

**2018 Municipal Election
Renter Report Card Working Group**

Notes: The Renter's Report Card and Voting Guide is authorized by the Vancouver Tenants Union, registered sponsor under LEFCA, 604-780-5705

Methodology:

Four key questions were developed by the Renter's Report Card Working Group based upon suggestions from the Steering Committee and Policy Committee of the Vancouver Tenants Union. Specifically these were drawn from our 50 recommendations to the BC Rental Housing Taskforce and the City we Need platform which our membership endorsed. These four questions were sent out to the following parties and independent mayoral candidates on September 10th: (COPE, Greens, One City, Stewart Kennedy, ProVancouver, Shauna Sylvester, NPA, Vision Vancouver, Coalition Vancouver, Vision Vancouver and Yes Vancouver.) They were asked to respond to the questions with a deadline of September 13th, 2018.

On September 15th, 2018, 31 tenants from apartment buildings across Vancouver participated in the Renters Report Card grading exercise. Participants came from diverse neighborhoods such as Kitsilano, the Downtown Eastside, the West End, Mount Pleasant, Arbutus, Hastings-Sunrise, Grandview-Woodland and Marpole. Participants were randomly divided into four corners of the room. In each corner they were read one of four key questions and the politicians response in alphabetical order. Participants were asked to grade the responses using a simple A/B/C/D grading scheme with F reserved for non-respondents. Those grades were given a numerical equivalent and then averaged to create an average score for each politician response.

Note: We asked for the responses to these questions to be by Party or Independent Candidate. Raza Mirza, candidate with Pro-Vancouver, did return a response however, he specifically mentioned that he cannot speak for the rest of the group on these questions. Additionally, Pete Fry and Adrienne Carr both responded individually to these questions. The tenants who graded these responses were asked to take both of candidates responses into consideration for grading for the Green party.

The following parties missed the deadline and sent their answers in after the Grading Exercise or simply acknowledged our email and apologized for not answering in time: (Pro-Vancouver - David Chen, Shauna Sylvester, Vision Vancouver)

Given a Grade of F*

The following parties did not respond to the survey at all:
(Yes Vancouver, Coalition Vancouver, NPA)

Given a Grade of F

IMPORTANT: The Renters Report Card is not an official VTU endorsement of any political party or candidate. Our bylaws state that endorsement requires a passing vote at one of our general meetings, which we have done in the past. With housing being the primary issue in the 2018 Vancouver municipal election, we wanted to engage in the policy questions and in tenants in a deeper way. The Renter's Report Card is a tool used by the VTU's Renters Report Card Working Group to get out the vote for the 2018 municipal election. It indicates candidates who when graded by tenants, may be favorable to pro-renter policies. We encourage you to read the full responses and get familiar with candidates platforms.

Questions and Consolidated Responses - Renter's Report Card

Instructions: Answer Yes or No to each question. Please take a maximum of 150 words to explain your answer.

1. Will you pressure the provincial government to implement vacancy control and a four year rent freeze? Y/N

(COPE) Yes COPE supports vacancy control and a rent freeze. The maximum annual rent increase has been rising faster than inflation and wages, so COPE will pressure the provincial ministry to set the rent increase regulation at 0%. The maximum rent increase doesn't apply when a tenant moves. Landlords can jack the rent to whatever the market bears. With market rent for a 1-bedroom at around \$2,000 per month, this is an incentive to evict. COPE will immediately ask the province to include vacancy control in the RTA, will indicate it's a top priority for city council, and will help to build campaigns and tenant power to push for change. If the province does not act, COPE will direct staff to use city business licensing powers to make a rent freeze and vacancy control a requirement of business licenses for landlords.

AVERAGE GRADE: A

(GREEN - Pete Fry) Yes. I think vacancy control is a fair and crucial tool to protecting rental stock from unreasonable and unnecessary rent increases. I would also approach the provincial government to enact a four year rent freeze, with the condition that they are providing some sort of intervention to protect and maintain affordable rental stock and a means to insulate landlords from legitimate maintenance and inflation costs. This could be a tax rebate or write off. I'd further suggest that the 'school tax' would be better directed to protect rental stock in the area it is being extracted (ie Vancouver) than going to general provincial revenue).

