

Housing Central Conference

*Report by Jason Tockman
and Dorri Mahdavian*

Housing Central 2023

- Housing Central: the premier annual conference on affordable housing in BC
- Focus is on community housing (non-profit housing/co-ops); approaches and conversations were largely *downstream* responses to an ongoing housing crisis
- Plenary sessions included presentations by Premier David Eby and Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon
- Main sponsors: BC Non-Profit Housing Association; Co-operative Housing Federation of BC; and Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- 1600 attendees in 2023

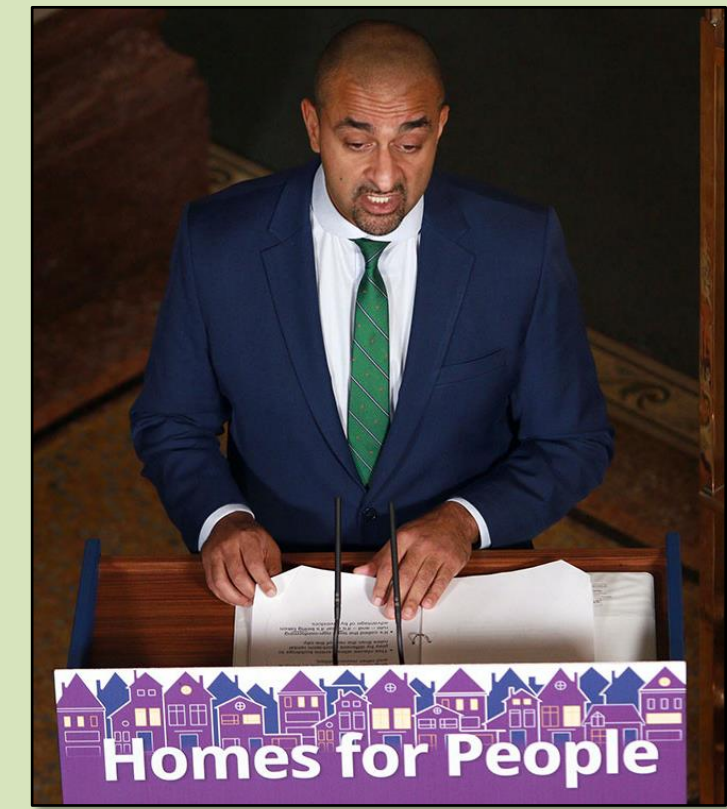


Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon



- “We know we’re in a housing crisis”
- We’re two decades behind the needed investment in housing
- There’s \$7 billion in BC’s Budget over the next three years to invest in affordable housing
- But we need the federal government to invest more
- The private sector will not solve this crisis by itself – the crisis will not be solved without the not-for-profit sector’s growth
- Co-ops will play a “huge” role and need to expand; we’ve been able to open new spaces (e.g. North Arm) and protect units in Burnaby; we’re working on a co-op strategy, and that’s a pillar of **Homes for People**

Minister Kahlon



Homes for People

- With the first 10 municipal housing targets, we're trying to flip the conversation on its head—rather than non-profits having to go to municipalities; now local governments have to go to non-profit operators
- Minister Kahlon highlighted several initiatives:
 1. **Action on Short-term Rentals:** taking legislative steps to take this housing stock back
 2. **Creation of a Land Bank:** assessment of all public lands (crown corps, ministries, etc.) to understand what is available to build housing; we have to use the land we have available to us
 3. **Complex Care Housing:** we're scaling up complex care; these days, the challenges that people bring into supportive housing are more complex; it's hard to keep staff – people are burning out
 4. **Rental Protection Fund**

Premier David Eby



“So many health issues are associated with a lack of housing.”

