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Subject: Memo - Rental Housing Task Force's Final Report

Attachments: PDS - Memo to Council - Rental Housing Task Force Final Report.pdf

Greetings Mayor & Council,

On December 12, 2018, the BC Government released the *Rental Housing Task Force Rental Housing Review Recommendations and Findings*.

The Rental Housing Task Force was appointed by Premier John Horgan in April 2018 to advise on how to improve security and fairness for renters and landlords throughout the province.

The attached memo summarizes the Rental Housing Task Force's Final Report and recommendations. The memo provides information on the following:

- Background and Implications of the Task Force's final recommendations
- Relationship of the recommendations to Motion B.10: Protecting Tenants from Renovictions and Aggressive Buy-outs

If you have any questions on this information, please contact Gil Kelley, General Manager of Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability at 604.873.7456 or Gil.Kelley@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Sadhu

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MEMORANDUM

December 13, 2018

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager
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Rena Kendall-Craden, Communications Director
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Abi Bond, Managing Director, Homelessness Services & Affordable Housing Programs

FROM: Gil Kelley
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Rental Housing Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

This memo provides information on the Rental Housing Task Force's Final Report and Recommendations , released on December 12, 2018.

What is the Rental Housing Task Force?

The Rental Housing Task Force was appointed by Premier John Horgan in April 2018 to advise on how to improve security and fairness for renters and landlords throughout the province. The Task Force is composed of three members:

- MLA Spencer Chandra Herbert MLA, Premier's Advisor on Residential Tenancy
- MLA Adam Olsen
- MLA Ronna-Rae Leonard

During the spring and summer of 2018, the Rental Housing Task Force conducted province-wide engagement with landlords, renters and others concerned citizens. City of Vancouver staff participated in the consultation process, and provided both in-person and written comments. The final report and recommendations submitted by the Task Force, including a summary of the public stakeholder engagement, can be found [here](#).

The final report from the Task Force follows earlier recommendations released in September and adopted by the Province, setting the annual allowable rent increase to 2.5% to match

inflation, with an exception to allow for modest increases where work has been done to improve rental properties.

Highlights in the Final Report and Recommendations

The Rental Housing Task Force final report identifies 23 recommendations that address suggestions heard during consultation to improve the rental housing system for renters and landlords. The recommendations include significant new measures to address the needs of renters facing challenges with displacement due to renovations, while also acknowledging the need for measures to ensure a consistent supply of new rental housing to support long-term affordability and availability of rental housing. This is critical in Vancouver, where renters are facing rising rents and a vacancy rate below one per cent.

Several of the Task Force recommendations address issues raised in *Motion B.10: Protecting Tenants from Renovations and Aggressive Buy-Outs*, approved by Council on December 4, 2018. These recommended measures include the following:

- Improving the Residential Tenancy Act to better accommodate tenants and maintain stable tenancies during renovations
- Clarifying that evictions are to be used for serious, major and long-term renovations (e.g. seismic upgrades)
- Requiring landlords to provide evidence to both the tenant and RTB that an eviction is necessary

These recommended improvements to the Act are intended to stop evictions for cosmetic changes to a unit, or even more significant renovations like windows, plumbing, or electrical work if the tenant is willing to accommodate construction. If the Province decides to move forward with these recommendations, it will be critical for municipalities to work with the RTB on implementation, including creating regulations and guidelines to define the types of work that could be accommodated with stable tenancies vs. evictions in order to ensure alignment with municipal permitting processes. This is essential in order to provide clarity for renters, landlords, municipalities, and the RTB.

Regarding the issue of vacancy control, the Task Force report recommended that rents continue to be tied to the tenant and not the unit. The report reflects on the concerns heard from renters during the consultation process about the impact of rising rents, particularly as rents are reset up to market upon turnover. The Task Force also heard significant concerns expressed by housing providers that vacancy control could impact the creation of new supply or the ability to undertake major structural work.

The report explains that the decision to maintain rents tied to the tenant and not the unit was made in the context of the recent changes to the RTA to limit the allowable rent increase to inflation only and increased fines for bad faith evictions, both of which are aimed at alleviating the concerns of renters. City staff are keen to work with the Province to continue to understand the impacts of these changes and to explore the implications of vacancy control measures on new supply and on renters and affordability.

Additional Recommendations

The Task Force final report also includes several recommendations aimed at expanding protection and support for renters in municipalities across B.C. These include:

- Making the Residential Tenancy Branch more responsive, accessible, and proactive and strengthening enforcement of existing law
- Implementing a B.C.-wide Rent Bank system for low-income people, which would build on existing municipal rent banks (such as the Vancouver Rent Bank that the City of Vancouver supported the establishment of), as well as recent improvements to Provincial housing supports under the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER)
- Developing guidelines and standards for municipalities that do not currently have policies to guide tenant compensation or relocation

These recommendations are aimed at ensuring a fair process for all renters, while also strengthening supports to assist the Province's most vulnerable renters facing severe affordability challenges. If implemented, these recommendations will help to create a consistent level of support for renters in all B.C. municipalities, and ensure a clear and effective rental system for all stakeholders.

Next Steps:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will review the Task Force's recommendations to consider how they might be implemented and discuss the recommendations with key stakeholder organizations. A timeline for the review and implementation, including any legislative changes, have yet to be announced.

City Staff look forward to working with the Provincial government and Residential Tenancy Branch on implementation of these recommendations as they move forward. As a next step, Staff will analyze the implications of these recommendations, particularly as they relate to the City's current Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy, permitting process, and the recently approved Council Motion *Protecting Tenants from Renovictions and Aggressive Buy-Outs*, and the establishment of a CoV Renter's Office. A report back to Council with a work program on increasing protection to renters is planned in early 2019.

Please do not hesitate to contact me further should you have any follow-up questions.



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