(GREEN - Adrienne Carr) Yes, I support and will pressure the provincial government to institute vacancy control measures that regulate rent increases in tight vacancy markets like we have in Vancouver by limiting rent increases for new tenancies to keep in line with existing rents. Understanding that this is a Provincial legislative issue, I would not support a four-year rent freeze unless some other source of money exists to cover the inflationary increases in the cost of maintaining rental accommodation. These recommendations should be accompanied by city action to protect and maintain affordable rental housing, as I moved to do at Council. My motion was referred to the Renters' Advisory Committee for their input on this.

AVERAGE GRADE: B-

(Kennedy Stewart) We're in the middle of a housing crisis and we need all levels of government to do their part to take bold action to solve it. When I heard the news of the 4.5% allowable rent increase, I immediately wrote the Minister responsible asking for a meeting to discuss how difficult such an increase would be to renters already struggling to get by. I further asked the Minister to put a freeze on the escalator

AVERAGE GRADE: C-

(One City) YES. We fully support vacancy control (tying the rent to the unit, rather than the tenant), and will advocate to the Provincial government to implement it. We also believe that the current formula for determining rent increases is broken, as evidenced by this year's 4.5% rent hike - this increase is far too high for renters who are already struggling. We believe that the best way to make rents more affordable in Vancouver is to build large amounts of non-market rental housing. Until these units are created, and the vacancy rate is improved, a rent freeze or a significant lowering to the allowable rent increase would be an appropriate measure.

AVERAGE GRADE: B

(ProVancouver- Reza Mirza) Yes. At least 50% of all future development be purpose built rentals is big part of ProVancouver's housing platform. First wave of these new PBRs will likely not come to market for next 2-3 year, and

renters cannot wait until then. I will also advocate for new rent adjustment formula which takes average income growth into account. component of the increase formula until the housing crisis is solved.

AVERAGE GRADE: B-

2. Do you support a 1% property tax hike on homes worth over \$5M and 2% over 10M to be used to end homelessness? Y/N

(COPE) Yes COPE supports a Mansion Tax of 1% on the value of property over \$5M and 1% on the value over 2%. This will generate over \$170M per year, which can fund over 2000 modular homes to end homelessness in the first year and build non-market housing in subsequent years. The province's new school tax is not set at a high enough rate on extremely high-end properties, and revenues aren't earmarked for housing. We need a Mansion Tax that acts a revenue source for building non-market housing on city-owned land.

(AVERAGE GRADE: A)

(GREEN - Pete Fry) Yes. However, under our current taxation structure, there is no guarantee this money would stay in Vancouver. Like the school tax, I think it is important that this revenue stays in the community that generates it in order to offset the impacts of housing costs that are grossly disconnected from our local incomes. Meeting this objective would require at least an amendment to the Vancouver Charter, or a rock-solid agreement with the province.

(GREEN - Adrienne Carr) Yes, with the understanding this is also a provincial legislative issue, requiring a change in property classifications by the BC Assessment Authority.

(AVERAGE GRADE: B+)

(Kennedy Stewart) I support the current provincial school tax surcharge on homes worth over \$3 million dollars. While recognising that this policy is completely in the provincial government's control, I would ask for that money to be returned to the city to fight homelessness here.

(AVERAGE GRADE: C-)

(One City) YES. One City's 4 the City policy calls for a broader, bigger property tax increase on Vancouver's wealthiest homeowners. We call for an additional 1% property tax on homes valued at over \$4 million and an additional 2% on homes valued over \$8 million. Together with OneCity's Land Value Capture Tax, and the already-existing Empty Homes Tax, we'll build up to 25,000 guaranteed affordable city-owned units over 5 years and ensure rents are fixed at no more than 30% of tenants' income in all these newly created City-owned rentals, forever. We believe that this would contribute to ending homelessness by creating secure, long-term, affordable housing.

(AVERAGE GRADE: A-)

(ProVancouver - Reza Mirza) Yes, with some exemptions.

- For all future purchases or where home is not a primary residence, yes.

- For current homeowners, exemption based on income level of homeowner, land size, length of ownership and if there are any longterm rental suites in the home.

