

Tobi Elliott, Trustee's Report

Gabriola Island LTC

May 10, 2023

## **UBCM Housing Summit "Housing BC Together" April 4-6, 2023, Vancouver**

### Takeaways

*We need a complete re-imaginantion of who we are building homes for; we are building for people, not cars. This council we really have a different vision for how we live together, how we densify, how we connect, and all these things are linked. Dramatic and intentional transformation in our communities.* - Marianne Alto, City of Victoria

*Kelowna's "infill housing and design challenge" resulted in 400 units on lots that had been zoned Single Family Dwellings (SFDs). Creativity is needed to inspire innovation* - Tom Dyer, Mayor of Kelowna

*This is a window of opportunity where the feds, BC and local governments are aligned on solving this problem. The good thing about living in a federated structure is every community can trial out different approaches and we see what works* - MP Terry Beech

*Our job is not to spread money evenly over the country like peanut butter... we reward local governments/municipalities that are stepping up to solve their problems"* - MP Terry Beech

*Can affordable housing projects be exempt from paying GST and PST on materials? Because those costs are passed on to renters.* - Cathy Jewett, Whistler Counsellor. [Answer: Lobby your local MP if this is important to you.]

*If you want the best outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, house them within their territories.* - Rod Hill, Director of Indigenous Asset Management, BC Housing

*Taxation system is regressive, incentivizes single family dwellings (SFD). What's going to happen when we see the "lifestyle pushout" into regional districts because people like their SFDs? Environmentally we can't allow land to be used for SFDs, we need to protect wetlands."* - Cindy Elliott, director qathet/Powell River Regional District

Need to review Local Government Finance System in BC: so much infrastructure is "up" for replacement across BC - who should pay? Which generation pays for it? How we pay for the basics of growth?

Recognition that zoning and taxation system was designed long ago and needs to be revamped. Rural and remote communities there are lots of different levels of governance. How do we deliver more of the enabling legislations for the right tools and the right places?

### Addresses by MP Terry Beech & MLA Ravi Kahlon

- MP **Terry Beech** (Burnaby North-Seymour and Parliamentary secretary to the Deputy PM): "Everyone wants to live and retire in BC. We are just beginning to witness the biggest demographic shift in Canadian history ... Our government is committed to working with local governments and boosting housing supply. ... We need systemic change. We will provide initial funding and again as we see the deliverables. We want to see more announcements in the future that are bold and will deliver results. Failure on this topic is not an option."
- Premier Eby's directive to Minister of Housing & Government House Leader MLA **Ravi Kahlon** was "deliver housing for people". Initial NDP promise of \$7 billion over 10 years, adding \$4.2 billion over the next 3 years; argest investment in BC's history.
- Highlights of the NDP Homes for People Plan: 10,000 homes at/near transit, creating liveable neighbourhoods, middle income homes on public lands. Expansion of community housing fund; Indigenous housing aiming for 1,450 homes on and off reserve. Homelessness framework, "Belonging in BC" to provide interim temporary housing. More: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HOUS0019-000436>

### Housing challenges/opportunities panel with Mayors / Councillors

Councillor **Jenna Stoner** (District of Squamish) reported they had doubled planning/building permitting staff, but: "demand is persistent, hasn't resulted in the reduction of housing costs over time. ... We need an equitable and fair tax structure that balances needs of landowners and renters, until we de-commodify land ownership, because the demand is only increasing."

Mayor **Ken Sim** (Vancouver): considering immigration, will be welcoming 500,000 people to the country this year. "We have constraints on land: Why aren't we thinking differently, when we are restructuring schools for seismic, why aren't we adding 3-5 stories for housing? Embrace change."

**Marianne Alto** (City of Victoria): affordable housing projects jump to the head of the line. Plan to densify the entire city, any city lot is able to have up to 6 units, huge jump. Called for amending the Local Government Act to provide better tools than just zoning so we can reward and incentivize housing. Suggest eliminating GST on all new rental housing.

General discussion on capacity: as communities grow, how to address levels of capacity, need education and schools. For small communities like Pemberton (2nd fastest growing community in BC) impacts are huge, unlike larger communities we don't have land, no older houses and infrastructure, hard-pressed to find support.

MP Beech: need to better understand what those constraints are to accessing the funding. Grant-writing? Unit mix? The Housing Accelerator Fund will be the biggest tool, opens in June. Housing crisis is not just the big cities, it's all across the province. Capital is mobile, as we expand connectivity to every corner of BC, housing pressures will follow.

### Indigenous Housing Partnerships and Opportunities

**Margaret Pfoh**, Director Aboriginal Housing Management Association: over 80% of Indigenous people are living outside of a community, reserve, and this is the urban Indigenous pop we need to support. It's important to understand the constitution in your community and key to have urban IP at the table.

