

BC Green Party  
PO Box 8088 STN Central  
Victoria BC V8W 3R7  
info@bcgreens.ca

October 19, 2020

## **RE: Questions regarding your stated commitments to affordable housing in British Columbia**

Dear Sonia Furstenau & Adam Olsen,

On behalf of Housing Central, we are writing to reinforce the need for bold action on affordable housing over the next four years and to seek your support in working to achieve this objective.

Since the onset of the global pandemic, housing affordability has continued to deteriorate across BC, and gaps in our social safety net have magnified existing social inequities to such a degree that immediate and urgent action is required to greatly expand affordable housing options across the province.

Together, we represent the community housing sector through Housing Central, a strategic alliance between BC Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC. Our mission is to strengthen and grow the community housing sector so all British Columbians have a safe, secure home they can afford. If your party is elected on October 24th, we urge you to adopt the following priorities in your housing mandate:

- 1. Accelerate the province's investment in the development of new homes for British Columbians, by:**
  - a. Remaining committed to the province's historic investment in the development of 114,000 new affordable homes over ten years;
  - b. Accelerating investments to respond to BC's deepening affordability crisis, delivering the promised homes by the end of the new government's mandate.
- 2. Support a strategy enabling the community housing sector to purchase private rental housing and make it permanently affordable.**
  - a. We can't build new affordable homes as quickly as we are losing them – in fact, we continue to lose three low-cost rental homes for every new affordable home built.
  - b. Coupled with an accelerated investment in new supply, we can stem the loss of low-cost rental homes with a well-capitalized acquisition strategy.
- 3. Take bold action to end homelessness by 2030, by:**
  - a. Dramatically expanding access to temporary and permanent supportive housing, along with needed wraparound supports;

- b. Making safer alternatives to the poisoned drug supply more widely and permanently available and by guaranteeing access to the full range of substance use and mental health treatment and recovery options for youth and adults.

We have reviewed your party platform to determine how it compares to the priorities above, and we're encouraged by the BC Green Party commitment to address housing affordability in BC. Based on this review, we are seeking clarification on several issues:

- 1. Will your party commit to accelerating the delivery of 114,000 homes by the end of the new government's mandate?**
- 2. Can you provide more details regarding your intention to develop a capital fund to support the acquisition and maintenance of rental housing by non-profits?**
- 3. What tangible steps will your party take to end homelessness by 2030?**

We are pleased to see the attention given to housing issues in your platform and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jill Atkey  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association



Thom Armstrong  
Chief Executive Officer  
Co-op Housing Federation of BC



October 21st, 2020

Thank you for your inquiry into how the B.C. Greens will support solutions to our housing crisis. We thank you for your review of our platform and hope that these answers provide further insight into our commitments for a province where everyone has a home they can afford and that meets their needs.

Sincerely,  
The B.C. Greens

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**1. Will your party commit to accelerating the delivery of 114,000 homes by the end of the new government's mandate?**

The B.C. Greens are committed to ensuring that everyone has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs. To achieve this we need a comprehensive suite of policies to deal with the housing affordability crisis for all, including significant expansion of building new affordable homes. We are supportive of the ambitious target of 114,000 new homes and supported the NDP's spending plans to deliver on this. We know that there has been difficulty with delivering on new homes on the timelines that were set, and we would review this target as a priority to see whether and how there is room for acceleration. We strongly support expanding the market through building new developments, and recognize that this is one part of a larger suite of holistic policies that will work to address the affordability crisis.

**2. Can you provide more details regarding your intention to develop a capital fund to support the acquisition and maintenance of rental housing by non-profits?**

We found your proposal - to establish a capital fund for acquiring and maintaining affordable rental housing - to be compelling. We recognize for this type of strategy to be effective, that the fund needs to be well-capitalized, which is why we would invest \$400 million into the fund. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the community housing sector to develop a strategy in partnership in order to use this fund to purchase existing rental housing and make it permanently affordable. As we densify and build new supply, it's well known that we often lose affordable rental units to expensive condos, and that affordable rentals are lost even when buildings change hands. Building new supply won't work to meet our affordability crisis if we continue to lose existing affordable housing. The tendency towards financialization in our economy needs to be addressed - as well as in housing we've also seen a similar trend in the financialization of long-term seniors' care, with evidence suggesting negative impacts on the care of seniors. We see a rental acquisition strategy as one important piece of the puzzle to make sure that we are doing everything we can to improve life for renters in our cities and maintain as many affordable places to call home as possible.