(AVERAGE GRADE: C)

3. Will you strengthen the City's "Tenant Relocation and Protection Guidelines" into a law that gives all tenants, including those in secondary suites in single family homes and industrial areas, the right of first refusal so they can return at the same rent in all redevelopment scenarios? Y/N

(COPE) Yes. One main way that landlords empty units to jack the rent is by renovicting or demovicting tenants. COPE will pressure the province to close this loophole in the RTA. At the same time COPE will strengthen the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy to make it a condition of renovation/development permits that all tenants can return to their unit at the same rent, and to expand coverage to all rental units. All landlords already need a business license, so all tenants should be protected. This broad coverage is crucial, especially in the context of the city's proposed "making room" policy, which could displace thousands of renters in single-family home neighbourhoods.

(AVERAGE GRADE: A)

(Green - Pete Fry) Yes. The TRPG could be strengthened by expanding scope of building type (to include secondary suites and smaller rental buildings for example) and removing geographic restrictions. Returning at same rent would have to be conditional on some sort of rebate and tax benefit for landlords on legitimate renovation costs. Senior governments have provided this in the past and it is not unprecedented. These measures must go hand-in-hand so that we don't put a chill on construction of purpose built rental in our city (in the absence of senior government building public housing and relying on private markets in the first place).

(Green - Adrienne Carr) Yes. The Vancouver Greens are committed to strengthening the Tenants Relocation and Protection Policy by expanding its applicability to all rental types and all zoning districts. Enabling renters to return to their homes after renovations have been completed at the same rent could be accomplished by requiring that leases not be terminated, even when major renovations are undertaken. There is case law to support this right. To reduce the costs of renos (and rent increases), I have moved motions as a Councillor to lobby the federal government to reinstate tax incentives for rental housing (not just building it, but also renovating and maintaining it), as well as establish a local source of funding (a Vancouver carbon trust) that could fund rental housing repairs and energy retrofits. City staff are working on this.

(AVERAGE GRADE: B-)

(Kennedy Stewart) I was proud to announce yesterday my intention to create a Renters Advocate Office to make sure renters are treated fairly and stop renovictions. The office would provide a one-stop shop for renters who need help and offer free information, advocacy, and legal assistance to renters during tenancy disputes. The Renters Advocate Office would also give City Council advice on new policies and recommend advocacy actions for senior level government changes like a rent freeze or ways to strengthen Tenant Relocation and Protection Guidelines.

(AVERAGE GRADE: D+)

(One City) YES. OneCity would, within the limits of municipal jurisdiction, work to amend the Rate of Change by-law to include all demolitions across the entire city, ensure the number of bedrooms is not reduced, give residents the right of first refusal, and limit rent increases. We also believe that the City can play a significant role in protecting renters from renovictions. We propose the creation of a Renter's Advocate at the City of Vancouver, specifically tasked with reviewing renovation permits to determine whether they require vacant possession, and whether they provide fair and adequate protection and compensation for displaced tenants.

(AVERAGE GRADE: C+)

(ProVancouver - Raza Mirza) No. Because I will put very strict definition of renovation and redevelopment. To charge new rent, post-work building-only value must increase by "10% x age of old building in years" i.e. for a 75 year old building, building-only value must increase 750% compared to old building-only value. Otherwise work doesn't qualify as redevelopment, and tenants automatically maintain first right of refusal at same rent.

(AVERAGE GRADE: D+)

4. If landlords cannot maintain their properties up to code, will you support the city to make the repairs and add the cost to the landlord's property tax bill? Y/N

(COPE) Absolutely. The Vancouver Charter section 23.8 already gives the city the power to bill landlords for repairs. The city has to be much more proactive so that buildings don't fall into disrepair. The city has until now been far too timid, having used section 23.8 only once in history. COPE will ensure that the city has resources to inspect all buildings, request repairs, and if they are not done in timely fashion, do the repairs and put the cost on the landlord's property tax bill. We will not hesitate to use the city's expropriation powers as a last resort; however, a proactive approach should stop buildings like the Regent and Balmoral from falling into disastrous disrepair in the first place.

