

New BC Govt Must Deliver on Housing Affordability



In the aftermath of the BC election, there are key housing policies that need implementation, regardless of which party ends up governing.

While each of the parties proposed their solutions for housing supply and affordability, the following must be addressed:

1. A cap on fees and taxes including Development Cost Charges (DCCs) and amenity contributions.

While the NDP government passed legislation enabling missing middle housing (townhomes, duplexes) on single family lots, they did not cap DCCs and other fees. These fees are spiraling upward – (eg) Victoria is imposing a 258% DCC increase - undermining any benefit to the density legislation.

In fact, the province expanded (DCCs) to include fire and police stations, solid waste facilities and highways, in addition to existing coverage of sewer and water, sidewalks and parks. They also legalized Community Amenity Contributions for recreation centres, public art, cash in-lieu, etc. These increased costs will hinder new development and affordability.

2. Mandatory site standards outlining suitable setbacks, building heights, etc. to make housing buildable and more affordable.

The BC government's Provincial Policy & Site Standards manual says, "In preparing, amending, or adopting a zoning bylaw to permit the use and density required by the SSMUH (small scale, multi-unit housing) legislation, a local government must consider any applicable guidelines for SSMUH, including this Policy Manual."

Councils may "consider" the guidelines, but there is no requirement to adopt reasonable provincial standards. This results in some municipalities adopting regulations obstructing successful implementation of the province's legislation.

3. Enforced timelines for development and permit approvals.

Some municipalities take years to consider a new development, and months to approve even a simple building permit. The province needs to step in and establish enforced timelines.

Without these critical changes, housing supply and affordability will continue to erode.

During the election, surveys revealed housing affordability is a top concern of British Columbians.

It is now up to the new BC government to deliver on those concerns.



Visit us at vrba.ca and careawards.ca

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter