COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

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

7. Moisture Monitoring and Prevention Standards in Residential Rental Housing

Submitted by: Mayor Fry

WHEREAS

1. Excess moisture in buildings is a leading contributor to mould growth, indoor air quality issues, structural deterioration, and associated health concerns;

2. Mould is generally a symptom of underlying moisture problems, including water intrusion, condensation, inadequate ventilation, plumbing leaks, and failures in the building envelope;

3. The City of Vancouver's Standards of Maintenance By-law is intended to ensure buildings are maintained in conformity with accepted health, fire, and building requirements;

4. Vancouver City Council, through the motion Enhanced Tools for Standards of Property Maintenance adopted on April 16, 2025, directed staff to investigate amendments related to mould, water damage, and indoor air quality;

5. Work to implement that direction has been slow, in part because of the difficulty in establishing safe levels of mould exposure. Different mould species produce different allergens, irritants, and toxins, individuals vary considerably in their sensitivity and health responses, and exposure levels can fluctuate over time. As a result, there is no universally accepted threshold below which mould exposure can be considered harmless for everyone;

6. Best practices in building science increasingly recognize moisture content monitoring and moisture management as essential preventative tools that can identify risks before mould growth, occupant health impacts, or major building deterioration occur. For instance, The National Building Code requires framing lumber to be considered "dry" at installation, which is defined as a maximum moisture content of 19%;

7. Advancements in moisture detection technology allow non-invasive and cost-effective assessment of building materials, wall assemblies, and indoor environmental conditions including pin-type moisture meters and infrared thermal imaging cameras; and

8. Preventative moisture management can reduce long-term maintenance costs for property owners while improving tenant health, safety, and housing quality.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to report back on opportunities to strengthen the Standards of Maintenance By-law and alongside workplan for Enhanced Tools for Standards of Property Maintenance by incorporating moisture management and moisture assessment provisions, including:

a) The establishment of objective criteria or thresholds for excessive moisture content, persistent dampness, or water intrusion in residential rental buildings, informed by current building science and public health guidance;

b) Options to authorize City inspectors to require moisture-content testing, building envelope assessments, or other appropriate investigations where evidence of chronic dampness, recurring leaks, condensation, or suspected mould exists;

c) Recommendations for moisture measurement protocols, including the use of non-invasive moisture meters, thermal imaging, or other recognized diagnostic tools;

d) A review of best practices from other Canadian and international jurisdictions that incorporate moisture management standards into housing maintenance regulations;

e) Options to require property owners to investigate and remediate the source of excessive moisture rather than solely addressing visible mould or cosmetic damage;

f) Recommendations for tenant education materials explaining moisture-related hazards, common indicators of water intrusion, and available remedies under municipal and provincial regulations; and

g) An assessment of enforcement mechanisms, implementation costs, and any legislative considerations necessary to support moisture-management standards within the City of Vancouver.

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