

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE REPORT
FROM THE MEETING HELD MAY 27, 2021

For the Council meeting of June 10, 2021, the Committee recommends the following:

D.1 Letter from the UBCM President

That the letter be received for information.

Motion Arising:

That Council request the Mayor write to the Premier, Minister of Health, and local MLAs, calling on the government to adopt universal no-cost prescription contraception that covers an expansive range of options without delay, to improve public health in an equitable and cost-effective way.

Motion arising:

That Council requests that the Mayor send a response to the Province along the following lines related to the City's resolution on land value taxation:

Subject: Response to Province re: Land Value Taxation

We would like to comment on the Province's response to our resolution.

The response indicates that separate rates on land and improvements would allow "unfairly" high tax rates on undeveloped or underdeveloped land. Of course the purpose of differential rates is precisely to impose relatively higher rates on such underdeveloped land, in order to encourage development and to avoid land being held as vacant buildings, as surface parking lots, or other low-intensity uses. Like other cities Victoria has at times suffered from land being held in such uses. While development of such properties (contrary to what your response suggests) will not actually reduce property taxes, it will certainly reduce taxes relative to the income from the property, which is perhaps what you intended to say.

You have suggested that other policies might be used to offset the impact of the current system and incentivize land development. We would like to suggest that it would conversely be more appropriate for other policies to be used to offset any negative impacts of higher land taxes. For example, it has been suggested that old established businesses in old low rise buildings should be helped to stay in place. Rather than holding down land taxes on such properties, to the benefit of the owners of the land such businesses sit on (who may not be the business owners) we can envision a program that might assist them

Another issue that you should consider is the growing wealth disparity between those who own their homes and those who live in rental accommodation. We believe research would show that the bulk of the recent increase in home values has been in land rather than building values, so that a relative increase in land taxes that would gradually depress land values would probably result in a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Finally, you suggest that land held for future use with Class 6 zoning is taxed at a rate that is too high. We note that it is the municipality itself that sets the relative tax rates for different classes, so that that a much more direct solution to this perceived problem is easily available.

E.1 546 Yates Street and 566-568 Yates: Rezoning Application No. 00770 (Downtown)

That Council instruct staff to prepare the necessary Zoning Regulation Bylaw Amendment that would authorize the proposed development outlined in Rezoning Application No. 00770 to add the use of Cannabis Storefront Retailer to 566-568 Yates Street and remove it from 546 Yates Street, that first and second reading of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw Amendments be considered by Council and a Public Hearing date be set subject to submission and evaluation by staff of a Heritage Alteration Permit for the changes to the front entrance.

I.1 Council Member Motion - Permissive Tax Exemptions of Parking Lots, Existing Properties

That the exemption for the parking lot portion of all properties subject to a permissive tax exemption be reduced by 20% each year over a five-year period, beginning in 2023, where surface parking lots are 50% or more of the total property area.