property;

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<sup>2</sup> 'Quite alarming': U.S. student says Vancouver housing unit subdivided with cardboard wall

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/vancouver/article/quite-alarming-us-student-says-vancouver-housing-unit-subdivided-with-cardboard-wall/>

<sup>3</sup> Vancouver tenants protest evictions, allege harassment by landlord

<https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2024/06/11/park-beach-manor-tenants-protest/>

<sup>4</sup> The Tyee | A Vancouver Landlord Keeps Being Allowed to Evict Tenants. Why?

<https://thetyee.ca/News/2025/12/05/Vancouver-Landlord-Keeps-Being-Allowed-Evict-Tenants/>

<sup>5</sup> CBC | Vancouver landlord acted in bad faith in attempted eviction for caretaker use, arbitrator finds

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-rtb-caretaker-eviction-plan-a-real-estate-bad-faith-1.7055918>

<sup>6</sup> City News | Vancouver West End tenants fighting more ‘phony’ evictions

<https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2024/09/13/west-end-tenants-fighting-evictions/>

<sup>7</sup> The risks desperate Vancouver renters are taking to secure housing

<https://vancouversun.com/news/the-risks-desperate-vancouver-renters-are-taking-to-secure-housing>

- e) **Unlawful Short Term Rentals.** Long identified as a problem but hard to catch. <sup>8</sup> Despite regulations by both the City and province, constrained resources present challenges identifying infractions by sophisticated multi-unit landlords with resources to deploy listings across multiple platforms using multiple proxies. Without accountability to the landlord's business license, listings merely appear under new fake names and fake licenses when caught; <sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>

8. The Province of British Columbia has enacted the Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act, granting municipalities enhanced authority to regulate short-term rentals, impose principal-residence requirements, and levy higher penalties for non-compliance, creating an opportunity for Vancouver to strengthen enforcement and integrate penalties for licensed multi-family rental operators who violate these rules; and
9. Imposing conditions and fines on multi-unit landlord licensing could help curb misconduct.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations for necessary and lawful amendments to the Licence By-law to:

- a. Introduce a Rental Business Licence category for landlords operating multiple rental units, with annual renewal requirements tied to compliance with City standards and provincial tenancy laws;
- b. Establish minimum property maintenance and safety standards as licence conditions, including clear authority to City for rapid inspections and enforcement orders;
- c. Require disclosure of ownership and management information for licensed rental properties to improve transparency and accountability;
- d. Require landlords to display their City of Vancouver rental property business licence in a location accessible and visible to tenants and that the document explicitly includes accurate and up-to-date name, contact information and address of the landlord (or agent) and notification that adherence to the RTA and the Standards of Maintenance By-law are conditions of license;

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<sup>8</sup> **CBC News | Vancouver landlord investigated for short-term vacation rental leases**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/landlord-investigation-short-term-vacation-rental-1.6000836>

<sup>9</sup> **AIRBNB | Cozy 2BR Suite • Steps to English Bay** (Retrieved January 2026)

[https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/1573676939112393435?source\\_impression\\_id=p3\\_1766429678\\_P3CdEiLE0iQgD7SQ](https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/1573676939112393435?source_impression_id=p3_1766429678_P3CdEiLE0iQgD7SQ)

<sup>10</sup> **Booking.com | Charming Heritage-Style 2-Bedroom in the Heart of the West End**

<https://www.booking.com/hotel/ca/charming-heritage-style-2-bedroom-in-the-heart-of-the-west-end.en-gb.html>

- e. Include provisions for fines, and licence suspension or revocation in cases of repeated violations, including but not limited to harassment, unauthorized surveillance, illegal suite conversions, bad faith evictions, or evasive sub-tenancy programs;
- f. Target multi-family building landlords engaged in unlawful short-term rental activity; and
- g. Integrate penalties and ticketing authority for non-compliance, leveraging recent provincial changes that allow higher municipal ticket fines for license transgressions and other breaches, including short-term rental violations.

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to:

- a. Explore coordination with provincial bodies (RTB and OIPC) to identify any serial landlord patterns, and to streamline complaint handling and enforcement related to tenant privacy and quiet enjoyment;
- b. Report back on resource implications and enforcement strategies, including proactive inspections and data-driven monitoring of bad-reputation operators;
- c. Report back on developing a public registry of licensed landlords, accessible online, to enhance transparency and allow tenants and the public to verify compliance; and
- d. Engage with key stakeholders, including tenant advocacy organizations, landlord associations, housing providers, and privacy experts, to ensure recommendations reflect diverse perspectives and practical implementation considerations.

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