



Richmond Mayor & Councillors
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC, V6Y 2C1

SENT BY EMAIL AND PRESENTED BY HAND

March 25, 2024

Dear Mayor Brodie and Councillors

Re: Low-End Market Rental (LEMR) Program and LEMR Unit Management - Item 12

This is a letter from the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition (RPRC) concerning Agenda item 12, on the management and operation of existing and future LEMR units.

The RPRC members include 11 local Richmond organizations that provide services and programs to our city's most vulnerable residents. Collectively, the RPRC represents thousands of low-income Richmond residents who need secure, reliable, and affordable rental housing.

Regarding the LEMR staff report, the RPRC believes the City is moving in the right direction. As we have advised City Council, it is incumbent upon you to have an accountable and transparent LEMR system and this report points the way forward.

We are pleased that much of the information and data in our two years of research, community engagement, and written submissions to Council, have been considered in the staff report presented to Planning Committee on March 18, 2024.

We understand the staff recommendations have been amended so any non-profit housing entity can apply to an Expression of Interest (not only BC Housing). Our view is a third-party operator makes sense if there are regular mandated reporting requirements in the contract.

Secondly, the RPRC appreciates the recommendation that the LEMR bulletin and Affordable Housing Guide (both available on the City's website) should be amended. This would be to separate past and present LEMR units, ie. 'past' units tenanted prior to 2017 where rents were in line with BC Housing HIL (Housing Income Limits) and 'present' units under the present framework in the LEMR bulletin. The difference in rents is quite stark and confusing for our Richmond renters searching for affordable housing.

Thirdly, and concerning an upcoming LEMR review, the RPRC wants to ensure that any changes in income thresholds and maximum rents stay in line with low-income renters' ability to pay.

In June 2024 the minimum wage increases to \$17.40 per hour. This means a person working full time earns about \$34,000 gross per year and 'affordable housing' is 30% of that, or about \$10,200 per year. And people on income assistance (IA), persons with disabilities (PWD) and seniors on a fixed income take home even less and should not be excluded from tenanted LEMR units.

Finally, we understand that made-in-Richmond criteria for tenancy will be developed, and the management and operation of this program will include a LEMR registry and a LEMR waitlist.

The RPRC has long advocated for people with lived experience of low incomes to sit at decision-making tables. We want City Council to invite people with lived experience to sit at this table to develop tenancy criteria for LEMR units.

Thank you for your commitment to improve the functioning and accountability of the LEMR program. The RPRC remains at the ready to work with the City to ensure a successful outcome.

Sincerely,

-original signed-

Deirdre Whalen
President, RPRC

cc. RPRC Directors