



VANCOUVER and DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL



October 29, 2021

To: Mayor Stewart and Vancouver City Council
Via Email

Re: Vacancy Control in SRO's

Dear Mayor Stewart and Council,

I am writing to follow up on our October 6, 2020, letter in support of implementing vacancy control for SRO's in the City of Vancouver.

It was very positive to see the unanimous approval of motions in December 2019 and September 2020 asking staff to investigate how to protect tenants of Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs). I understand that by the end of this year city staff are asked to present options to council for municipal vacancy control mechanisms.

SRO's are the last resort before homelessness. As rents increase many of these units are being lost, which is directly contributing to homelessness and the formation of tent encampments. While we understand that the goal is to replace these units with more appropriate, better quality social housing, in the interim we cannot afford to lose the remaining 4,000 SRO's units. Vacancy control is the cheapest and fastest way to prevent homelessness while the work of providing new housing solutions is undertaken.

Many unionized workers, such as those providing frontline services in the Downtown Eastside, see firsthand the impact of the housing crisis on people living in SRO's. Many residents are on the verge of homelessness, a prospect that is perhaps more dangerous than ever given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, opioid crisis, and climate emergency. SRO's are also close to communities and services that these tenants rely on, thereby making their ability to continue to reside there even more critical to their wellbeing. It is also crucial to consider that approximately one third of SRO tenants are Indigenous. Advancing reconciliation includes preventing unnecessary homelessness for these tenants.

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Now is the time for urgent action to tie SRO rents to unit rather than tenant and protect these remaining units for those who need them. We encourage this policy to be implemented without delay, with proactive monitoring and education and sufficient penalties to discourage violations.

Thank you for taking action on this important issue.

Yours truly,



Stephen von Sychowski
President, VDLC

cc: VDLC Executive Board
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svs/eb
move**up**