

# 2023 Operating Budget

Submission to Vancouver City Council

February 27, 2023

Vancouver City Council  
Council Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall  
453 W 12<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vancouver, BC

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

**Re: 2023 Draft Operating Budget**

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR) to comment on the City of Vancouver's proposed 2023 operating budget. For over 35 years, CCHR has worked tirelessly at the intersection of human rights and housing, providing free services to renters facing evictions and human rights violations to remain housed, providing education and training about housing rights across Canada, and advancing rights-based housing policy through research, policy development, and law reform.

Like many municipalities in Canada, Vancouver is experiencing a housing affordability and homelessness crisis. Vancouver's Housing Needs Report indicates that the crisis is most acutely felt by renters, in particular those living on lower incomes.<sup>1</sup> They are grappling with a shortfall in the supply of affordable rental and social housing, aging and inadequate units and low vacancy rates. They face inflationary pressures and rents that are increasing far quicker than household incomes.

Renters living on lower incomes are being left behind. Many are at increased risk of homelessness, while others are deciding to leave the city and its economic opportunities in search of an affordable place to call home.

The rental housing affordability crisis demands an urgent and coordinated response that increases supply of affordable housing while maintaining existing affordable housing stock, creates diverse housing options, protects renters, and supports those at risk of or experiencing homelessness to transition into stable and supportive housing. It demands a human rights-based approach that increases access to adequate housing for those most impacted by the housing affordability crisis. We note that lower income renters, including persons with disabilities, lone parent households, youth, Indigenous peoples and other equity-denied communities disproportionately experience housing need. This is in line with Canada's commitment to advance the right to housing, which considers adequate housing to be affordable, habitable, accessible, culturally adequate, located near essential services and employment, and where renters can live without fear of forced eviction.<sup>2</sup>

The adoption of the Vancouver Plan in July 2022 provides Council with a mandate and roadmap to respond to the housing crisis by increasing the supply of deeply affordable rental housing across neighborhoods, preserving existing affordable rental housing, and protecting renters from displacement. In addition, through the 2023 Civic Satisfaction Survey, Vancouver's

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/pds-housing-policy-housing-needs-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf)

residents have resoundingly told Council that investing in affordable housing and homelessness services is their top priority and that this service area requires greater investment.<sup>3</sup>

As the first operating budget developed since the adoption of the Vancouver Plan and since the election of this Council, the budget is an important signal of the City's priorities and strategy. It acts as a blueprint for how resources will be allocated to achieve them.

We recognize that this budget comes at a time where the City is facing significant financial pressures due to inflation, increasing costs and the ongoing impact of COVID-19. However, this Council has been given a clear mandate that increasing access to adequate and affordable housing and responding to homelessness are priorities that demand urgent investment. This is not the time to be cutting the critical city services that residents rely on.

In this context, we call on Council to consider the following principles as you review Vancouver's 2023 operating budget:

1. Reflect and respond to the needs of those most impacted by the housing crisis, in particular lower income renters who are often Indigenous peoples, lone parent households, persons with disabilities, newcomers, racialized communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and unhoused individuals.
2. Leverage partnerships with non-profit and cooperative housing providers and incentivize the construction of purpose-built rental housing that is affordable to those living on low-to moderate-incomes and ensure that these units remain affordable in perpetuity.
3. Preserve and maintain Vancouver's deeply affordable housing by repairing existing housing stock and protecting renters from displacement.

We encourage Council to use this and forthcoming budgets to invest in policy tools and programs that respond to growing housing need. We recommend using a rights-based approach where the City will use its maximum available resources to meet the needs of those most impacted by the affordable housing crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We welcome the opportunity to provide our housing expertise and welcome further discussion with members of Council to ensure that Vancouver's diverse residents can live in safe, adequate and affordable homes.

Sincerely,



Bahar Shadpour  
Director of Policy and Communications  
Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://council.vancouver.ca/20230228/documents/spec1.pdf>