



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA  
Premier of British Columbia  
West Annex  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Premier,

Over the past number of weeks, I have heard from many British Columbians that housing affordability continues to be of significant concern, a situation that has been made worse for many people due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It would be a mistake to assume COVID-19 will provide any lasting relief with housing prices. Prior to the pandemic, Metro Vancouver was growing by 65,000 people per year, but regional growth plans were focused on housing 35,000 people in the region per year. Clearly there is a generational need to embrace measures that boost the production of housing supply. This includes rental and market housing for the middle class, increasing choice, and improving affordability for all British Columbians, all while ensuring this growth is happening in a smart and sustainable manner, with new homes supported by transit infrastructure and located close to peoples' jobs, schools and childcare.

According to BC Housing's latest update (*Affordable Housing Investment Plan Report, Third Quarter – October 1 to December 31, 2019*) fewer than 3,000 units of new housing have been opened since 2017. This same report indicates that 75% of the units that opened to date are modular housing units, while only 161 units of affordable rentals have opened, and almost half of the units announced by your government have no funding attached to them.

Clearly this is not good enough. The need for more homes of all types in British Columbia is huge and growing. Furthermore, the economic impact of the home construction sector is significant, employing over 230,000 British Columbians and accounting for 15 per cent of B.C.'s GDP. Yet, this sector continues to face ever-increasing costs and onerous regulatory requirements which put potential jobs and homes at risk.

Therefore, the Official Opposition is calling on your government to take immediate actions to address housing affordability in B.C., including:

1. Working with local governments, implement opportunities to accelerate and reduce the cost of new housing development approval processes such as:
  - A one-year suspension of any new requirements, fees, charges, taxes and amenity contributions that add costs/delays to projects
  - Incentivizing local governments to approve a higher pre-determined number of rental units per year, and to allow for a broader range of housing options in their communities;



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- Creating equity in development approvals by ensuring that public hearings are more accessible to people who would benefit from rental housing, and that fit within the objectives of community's Official Community Plan.
  - Seeking broader use of the Certified Professionals Program in building inspections; and
  - Encouraging pre-zoning with density bonuses.
2. To ensure existing rentals remain viable during COVID-19, enable landlords to apply directly for financial supports available within the B.C. Temporary Rental Supplement program if their tenants do not apply for this support and do not pay their rent, retroactive to March 2020.
  3. Extend the same COVID-19 property tax reductions and deadline extensions that were announced for commercial land owners to housing developments for Class 1 properties, to avoid passing increased costs of pandemic-related delays onto homebuyers and renters.
  4. Noting that the average rental apartment in Vancouver is more than 60 years old, implement the promised 'above guideline rent increase' regulations (AGIs) and establish more rebates and energy efficient improvements in buildings to encourage reinvestment into the aging stock of existing rental units so renters have safe and decent places to live.

Each of these measures represents tangible action focused on making housing more affordable for all British Columbians. Getting this right is critical for creating healthy, affordable and sustainable communities, for driving business competitiveness, and for ensuring long-term sustained economic growth for our province. The people of B.C. are counting on you to act now.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C.  
MLA Leader of the Official Opposition