

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

*For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting on City Finance and Services meeting on
May 20, 2026*

8. Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Housing Affordability Through Alignment with the Provincial Building Code

Submitted by: Mayor Sim

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is consistently ranked among the most unaffordable housing markets in the world, including by the Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, with home prices and rents that are increasingly out of reach for middle- and even upper-income households;
2. Both the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia have identified housing affordability as a national and provincial crisis, and have called on municipalities to remove unnecessary regulatory barriers, standardize requirements, and accelerate the delivery of new homes;
3. The Province of British Columbia has taken steps to standardize housing-related regulations across municipalities, including through housing legislation intended to increase supply and reduce local variation that adds cost and delay;
4. The City of Vancouver remains the only municipality in British Columbia that maintains a standalone building code – the Vancouver Building By-law – rather than adopting the British Columbia Building Code;
5. This regulatory divergence requires builders, designers, and manufacturers to adapt projects specifically for Vancouver, limiting the ability to use standardized designs, modular construction, and prefabricated components that are otherwise compliant across the province. Greater alignment between the building codes of Vancouver and baseline provincial standards will reduce duplication, improve predictability for builders and trades, and support more efficient housing delivery;
6. Even modest percentage increases in construction costs can translate into significant increases in rents and home prices, particularly in a high-cost market such as Vancouver, compounding affordability challenges for residents;
7. Maintaining a separate and more complex regulatory regime, absent clear and demonstrable local necessity, risks undermining broader provincial and federal efforts to improve housing affordability and supply. Stakeholders in business and labour and the plumbing, heating and cooling industries have clearly identified that limiting options for water heating will increase costs to residents and hurt affordability;
8. In 2025, the federal consumer carbon tax and provincial carbon tax were removed, including for natural gas residential customers, highlighting a material

change in the economic context where Energize Vancouver was initially adopted; and

9. It is incumbent on Vancouver City Council to ensure that municipal policies and regulations do not unnecessarily contribute to the cost of delivering housing or compound affordability issues already evident in the city.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to undertake a comprehensive review, through an affordability lens, of the City's housing and energy regulations – including the Vancouver Building By-law, the Energize Vancouver Program, and exploring alignment with the baseline provincial Energy Step Code, to identify opportunities to reduce duplication, costs, and delays;

FURTHER THAT staff be directed to consult with industry stakeholders, including homebuilders, non-profit housing providers, architects, engineers, and manufacturers, with a focus on identifying opportunities to enable greater standardization, modular construction, and cost efficiencies;

FURTHER THAT where beneficial to life and safety measures, staff be directed to consult with Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) on measures not addressed in the provincial building code but embedded in the City's independent Building By-law's regulatory authorities under Section 306 of the Vancouver Charter;

AND FURTHER THAT this review identifies all areas of divergence and classifies them according to:

- i. cost impact on housing delivery;
- ii. impact on timelines and permitting complexity; and
- iii. whether a clear, evidence-based local rationale exists for maintaining the divergence.

- B. THAT staff be directed to bring forward amendments at the earliest possible date to eliminate or harmonize all provisions that add cost, delay, or complexity without a compelling local justification, with a presumption in favour of alignment;

FURTHER THAT any recommendation to retain a divergence from the British Columbia Building Code must include a transparent justification, including quantified cost impacts and a clear explanation of the public benefit achieved.

- C. THAT staff report back with a phased implementation plan at the earliest possible date to achieve alignment, including timelines, transitional provisions, and any required amendments to the *Vancouver Building By-law*.
- D. THAT staff be directed to pause the Energize Vancouver By-law implementation through non-enforcement as a specific means of addressing affordability in the city in advance of the review by staff, and inform strata owned buildings of this change as soon as possible.

- E. THAT Council direct staff to bring back a bylaw repeal report for By-Law No. 14578, to align with baseline provincial standards and restore the ability of Vancouverites to choose a hot water heater replacement that best suits their needs.

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