

January 30, 2023

Ravi Kahlon

B.C. Minister of Housing

HOUS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Harwinder Sandhu

MLA, Vernon-Monashee

Harwinder.Sandhu.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Re: Follow-up on action items for housing affordability and accessibility

Minister Kahlon and MLA Sandhu

Thank you for meeting with representatives of the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce Jan. 19, 2023.

As part of the meeting, there was a commitment to continue dialogue and we wish to highlight areas we believe could assist with the Government of B.C.'s goal of providing "British Columbians access to more affordable, safe and appropriate housing." These areas include:

- Government providing incentives to the private sector to build multi-family rental and market housing;
- The BC Housing HousingHub program working directly with non-profit and private sector developers in Greater Vernon to increase the supply of rental housing and homeownership options;
- MLA Sandhu's office assist the Premier's housing solutions advisor to meet with North Okanagan local government and private sector developers to determine how the BC Builds program can benefit the Greater Vernon area;
- Financial support that assists first-time home buyers such as increasing the property transfer tax threshold to reduce barriers to home ownership and gain equity.
- Providing employers with the support and resources needed to provide employee housing;
- Respecting the responsibility of municipalities and regional districts to identify appropriate locations for all types of housing;
- That Vernon be identified as a priority location for complex care housing that supports people living with complex mental health and substance-use challenges who are at risk of homelessness. This would include capital and operational funding;

- B.C. Housing evaluate its strategy to congregate supportive and complex care housing in just one section of the community and the direct affects this has on immediate neighbours;
- Collaboration between the provincial government, local government, business organizations and non-profits to actively advocate to the Government of Canada for housing funding and support.

We appreciate the efforts the Government of British Columbia has taken regarding supportive housing and we agree with you that more needs to be done. We must continue to address this complex issue and to help move people off the street or into more adequate housing options. In addition, housing affordability and accessibility is also increasingly having a negative impact on the working middle-class and first time home buyers who are individuals and families fundamental to a strong economy and vibrant communities. We regularly hear from businesses and non-profit organizations that struggle to retain or attract staff because of the high cost of housing; either to purchase or rent. This is compounding the labour shortage for retailers, manufacturers, agriculture, tourism or essential services such as seniors care, hospitals, child care and educators.

Immediate and long-term solutions to the housing crisis in B.C. must be found that involve all levels of government, non-profits, and the private sector. Co-operation at these various levels is the key to success.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Robin Cardew, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Kevin Falcon, Leader of the BC Official Opposition
City of Vernon Mayor and Council
District of Coldstream Mayor and Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
Okanagan Indian Band Chief and Council
Okanagan-Shuswap Chambers of Commerce

