



Report to Council From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: January 20, 2020
Subject: LMLGA & UBCM Resolution - Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to Disallow Discrimination Against Pet Owners

Purpose

To propose a resolution regarding Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to Not Allow for Discrimination Against Pets for 2020 LMLGA and UBCM Consideration.

Recommendation

THAT the following resolution regarding Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to not Discriminate Against Pets for LMLGA and UBCM Consideration be endorsed by the City of Port Moody and forwarded for consideration at the 2020 LMLGA and subsequent UBCM convention as recommended in the report dated January 20, 2020 from Cllr. Amy Lubik regarding Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to not Discriminate Against Pets for LMLGA and UBCM Consideration:

WHEREAS BC is experiencing a housing crisis and it is hard enough to find shelter even if the prospective renter does not have pets;

AND WHEREAS pets serve in effect as close family members and emotionally essential life partners for their owners;

AND WHEREAS, in 2017, an estimated 1700 pets had to be given up or terminated because their owners could not find stable shelter with them;

AND WHEREAS people end up in substandard or inadequate housing because they are not allowed to house their pets in preferable accommodations;

AND WHEREAS enabling stable housing that keeps family units intact is often the first step to breaking the cycle of poverty;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Province of British Columbia change the Residential Tenancy Act and Strata Act such that landlords and strata organizations may not reject applicants for rental units because their family unit may include pets, on the condition that those pets would not pose serious and specific concerns in regard to physical danger, noise, smell, or an adverse allergic reaction among other building residents.

Background

We often hear about people having trouble finding places they can afford in our community, and we know that affordability is a challenge for our community as a recent MacLean's poll rated us high on livability and low on affordability. We also know that our family, friends, and neighbours consider their pets family and are sometimes hard pressed to find places that will take them. A 2002 study (and things have gotten worse since then) for MOSAIC BC determined that one of the reasons why people ended up homeless or in substandard housing was because of policies that prohibit pets. In 2017 more than 1700 pets were surrendered because their families could not take them to a new place they were living (<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/pet-friendly-housing-pets-surrendered-bc-2017>). Additionally, the Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue is seeing a growing number of owners having to give up their cats because they cannot find a place they can afford to that will take them in (<https://www.narcity.com/news/ca/bc/vancouver/people-abandoning-animals-due-to-housing-crisis-in-vancouver>).

More information can be found at <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/should-you-make-your-property-pet-friendly-2125005>.

Local governments do not have the power to disallow discrimination of stratas or landlords due to pet ownership; however, we are the closest level of government to our constituents and hear the challenges they can face. It is important that we try to do what we can to make sure that all our residents and their furry family members have a safe place to live within our community. That is why advocating through UBCM to change these acts are vital.

Discussion

Pets are important for the [physical](#) and [mental](#) wellbeing of our residents. They are important for the [social wellness of our communities](#). A 2013 study found that the bond between a dog and its owner is close to the one shared between [an infant and a parent](#), and yet in the housing crisis people are forced to make heartbreaking choices. The strata act and the Residential Tenancy act need to be updated to reflect the crisis we are in.

Pet-friendly housing is considerably limited in British Columbia. Landlords and stratas can choose whether they will permit pets. They can also restrict the sizes, kinds or number of pets. Some pet guardians will agree to pay hundreds more a month to have a home with their pets. per month in order to have a home for their family.

While it is true that certain dangerous pets might, in uncommon and singular cases, pose risks to other building residents, and should be removed, general worries of pets becoming a serious risk to landlords/ stratas are unfounded. What's more, allowing pets can be advantageous. [Data gathered by the BC SPCA](#) showed one major advantage to landlords offering pet-friendly housing is increased rental income. People with pets will pay more for housing: units that limit the type or size of pets tend to be cheaper than those without restrictions by \$100. Tenants with pets also stay longer — an average of 46 months, compared to 18 months for people without pets. This saves landlords from having to spend time and money finding new, reliable tenants.

Data also indicates there is no difference between tenants with and without pets in the amount of damage that these groups, on average, do to rental property.

Another direct benefit is increased security, as pet guardians are the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood during late-night and early-morning dog walks. A dog often stays behind to protect the home when his or her guardian isn't there.

However, not all guardians of dogs and cats can afford to pay more to keep their family members. Across the province, about 20% of companion animals who have been surrendered by their guardians have been surrendered because of a lack of available pet-friendly housing. This represents about [1700, up from 1500 in previous years]. The BC SPCA frequently receives calls from frustrated people unable to find a home to rent with their pet. Almost 80% of BC residents favour legislation that allows pet guardians the right to keep companion animals, according to a 2008 poll (McIntyre & Mustel). Pet guardians also face heavy competition for housing due to B.C.'s low vacancy rate.

Ontario has recently made changes to their tenancy acts such that landlords cannot have a "no animals" clause; however, stratas still can still have no pet causes. BC should follow that lead and go farther. Such changes in legislation would benefit our residents in a market where it is difficult for everyone to find homes.

Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated January 20, 2020 from Councillor Amy Lubik regarding LMLGA & UBCM Resolution - Change of Strata Act and Residential Tenancy Act to Disallow Discrimination Against Pet Owners be received for information.

Financial Implications

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communication and civic engagement initiatives associated with this report.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

In submitting a resolution to LMLGA and UBCM, Council's strategic plan objectives are met by demonstrating dedication to:

- The health and wellness needs of residents;
- Access to housing;
- Social inclusion; and
- Courage to lead and embrace new ideas.