- It’s so clear how we got here: government got out of the business of building housing for middle-income people; we’ve seen people bidding up lower and lower income housing – pushing down until people fall out of the market
- More recently: we have hit records for people moving to BC, supply chain issues, high inflation... and we have the NIMBYs
- There are political proposals to sell off public assets to solve the housing crisis; in BC we are doing the opposite
- BC has created an inventory of the properties we own; if we own the land we can build housing; we are especially buying up land around transit stations
- We’re working to reverse the historical trend at the provincial level: we have 77,000 homes delivered or underway: supportive, not-profit, student housing, and Indigenous housing (on and off reserve)

New legislative initiatives

1. Assist in the construction of market housing on single-family lots (town homes, tri- and four-plexes)
2. Speed up housing approvals and permitting by moving all of the planning work up front, rather than individual hearings at the point of approval; torturous public hearings will be a thing of the past
3. Create pre-approved model designs for new housing types to speed up the construction and reduce costs
4. Address short-term rentals, restricting them to only on one's principal residence property

BC Builds: BC will partner with builders on provincially owned land to create housing for long-term lease or attainable rental; this model has been proven in Singapore, Seoul, Vienna, and co-ops right here in BC; we're on the verge of some very significant announcements



Premier Eby

Homes for People – presented by Housing Ministry staff

Changes to housing planning and zoning (Bill 44)

- Bill 44 will very significantly overhaul municipal planning processes, with the goal of streamlining the process and creating a diversity of housing: small-scale multi-unit housing on traditional single family lots + forgivable loans for people who convert some of their home into a secondary suite to be rented below market rates
- Housing Need Reports will be standardized and produced every 5 years; public engagement is required on *where* to put housing to meet the housing needs (not *if*)
- OCPs will also need to be updated every 5 years (with 20-year planning), and will need to be consistent with the municipality's Housing Needs Report
- Municipal by-laws and rezoning: we're moving municipalities away from site-by-site zoning; they will have to prezone earlier; move that process up front; to streamline approval
- Public hearings at the stage of rezoning will be eliminated, with public consultation moving upstream to the stage of the OCP – to avoid re-litigating development projects (especially supportive housing)
- Vancouver Charter is distinct; province is working with the City to develop a parallel processes
- Timelines for revising by-laws → Housing Needs Reports → OCPs are tight; province is providing \$51 million to support municipalities to do this work

Homes for People

Changes to Development Cost Charges and Amenity Cost Charges (Bill 46)

- Development Cost Charges (DCC) and Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs, previously CACs) will be up-front and transparent costs set by by-law rather than through a site-by-site assessment; these can be waived for affordable rental housing projects
- Bill 46 will also widen the types of infrastructure/amenities these charges can be used for (e.g. adding fire protection, solid waste, police facilities)

Transit-oriented development, TOD (Bill 47)