(AVERAGE GRADE: A)

(GREEN - Pete Fry) Yes, absolutely health and safety for all Vancouverites must be our primary objective in everything we do. Negligence in applying our Standards of Maintenance bylaws over the years directly resulted in the sensationally

appalling situations we observed at Sahota-slums like the Balmoral and Regent, but also in everyday appalling situations in moldy basements and suites across our city. This needs to be a priority of our new government and I think working with the VTU on this is a great idea - it dovetails with our promise to create a "Renter's Office" at the City of Vancouver - to process complaints, and assist with advocacy and work with other rental agencies like the RTB, TRAC and VTU.

(GREEN - Adrienne Carr) Yes, We also want much faster repairs (within 1-2 days as in some U.S. cities) when health and safety of tenants are at risk. I have been pushing for the provincial government to change the Vancouver Charter to increase the fines the City can charge for failure to comply with the Standards of Maintenance By-law. The Tenants' Union can provide invaluable support through providing evidence in court of building owners' failure to maintain properties.

(AVERAGE GRADE: B+)

(Kennedy Stewart) The city has power to expropriate derelict buildings if owners refuse to maintain them properly. I would not hesitate to use this power, especially to protect and improve housing for our most vulnerable.

(AVERAGE GRADE: C-)

(One City) For too long, the City has stood by idly while landlords have allowed buildings to deteriorate into terrible conditions. OneCity believes that the City should use all tools available, including making and billing repairs, and in extreme cases, expropriating buildings from negligent landlords.

(AVERAGE GRADE: B)

(Pro-Vancouver - Raza Mirza) Yes. Does this even require a reason?

(AVERAGE GRADE: C+)

David Chen of ProVancouver submitted his answers after the Sept 15th grading exercise and so these responses were not graded, however we have posted them here for comparison.

- 1. Will you pressure the provincial government to implement vacancy control and a four year rent freeze? Y/N**
Yes to vacancy control and sort of to a 4 year rent freeze. Vacancy control is needed in our crisis, no question, rent control is a bit of an issue where one shoe doesn't fit all. No question, cost of living goes up each year. My target is the reno/demovict landlord who is consistently at or above market rent. On the other hand we have rentals that are below market (like my own) and my landlord who doesn't raise rents on a regular basis because I take care of the place. Last winter the landlord replaced our dead water heater with a high efficiency one for \$20k which has cut my gas bills 80%. I get the cost savings but he has the cost to recover. A rent freeze would negatively impact people like him. I would modify the rent freeze to allow for increases if the rent is 10% or more below market for rental homes in good repair. Poorly kept up rentals or those above market should not be allowed rent increases for failing to provide a minimum standard of living.
- 2. Do you support a 1% property tax hike on homes worth over \$5M and 2% over 10M to be used to end homelessness? Y/N**
Sort of. My target is not the homeowner who has lived here 20+ years, paid income and consumption taxes here and built our communities. My target is land bankers and speculators. I would support it if there was a 20 year prorated tax credit related to the amount of time the person spent living here in the principle residence and paid appropriate amounts of tax (sorry \$1700 tax a year for someone living in a multimillion dollar home and driving a luxury car smells of tax fraud.) Without a laser focused tax, there will be seniors who have lived here all their lives, many in the same home that will be by-catch and I am not cool with harming our community elders.
- 3. Will you strengthen the City's "Tenant Relocation and Protection Guidelines" into a law that gives all**



**P.O. Box 88151
418 Main Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6A 4A5**

**w: vancouvertenantsunion.ca
e: tenantsunion.yvr@gmail.com**

tenants, including those in secondary suites in single family homes and industrial areas, the right of first refusal so they can return at the same rent in all redevelopment scenarios? Y/N

First right of refusal is good but at the same rent can be abused. If a landlord knows they have to rent to the displaced tenant at the same rate, they will just let the property fall apart until the tenant leaves and do the changes without worrying about this. The issue is if a person gets a new computer, do they get the old lease price when the new device costs a lot more? I would wager a judge will not side with this. However, if we use a sliding scale of right of refusal with an allowed rent increase of 1% of all the dollars spent on the improvements starting at \$50,000 (\$41.67 a month increase rent from \$50k improvements from the renos in this example) then there would be some equity for landlords to do improvements and great benefits for the tenant.

4. If landlords cannot maintain their properties up to code, will you support the city to make the repairs and add the cost to the landlord's property tax bill? Y/N

Absolutely yes!! I have already gone on record that the city has not used any of its charter powers to regulate poorly or wrongly run rentals or empty homes.