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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Housing

### **Province takes action to prevent evictions in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside**

VANCOUVER – The Province is taking action to keep rents affordable for people with a low income in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), preventing as many as 1,000 people from losing their homes.

“We are taking urgent action to reduce the displacement of vulnerable tenants who live in single-room occupancy (SRO) buildings in the DTES,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “As we work to replace SROs over the long term, we cannot risk losing the current affordable housing stock they provide. We are protecting vulnerable people who are being exploited by some bad actors who are using pressure tactics on tenants to leave their rental units so they can hike the rent, leaving them with nowhere else to live. These SROs have a disproportionately high rate of tenant evictions resulting in direct homelessness, which is why we are responding to the City of Vancouver’s request to enforce vacancy control and not looking to do so across the province.”

The Province has introduced amendments to the Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act (MEVA) at the request of the City of Vancouver, to enable the city to regulate SRO vacancy control to protect rent affordability for tenants that include some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. The amendments, if passed, will validate Single Room Accommodation bylaws that limit rent increases between tenancies at SROs, as set out in Vancouver’s bylaws.

“We thank the Province for supporting the SRA Vacancy Control By-law,” said Ken Sim, mayor of Vancouver. “We want to ensure Vancouver remains a place where everyone can find a sense of belonging, regardless of their income. This bylaw is crucial for protecting low-income SRO tenants, who often find these accommodations to be their last available option before homelessness. While this is a step forward, more action is needed to ensure stability and inclusion for all members of our community.”

The DTES SRO Collaborative Society cites that a minimum of 500 tenants have been displaced from private SROs, with indications that these numbers could increase over the summer, if no action is taken. SRO rents are increasing to \$800 to \$1,000 a month with some renting for as much as \$1,950 per month.

Since summer 2022, the Province has been working with the City of Vancouver, Indigenous and other community partners to develop and implement a co-ordinated and comprehensive response plan to support people experiencing homelessness in the DTES. The DTES response plan focuses on ensuring people have access to shelter spaces and supportive housing and on strengthening health, safety, social and cultural supports to make the DTES a healthier, safer place for everyone.

The Province is making a historic \$19-billion housing investment to deliver more homes for people in B.C. Since 2017, the Province has more than 78,000 homes that are delivered or underway, including nearly 8,000 homes in Vancouver. This includes approximately 2,500 supportive housing units.

The Province's Belonging in BC homelessness plan will add nearly 4,000 new supportive housing units and 240 complex-care spaces provincewide.

**Quotes:**

**Spencer Chandra Herbert, premier's liaison for renters; MLA for Vancouver-West End –**

"Our government is committed to delivering improved outcomes for people living in Vancouver's DTES, and housing stability is of utmost importance to achieving that. We are responding to calls from DTES advocates for this change and will continue to work to revitalize the DTES and preserve affordable housing stock for those who need it most, so they are not faced with homelessness."

**Joan Phillip, MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant –**

"We cannot stand by as some landlords hike rents as much as five times the shelter rate for our most vulnerable residents, leading them into homelessness. These amendments will ensure that private SROs remain accessible to residents and preserve this critical housing supply."

**Richard Schwab, president, SRO Collaborative Society; Arlington Hotel tenant –**

"In 2007, we realized there was a direct connection between the loss of low-income SRO rentals and homelessness. This is such a huge relief for low-income tenants who are really scared of becoming homeless right now."

**Quick Facts:**

- There are more than 6,500 SRO spaces in Vancouver, with 48% of SRO buildings privately owned.
- The remaining 52% are owned by the Province, the City of Vancouver or a non-profit organization.
- There are 88 privately owned SRO hotels in the DTES with approximately 3,600 beds.
- Since summer 2022, the Province has opened more than 660 new or renovated spaces for people in the DTES.
- In 2023, the Province provided a one-time grant of \$11 million to the Downtown Eastside SRO Collaborative Society to offer supports to people living in private SROs.

**Learn More:**

To read the Belonging in BC plan, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BelongingStrategy.pdf>

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