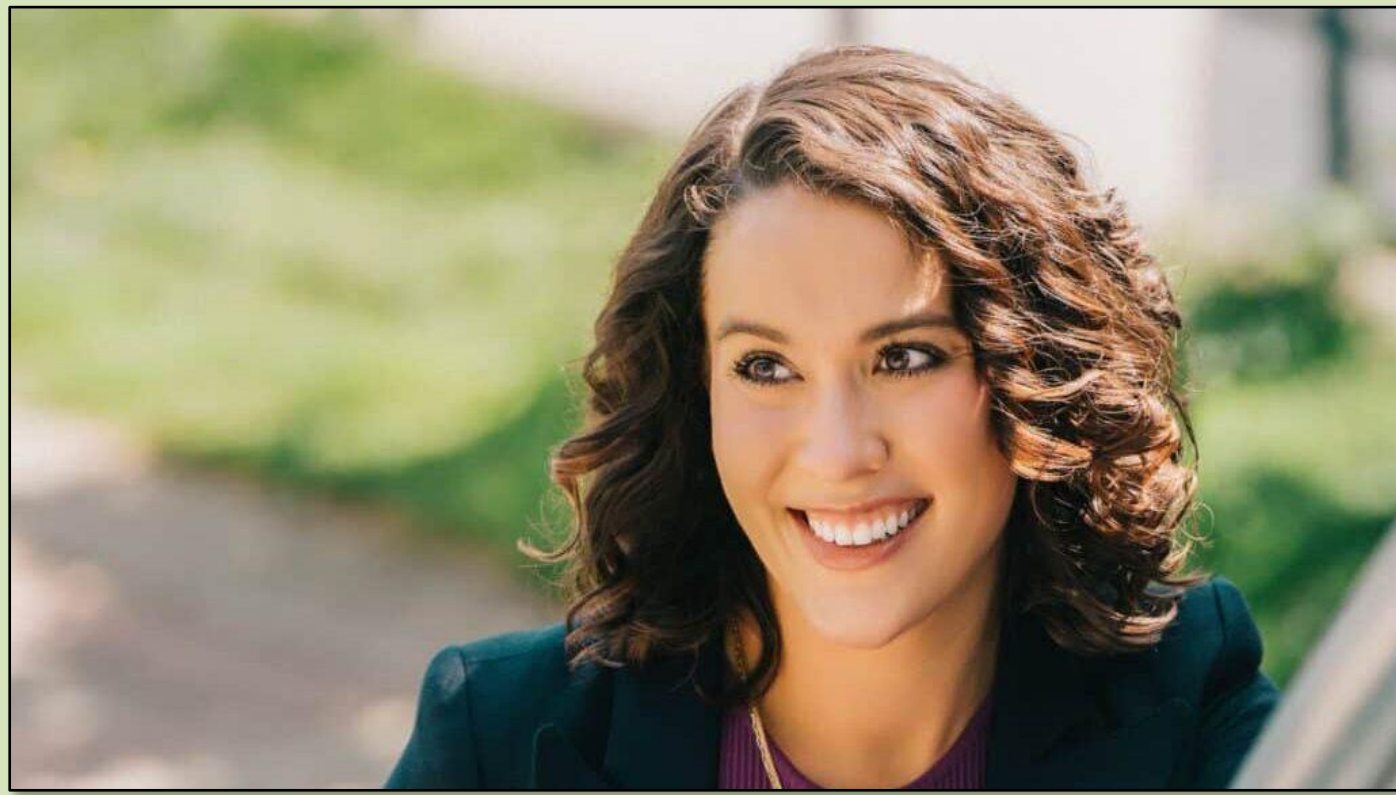
- Goal is to develop walkable complete communities around current and planned transit hubs, reducing reliance on carbon-intensive transportation
- Municipalities will be required to designate certain areas as TOD areas around transit hubs; there will be a minimum density level allowed; no parking minimums will be allowed except related to disability and commercial parking for amenities
- Initial assessments: this will add 100,000 new housing units in TOD areas in the next 10 years

Homes for People

New rules on short-term rentals

- BC will limit short-term rentals to principal residents + one additional unit on the property
- Short -term rental platforms will have to share information with the province
- Hosts will have to join a provincial registry (operational in 2024-2025)
- BC will launch an enforcement unit
- There will be an increase in fines for violations, and new tools for local governments
- Resort municipalities (e.g. Whistler) and communities under 10,000 people will be exempt but may opt-in
- Rules will come into effect in the coming year





Katie Maslechko, CEO

Rental Protection Fund

Rental Protection Fund

- The most affordable housing is the housing we already have; we want to keep those homes, make them more affordable, and move them into community housing;
- Fund includes a \$500 million initial investment from the province; hopefully the federal government will join us
- Goal: 200,000 units protected
- In four months, we've had 80 non-profit housing applicants, and we've pre-qualified 22 who are now advancing acquisitions: we have over 1500 homes in 30 buildings seeking support from the Fund
- Initiative represents over \$1 billion of new assets that will move into the hands of the housing sector – at a fraction of the cost of building new
- The Rental Protection Fund is generating interest from jurisdictions across the country

