COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services meeting on November 18, 2026

10. Addressing the Risks of Digital Infrastructure

Submitted by: Councillor Maloney

WHEREAS

1. The explosive growth of AI and new digital technologies is driving major investment in Bulk Data Storage infrastructure across Canada, including in Vancouver;

2. The U.S. experience has shown that, in the absence of thoughtful regulation, Bulk Data Storage construction and operation can create legitimate concerns and serious impacts on both nearby residents and municipal infrastructure;

3. Bulk Data Storage infrastructure serves a variety of roles and can be distinguished by the number of servers it accommodates and the technologies it employs. Bulk Data Storage specifically designed to support Artificial Intelligence differs from conventional Bulk Data Storage in both scale and energy needs due to the technologies involved. As a result, these facilities present new challenges for cities;

4. More and more municipalities are questioning whether it is appropriate to locate Bulk Data Storage infrastructure near residential areas and are requiring further studies to mitigate potential impacts (US National Association of Counties);

5. Bulk Data Storage infrastructure also risks occupying scarce commercial- and industrial-zoned land in Vancouver while creating fewer post-construction jobs than other uses (Joint Legislative Audit and Review of Virginia);

6. Concerns have also been raised that although AI infrastructure generates substantial value for private investors, it contributes only marginally to the local economy (The Tyee);

7. Vancouver is already seeing AI Bulk Data Storage development, with projects like the conversion of 175 West Cordova (DP-2022-00689) moving forward. Before more follows, the City has an opportunity to implement a robust impact assessment framework that weighs economic, social, and community implications prior to granting further approvals; and

8. The City of Vancouver can ensure proper impact assessment of AI infrastructure under consideration and the consistency of projects with the public interest by

using its land-use authority, permitting powers, and public reporting requirements.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

A. THAT Council direct staff to report back on how to develop a Bulk Data Storage Public Impact Requirement, requiring applicants, prior to rezoning or permitting, to commission a third-party assessment addressing water, greenhouse gas emissions, potential air contaminants, noise and heat impacts, mitigation measures including heat recovery, and employment impacts relative to other viable industrial uses for the land.

B. THAT Council direct staff to report back on how staff could assess the consistency of any Bulk Data Storage development applications with the City's climate targets and other strategies and objectives.

C. THAT Council direct staff to review existing and emerging Bulk Data Storage uses in Vancouver, including 175 West Cordova (DP-2022-00689) and similar retrofitted facilities, and report back on pre- and post- retrofit noise complaints, current ambient noise levels and any other measurable community impacts associated with new or retrofitted Bulk Data Storage facilities to inform the Bulk Data Storage Public Impact Requirement.

D. THAT Council direct staff to review and report back on whether the Noise Control By-law adequately addresses continuous mechanical noise, low-frequency noise and data-centre related equipment noise in mixed-use, commercial and light industrial contexts, taking into account literature from the U.S. and provide recommendations for enhanced enforcement or by-law amendments.

E. THAT Council direct staff to report back on options for enforcement of applicants' commitments, including a Bulk Data Storage Infrastructure-specific business license, which would require annual public disclosure of water consumption, power consumption and noise levels, and provide a point of accountability should applicants violate commitments made as part of the Public Impact Requirement.

F. THAT Council direct staff to explore and report back on options for securing public benefit from Bulk Data Storage Infrastructure, such as fees or contributions, recognizing that Bulk Data Storage infrastructure creates significant private wealth for their investors, such that the City and its residents should not be left to deal with any impacts, infrastructure pressures and opportunity costs.

G. THAT Council direct staff to report back on resolutions A, E and F as soon as possible, to seek to ensure that compliance with a new regulatory framework is

required before new development permit applications are approved and any rezoning applications are considered by Council.

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