**3. What tangible steps will your party take to end homelessness by 2030?**

The B.C. Greens are dedicated to the need to end homelessness. We believe that we urgently need to create a more robust and responsive social safety net. As we rebuild, we cannot afford to go back to our old patchwork of social supports that weren't meeting the needs of people and that were allowing too many people to fall through the cracks. Starting with housing, we commit

to taking a housing first approach and accelerating investments to affordable, supportive and social housing on a priority basis. We know that 43% of renter households pay more than 30% of their income in rent in BC, and a significant number pay more than 50%, a number that puts people at risk of homelessness. To help deal with this, we would introduce a means-tested grant that applies to low and moderate income earners who are paying more than 30% of their income in rent, in order to close the gap between affordable rent and what low to moderate income renters are actually paying.

We have also committed \$1 billion over four years to address mental health care within the medical services plan, including enhanced counselling outreach services to work with the homeless community and early intervention youth mental health initiatives, integrated into primary care specific to youth and mental health enabling families to easily navigate resources in a supportive environment. Further to this, we have committed to allocate \$200 million per year to invest in facilities to provide mental healthcare services and community-based centres for mental health and rehabilitation; and, accelerate capital plans for the construction of tertiary care facilities and detoxification beds. We are also committed to expanding access to safe supply, and decriminalizing simple possession of illicit substances in keeping with Dr. Henry's recommendation.

We believe in implementing principles of basic income - including simplicity, economic security, and reduced stigma - into our social safety net starting with the following steps: 1) increase income support levels, beginning with making the \$300 crisis supplement permanent and indexing assistance to inflation, 2) eliminate the asset test, 3) reduce clawbacks on earned income to reduce the disincentive to work, and 4) establish a 12-month period where those who qualify for income assistance can earn extra income without clawbacks.

These are initial commitments that we believe will give people the support they need to stay housed, take care of their mental health, and be able to afford the costs of living in our province. We welcome the opportunity to work further on compassionate and evidence-based initiatives to address homelessness in British Columbia.

BC New Democratic Party  
#320 - 34 West 7th Ave  
Vancouver, BC  
V5Y 1L6  
contact@bcndp.ca

October 19, 2020

**RE: Questions regarding your stated commitments to affordable housing in British Columbia**

Dear John Horgan & Selina Robinson,

On behalf of Housing Central, we are writing to reinforce the need for bold action on affordable housing over the next four years and to seek your support in working to achieve this objective.

Since the onset of the global pandemic, housing affordability has continued to deteriorate across BC, and gaps in our social safety net have magnified existing social inequities to such a degree that immediate and urgent action is required to greatly expand affordable housing options across the province.

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- 2. Support a strategy enabling the community housing sector to purchase private rental housing and make it permanently affordable.**
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  - b. Coupled with an accelerated investment in new supply, we can stem the loss of low-cost rental homes with a well-capitalized acquisition strategy.

*Continued below*

**3. Take bold action to end homelessness by 2030, by:**

- a. Dramatically expanding access to temporary and permanent supportive housing, along with needed wraparound supports;
- b. Making safer alternatives to the poisoned drug supply more widely and permanently available and by guaranteeing access to the full range of substance use and mental health treatment and recovery options for youth and adults.

We have reviewed your party platform to determine how it compares to the priorities above, and we're encouraged by the BC New Democratic Party commitment to address housing affordability in BC.

