



October 6, 2020

City of Vancouver
Mayor Kennedy Stewart and Council

Via Email: mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca

To Mayor and Council,

RE: Unions Support Vacancy Control in Privately-Owned Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SRO's)

In December 2019, council unanimously passed a motion to ask the province for vacancy controls in SRO's and investigate ways the city could accomplish this if the province did not. Since that motion passed the province has not implemented vacancy controls on SRO's and now, as unions representing thousands of working people across this Province, we are calling on you to use your municipal authority to enact legal protections and penalties to implement vacancy controls in Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SRO's).

SRO's are roughly 100 square foot rooms with no kitchen or private bathrooms. Built in the early 20th century to accommodate a booming seasonal workforce, they have become much needed housing for people who would otherwise end up homeless. They are typically rented out at a low rate (between \$300-500 per month) for low income individuals and are most suitable for those on welfare who cannot afford Vancouver's market rental rates.

Many unionized workers see firsthand the impact the housing crisis has had on people living in SRO's. Many people who live in SRO's are on the verge of homelessness and it makes even more urgent to preserve these homes until the housing crisis is ended. SRO's are also close to communities and services that tenants depend on.

It is important that protections are put in place to ensure they do not fall victim to profit seeking investors who purchase these buildings in order to rent out the rooms at higher rents than current tenants are paying.

The city can protect these homes by legislating that rents in SRO's be tied to the unit, not the tenant, so that they remain affordable even when tenancy changes. This can be done by using the Business License bylaw to impose penalties on landlords who raise rents between tenancies. The City of New Westminster has implemented this form of vacancy control, and its right to do so was upheld by the BC Supreme Court.

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We urge the Mayor and Council to use the powers at their disposal to ensure SRO's are protected with vacancy control measures.

Sincerely,



Stephen von Sychowski
President, VDLC

Letter also endorsed by:

BC Government and Service Employees' Union
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 15
Hospital Employees Union, VGH Local
International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers, Local 118
International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 400
Public Service Alliance of Canada – BC Regional Council
Teaching Support Staff Union
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1518

cc: VDLC Executive Board
VDLC Housing Action Team

svs/eb

moveUP