BC Housing Fireside Chat

- **We can keep looking to health authorities to address people's mental health needs, but this is our world now. This is all health-related, but at what point do we say Health is not coming to the table, when does housing take on that mandate?**
I'll quote my predecessor, Craig Crawford, who would famously say "We're BC Housing, not BC Health; Health has to come to the table." I don't accept that anymore. Increasingly we're having to step up. BC Housing has mental health nurses, supporting people in encampments with various health needs. We do need to keep pulling Health to the table; they are the subject matter experts. I am not going to give them a pass. We're not health professionals; we need them at the table.
- **BC Housing wants to be partners; how does this look in the public realm when the public is increasingly intolerant of people who use drugs? How is BC Housing showing up, considering these are your tenants?**
It's true that the public is less and less tolerant. As new housing sites are developed, neighbours come out to oppose the projects. We are noticing a shift in public perception, but sometimes the loudest voices are not representative of the majority opinion. In those contexts, we speak up vociferously. Housing is a right; people deserve a home. We stand up to intolerance. And it's not going to be the terrible doomsday scenario people worry about.
- **As we're building smaller and smaller spaces for folks, there's less space for people to hang out, less green space. The streets are people's living rooms. How is BC Housing ensuring that their buildings are being used for people who actually live in their buildings?**
You're right; a lot of our supportive housing is in extraordinary small spaces, such as SROs. We know that that's not conducive to healthy housing. We're not going to be putting that kind of housing in place. It will take time, but we're working to renovate those spaces and make them larger. We want to create more collaborate spaces where people can gather in their day-to-day lives.
- **Does the provincial health authority get invited to Housing Central?**
Not as delegates, but we occasionally have Health here on panels (e.g. homelessness). Ministry or health authority staff comes to those. But it would be helpful to do some outreach to get Health in the room listening to all of these conversations.

Building partnerships with health authorities

- There's always been a relationship between PHS and VCH – it's been evolving, and we need to keep innovating together
- When I started this work 25 years ago the health authority would not recognize the term “harm reduction”; today PHS operates the Insight and Maple OPS sites, and they are funded by VCH
- At some PHS sites VCH staff come in and do regular clinics, including vaccinations
- PHS has a mobile OPS unit, a needle exchange van, and a van that people can use substances within; all are funded by VCH and more recently by FNHA; PHS hosts a community-run managed alcohol program (MAP), also funded by VCH and FNHA
- PHS is also establishing workforce housing with enhanced health – at the BC Housing-funded Margaret Mitchell modular unit, with resident care aides paid by VCH. Soon they will add harm reduction programming: an overdose prevention service inside, an inhalation tent outside, and a new MAP.



Tanya Fader, PHS
Director of Housing

Driving Innovation and Accelerating Change by Scaling Solutions

- CHMC discussed funding opportunities and innovative solutions to advance the collective objective of creating more affordable housing in Canada → Non-capital fund programs
- **VanCity Community Foundation** - Affordable Community Housing Accelerator Fund
 - **Solutions:** helps organizations advance their project to construction and completion by providing affordable loans during the early phases of a development project (the acquisition and pre-construction phases).
 - **Impact:** Organizations can use these loans to move onto the next stage of development faster and gain access to the other forms of capital, such as construction.
- **Housing Assessment Resources Tool (HART)**
 - **Solution:** an on-line data driven tool for municipalities to conduct housing needs assessment from census data
 - **Impact:** Improved quality of housing supply decision-making at all levels of government
- **Expert Community on Housing (ECoH)**
 - Open community where members with a wide range of housing experience can collaborate, share knowledge, contribute to solutions, and network with leaders within and outside of the housing ecosystem to address common challenges.



Trade Show

- Connections and networking



- **Aims** to foster meaningful connections
- **Vision:** Supporting resilience and well-being through meaningful connections and practical services on every street
- **How?** Provide a one-stop platform that empowers neighbors to meet trusted connections, share skills and trade in local networks
- **Why?** Meaningful connections are essentials for wellbeing.



Intentionally designing a system of belonging for neighbourhoods

3

Good Health and Well-Being for People

9

Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

16

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Reducing loneliness by generating gatherings and meaningful connections within walking distance

3

Good Health and Well-Being for People

Empowering disadvantaged communities by providing flexible work and networking opportunities

8

Decent Work and Sustainable Economic Growth

10

Reducing Inequalities

Strengthening social capital by identifying and empowering the gift, talents and skills in the community

8

Decent Work and Sustainable Economic Growth

11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

Advocacy to Action: BCNPHA's Policy Team

- BCNPHA's Policy Department builds resources, deploys data, and advances policy expertise to strengthen BC's non-profit housing sector.
- Services
 - Research and policy
 - 1) Canadian Rental Housing Index - www.rentalhousingindex.ca
 - 2) Municipal Housing Needs Assessment Explorer (approximately 120 communities)
 - Education and events
 - 1) HousingU online learning platform
 - 2) Regional Education, Networking & Tradeshow (RENT) events give the affordable housing sector a chance to gather for a day of in-depth professional development, education and networking
 - 3) Housing Central Conference