Based on this review, we are seeking clarification on several issues:

- 1. Will your party commit to accelerating the delivery of 114,000 homes by the end of the new government's mandate?**
- 2. What are your specific plans/vision for expanding the role of the Housing Hub to partner with our sector to acquire and preserve existing rental housing?**
- 3. What targets you will set to measure the success of your plan to address homelessness in the province?**

We are pleased to see the attention given to housing issues in your platform and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jill Atkey  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association



Thom Armstrong  
Chief Executive Officer  
Co-op Housing Federation of BC

October 21, 2020

Dear Jill Atkey & Thom Armstrong,

First, we want to thank both you and the members of your organizations for your continued support and partnership in tackling the affordable housing crisis in B.C. After years of inaction by the BC Liberal government in the face of a worsening housing crisis, we were elected in 2017 in the midst of the worst housing affordability challenge our province has ever faced.

We quickly got to work tackling the crisis and, with significant input from your sector and your members, in 2018 we rolled out our 10-year housing plan, Homes for BC. As part of that plan, we are committed to working in partnership to deliver 114,000 affordable homes over ten years, and have backed up that goal with a commitment of more than \$7 billion, the largest investment in affordable housing in our province's history.

Over the past few years, we have made significant progress towards that target, with the support of many of your members, and now have more than 25,000 homes complete or underway in communities across B.C. This includes all categories of housing, from homes with supports for those experiencing homelessness and the first investment in new housing for women and children fleeing violence in two decades, to new indigenous housing both on- and off-reserve, new mixed-income rental housing for families and seniors with low to moderate incomes, and thousands of market rental units for middle-income families and individuals.

While we have made good progress, there is much more still to do. A re-elected BC NDP government will again be counting on our strong partnerships with the community housing sector to deliver the homes that people need. We look forward to your members' support as we work to:

- streamline local government development approvals, while making the provincial permit and approval process more efficient with a new single-window permitting process;
- eliminate unnecessary parking minimums in new developments near transit investments, allowing for more affordable transit-oriented housing options; and
- continue to bring new rental developments to market, whether they are the next set of publicly-funded social housing projects, or tens of thousands of new market rental options for the middle-class delivered through the additional low-cost loans we will provide through our HousingHub program.

We also plan to expand the role of the innovative HousingHub team to partner with non-profit and co-op housing providers to acquire and preserve existing rental housing. We look forward to working closely with your sector to develop this program and identify the best way to deliver the affordability and long-term preservation we both want to see from these important assets.

We will also be counting on the support of your members, as well as the continued partnership of the Homelessness Services Association of BC, as we continue to address the challenge of homelessness in our communities. Through the investments and actions laid out in both our poverty reduction and housing strategies, we are committed to working towards a goal that homelessness in BC is rare, brief, and one-time. Over the last three years, we have opened more than 2,800 homes with supports across the province, providing an opportunity for

thousands of people experiencing homelessness to have safe shelter with the supports they need to succeed in their housing.

A re-elected BC NDP government will build on that work and continue to fund affordable housing, including supportive housing, to bring people indoors and provide them with the support services they need, including by:

- continuing to build new supportive housing, towards a goal of delivering 5,000 new supportive homes through our 10-year plan;
- delivering new Complex Care housing, which will bring an increased level of psychiatric and nursing care to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities who need more intensive clinical supports than are provided in supportive housing, and
- investing in rent supplements, to help those who have stabilized in supportive housing and are ready to move into the private rental market, creating space in existing supportive housing to help more people experiencing homelessness who need the presence of on-site supports.

With the support of your members, and of the two of you as leaders, we have made significant progress over the last few years. If re-elected, we look forward to building on that success together in the years to come, as we work towards a future where everyone can find a home they can afford to rent or buy.

Sincerely,  
BC NDP

BC Liberal Party

PO Box 28131 West Pender St PO,  
Vancouver, BC V6C3T7  
contact@bcliberals.com

October 19, 2020

## **RE: Questions regarding your stated commitments to affordable housing in British Columbia**

Dear Andrew Wilkinson & Todd Stone,

On behalf of Housing Central, we are writing to reinforce the need for bold action on affordable housing over the next four years and to seek your support in working to achieve this objective.

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- b. Making safer alternatives to the poisoned drug supply more widely and permanently available and by guaranteeing access to the full range of substance use and mental health treatment and recovery options for youth and adults.

