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City of Kelowna

MEMORANDUM

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DATE: February 15, 2006

FILE: 0540-20

TO: City Manager

FROM: Community Planning Manager

RE: Resolution for the OMMA Regarding BC Assistance Rates

REPORT PREPARED BY: Theresa Eichler

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RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council forward the attached resolution for action to the OMMA and for further consideration at the UBCM.

REPORT:

Last August, Council passed the following resolution:

**R818/05/08/23** THAT the Social Planning & Housing Committee report back to Council with recommendations on the feasibility of implementing an Inclusionary Housing Bylaw, use of the Housing Opportunities Reserve Fund for home ownership, and for lobbying the Provincial Government to increase the monthly shelter rate;

AND THAT the Finance Department consider additional sources of funding for the Housing Opportunities Reserve Fund.

Carried

Since then, the Social Planning and Housing Committee has been working on the recommendations within the resolution. The Finance Department was forwarded the request for additional sources of funding for the Housing Opportunities Reserve Fund.

On the issue of Provincial Assistance rates, a letter has been sent under the Chair's signature on behalf of the Social Planning and Housing Committee. A copy of the letter is attached. In addition, the Committee asked that Council consider forwarding a resolution through the OMMA to the UBCM, on this issue. Wording of the resolution is attached.

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Theresa Eichler, MCIP  
Community Planning Manager

Approved for  Inclusion

David Shipclark  
Manager, Community Development & Real Estate

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Attachments:

OMMA draft resolution

Letter to Province from Social Planning & Housing Committee

## **Provincial Income Assistance Rates**

## **City of Kelowna**

WHEREAS the October 2005 CMHC Rental Market Report for Kelowna indicates average rents far exceed the shelter allowance portion of BC Assistance;

AND WHEREAS the cost of living, particularly shelter, in this province has continually increased without corresponding adjustments to the levels of assistance;

AND WHEREAS thousands of low-income households in our city are paying far in excess of 30%, the majority in excess of 50%, of their gross income before tax on shelter;

AND WHEREAS adults with disabilities may have greater expenses than seniors in order to address the needs of their disability, including access to special needs housing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Provincial Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance be asked to increase current assistance rates and implement a program to adjust those rates annually based on the BC Average Annual Consumer Price Index;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Provincial Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance also be asked to increase assistance for adults with disabilities to the same level of assistance available to seniors.

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February 9, 2006

Provincial Government of British Columbia

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Honourable Claude Richmond  
Minister of Employment and Income Assistance  
P.O. Box 9058, Stn. Provincial Government  
Victoria, BC, V8W 9E1

Dear Minister Richmond:

RE: Income Assistance and Shelter Rates

As Chairperson for the City of Kelowna's Social Planning and Housing Committee, I have been asked to relay to your Ministry our concern regarding the current BC Assistance Rates.

Based on the Rental Market Report (latest one is October 2005) for Kelowna, average rents far exceed the shelter allowance portion of BC Assistance. This means that people in need of assistance must do without other basic necessities, like food, clothing and transportation, in order to pay the rent, which is not acceptable.

"We ask that the Province of British Columbia increase current Assistance rates and implement a program to adjust those rates annually based on the BC Average Annual Consumer Price Index."

The cost of living, particularly shelter, in this province has continually increased without corresponding adjustments to the levels of assistance. Each year the City of Kelowna experiences increased numbers of homeless on our streets, as they are unable to find suitable accommodation. We also know that thousands of low-income households in our city are paying far in excess of 30%, the majority in excess of 50%, of their gross income before tax on shelter. BC Assistance rates should also allow people to pay rent equivalent to the average rents in the CMHC reports and still leave adequate funds to pay for nutritious food and other basic needs.

"We ask that the Province of British Columbia increase assistance for adults with disabilities to the same level of assistance available to seniors."

Adults with disabilities may have greater expenses than seniors in order to address the needs of their disability, including access to special needs housing.

The assistance level for adults that are unable to work because of their disability should at least be equivalent to the assistance levels for seniors. The current rate of assistance for a single low income senior is \$1078.60. They are also eligible for a Safer rent supplement through BC Housing that is not available to non-seniors.

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Addressing the needs of low income populations, in particular the ability to afford shelter, is an issue that our Committee, on behalf of the City of Kelowna, believes should be high priority. Please make the review of the BC Assistance rates a priority today, and allow all our citizens the right to an acceptable quality of life.

Kindest regards,

Mr. Michael Loewen  
Chair, City of Kelowna  
Social Planning and Housing Committee