
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM17.2	ACTION			Ward: All
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Improving the Vacant Home Tax Program for Seniors - by Councillor Vincent Crisanti, seconded by Councillor Anthony Perruzza

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Vincent Crisanti, seconded by Councillor Anthony Perruzza, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer and the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat to report in January 2025 on the number of vacant homes in 2022 and 2023, and any other findings on the effectiveness of the Vacant Home Tax program in achieving housing objectives.
2. City Council direct the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer and the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat to conduct a review of the Vacant Home Tax Program to determine how to make the reporting mechanism more user-friendly to seniors and other vulnerable groups and waive the late penalty fee for seniors occupying their homes and report back in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Summary

The Vacant Home Tax was implemented in 2022. The objective of this program was to address the housing affordability crisis in Toronto by identifying vacant residential units. Through the collection of data from self-declared forms, the City would utilize this tool to identify vacant properties and impact the behaviors of these owners to sell or rent out such homes, therefore returning these available units back to the market.

The Vacant Home Tax has resulted in numerous policy changes to provide greater flexibility, clarity, and exemptions. However, with the passing of 2023 taxation deadline extension, hundreds of seniors have come forward expressing their concerns and frustration with this program.

Many seniors believe it is unfair and unjust to charge them with the late penalty fee when they were unaware of the program and its deadline. It is disheartening to hear the distress they are facing when they receive their hefty bill and are faced with challenges in finding someone to speak to at 311 to assist them. Other seniors have noted their limited technological access or digital literacy posing them with barriers in understanding how to complete the self-declaration form.

My motion seeks to explore how we can further amend the Vacant Home Tax to make it more senior friendly through enhanced accessibility measures and determine if the late penalty fee can be waived for our seniors who have not declared due to various different reasons.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM17.2