We have reviewed your party platform to determine how it compares to the priorities above, and we're encouraged by the BC Liberal Party commitment to address housing affordability in BC. Based on this review, we are seeking clarification on several issues:

- 1. Can you commit to increasing spending on new low- and moderate-income housing supply, beyond the commitments outlined in Budget 2018?**
- 2. Does your party support an acquisition strategy that would enable community housing providers to purchase private rental buildings from their current owners to ensure these units remain part of the affordable rental housing stock?**
- 3. Can you elaborate on your plans to tackle homelessness in the province? How would your party address community opposition to supportive housing options for people experiencing homelessness?**

We are pleased to see the attention given to housing issues in your platform and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jill Atkey  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association



Thom Armstrong  
Chief Executive Officer  
Co-op Housing Federation of BC



**Restore Confidence.  
Rebuild BC.**

### **BC Non-Profit Housing Association — 2020 Election Questions**

Our party has presented a plan to dramatically increase affordable housing and supply across BC, with the most comprehensive housing strategy of any jurisdiction in North America. Our platform commits to a 75% increase over the current capital budget for housing laid out by the NDP, raising total capital spending on supportive and affordable housing to \$1.75 billion. This will be backed up by an additional \$146 million in operating funding.

The NDP have broken their promises to ensure affordable housing options for British Columbians. Out of a promised 114,000 more affordable homes, they have only opened 2,963 units. It will take more than 100 years for the NDP to reach their housing target. And house prices, rents and property taxes continue to grow, making housing even less affordable.

Our housing platform also includes the following promises:

*A BC Liberal Government will:*

- Invest in getting homeless British Columbians a home and connecting them with the health and social service supports they need.
- Establish an incentive fund for municipalities with housing policies that enable demonstrable increases in the construction and supply of new housing.
- Implement tax and permitting changes to boost housing supply, including rental and market housing, to increase choice and improve affordability for British Columbians.
- Work with municipalities to review the current property tax structure to incent affordable housing development, prevent speculation and drive affordable rental housing.
- Require reviews of Official Community Plans every five years that are public, robust and transparent; require that zoning bylaws then be updated to reflect changes to the plan within one year after adoption; and allow for the waiving of hearings for Official Community Plan compliant projects.
- Support zoning reform to provide inclusionary zoning and to ensure that the Residential Rental Tenure Zoning (RRTZ) tool cannot be used to devalue and downzone property.
- Ensure no net loss of rental units in real estate redevelopment projects.
- Develop tax-relief measures to help people hurt by COVID-19 economic impacts to keep their homes.
- Implement split assessments for the commercially-rented portion of buildings through a new commercial property sub-class.
- Create a new residential property sub-class for rental housing of three or more units.

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- Change BC Assessment practices to ensure rental properties are no longer valued based on the highest and best use, but rather on actual rental use.
- Provide energy-efficiency rebates on rental renovations.
- Use provincial and municipal land for affordable housing.
- Ensure prompt and effective resolution of tenancy disputes.
- Enable affordable condominium strata insurance by: encouraging and facilitating self-insurance models for stratas; eliminating the practice of “best-terms” pricing; and reducing statutorily-required insurance for strata properties from full replacement value to a level in line with actual claims cost history.
- Reduce delays in building-permit approvals and new homeowner costs.
- Improve the municipal development approval process, based on best practices.
- Strengthen and enforce Regional Growth Strategy targets so they are robust and effective.
- Provide provincial funding to create a digital tracking tool to allow municipalities and applicants to track the progress of individual applications and identify roadblocks.
- Increase the supply of fully-accessible units for persons with disabilities in newly-built multi-unit residential buildings.
- Modernize the BC Building Code to address accessibility, energy efficiency and strata insurance premiums.
- Support and develop co-operative housing and other alternative ownership models.

In addition, rather than penalizing homeowners, we will implement measures to combat true speculation in the housing sector.

*A BC Liberal Government will:*

- Replace the phony NDP Speculation Tax with a true real-estate speculation tax, by changing it to a condo-flipping capital gains tax.
- Implement higher property-taxes for non-residents of Canada, to help prevent inflation of housing prices caused by foreign investors.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you and your organizations’ membership will find this information helpful. For further details on our plans, please see our [platform](#).