



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of November 8, 2018**

Date: November 1, 2018
From: Councillors Isitt, Loveday, Collins and Potts
Subject: Acquiring Land to Facilitate Investment in Decommodified Housing

Background

The City of Victoria is in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. This crisis is structural and acute, reflecting a deep disconnect between the incomes of a majority of the population and the price of housing available to rent or own. This crisis is impacting the wellbeing of individuals as well as the health and sustainability of the local economy.

As noted in the attached report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, recent years have witnessed the “financialization of housing”: “massive amounts of global capital have been invested in housing as a commodity ... and as a means of accumulating wealth,” negatively impacting “the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing” – which Canada recognized as a fundamental human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Looking to European jurisdictions, access to affordable housing is improved when a substantial share of the housing supply is decommodified (defined as housing that is owned and operated by public or non-profit entities for the social purpose of providing affordable housing, rather than housing that is privately owned and operated with prices established for the private purpose of maximizing the economic benefit to the owner). (See Attachment 2).

Recent announcements by the Governments of British Columbia and Canada suggest that investment in decommodified housing can be secured if local government is willing to contribute land. It is therefore recommended that Council endorse in principle the acquisition of land to facilitate senior government investment in decommodified housing, and direct staff to report back on options for financing this acquisition.

Recommendations

That Council:

1. Endorse in principle the acquisition of land on a priority basis to facilitate federal, provincial and regional investment in decommodified housing, to address the escalating housing costs that have made securing safe, affordable housing out of reach for many in our community, including seniors, youth, people with disabilities, families, workers, and people from racialized and Indigenous communities.
2. Direct staff to report to Council by December 13, 2018 with recommendations on options for financing the acquisition of land to facilitate federal, provincial and regional investment in decommodified housing.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Isitt



Councillor Loveday



Councillor Collins



Councillor Potts

Attachments:

1. Report of UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing
2. Kathleen Scanlon, et al., "Social Housing in Europe," (2015)