- Strategies by Aboriginal Housing Management Association: <https://www.ahma-bc.org/> BC Aboriginal Management strategy is the baseline for every other province in Canada. "For Indigenous, by indigenous program" with multi-care approach for Indigenous people with complex needs.
- AHMA's full report on BC's 1st Indigenous community-led, Provincial, Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy available here: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/573e02ab62cd943531b23633/t/6201693e2bbce05d5cae4031/1644259653966/AHMA\\_BCURNIHousingStrategy\\_220124.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/573e02ab62cd943531b23633/t/6201693e2bbce05d5cae4031/1644259653966/AHMA_BCURNIHousingStrategy_220124.pdf)
- employ Indigenous workers to work in planning, on construction crews, in your communities, to help meet your labour pool needs, ensure you have the staff you need to turn around projects quickly, and come up with creative solutions that you may not have thought of.
- the connection between municipal and FN is a challenge, you don't know who you would be working with in that space. AHMA and BC Housing will.
- Margaret Pfoh is "bannock slapping" all levels of government when we start the conversation. "There is no reconciliation without truth. There are communities heavily rooted in their racist bias, that have created government processes and structures and cultures that are exclusionary. This cannot change if we don't call it out and we don't address it. There is 150+ years of mistrust in this country. If you can understand that reality, it will give you the 1st step to understand how you can collaborate with FNs in your community to effect change. "
- Indigenous Housing Fund, 3,500 units by 2032 / BC Housing committed to building 25,000 units

**Rod Hill**: people are actually asking 'how do I give my land back? How do I transfer my land to an indigenous nation so they can benefit, because they believed their profited from stolen land.' We can connect you with those people, we have not sought it out, but we could do more.

## Labour Shortages and Supply Chain Disruptions

**Chris Atchison**, President of the BC Construction Association: 90% of construction companies have < 20 employees. Contractors need to be at the table, and they are in business. We are an industry that can build under duress, manage the pressures, that's what we do. But if the risk that is transferred from owners to contractors is too great, they will go other places, so if your dev permit process is too onerous, they won't want to work with you. "Keep in mind risk factor: 30 days is max you can get a contractor to hold their prices."

**Bridgette Anderson**, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade: 1 million jobs from immigration next 10 years, they will need housing. We need urgency at all levels of gov for places for them to live, schools and hospitals. We are all grappling with affordability issues, business are now in the situation where they are going to have to pass on costs, either because of supply chain shortages. Lots of shortage in the skilled trades, includes 750,000 people retiring. No reason why people immigrating are not getting to work right away. Need to support women in trades and Indigenous communities.

**Jeremy Holm**, Director Development Approvals (City of Nanaimo): Regulations getting stricter but we need more housing and development: how can you work with local govts to make sure that the standards make sense? People want alternative houses, tiny houses, but they don't fit the codes. We are extremely good at over-complicating it. Everyone wants their housing project to be boutique and serve their special need. If we are in a housing crisis, then we need to come up with a blueprint that can meet 80% of the need, the needs are not that different. If you look at the competing interest and the costs going into designing a building, do we need that level of specialness at this time of crisis?

## Densification and upzoning

**Andrea Hudson**, Asst Director, Community Planning, (City of Victoria): allowing a menu of housing options: maintain SFD as a permitted use, but added corner townhouses (up to 12 units) and heritage conserving development. Rethink the density bonus system, require a base development, rather than density bonus.

- Development permit area guidelines: "missing middle" design guidelines, things that zoning alone cannot achieve. Explaining constraints of competing objectives/tradeoffs to the public through engagement: "can't have it all. If you want more greenspace, you need to give up parking, if you want accessibility, you might need to go higher and not down into basement."

**Andrew Merrill**, Dir of Development services, City of Coquitlam: Coquitlam did the new version of the 'Vancouver special' with their Housing Choices program, "the city should continue to find ways to support the type of development they want to see, and regulate the kind of development they don't want to see." Strategy is to help educate homeowners who aren't builders through education on their website.

## Short Term Vacation Rentals

UBCM/Provincial Advisory Group had 13 key recommendations: provincial regulatory framework to increase platform accountability, make them accountable to the province to do such things as only accept listing with valid gov business licenses. Policy work in progress now, using Advisory Group report as guidance. LINK:

Recommendations: require STR platforms to share data so local gov's have info needed for more effective enforcement; regional districts need to have their authority to issue business licenses; fines and penalties for STVs operating out of compliance; collect tax at the point of booking for all online accommodation platforms.

## Address by Premier Eby

We all know the problem: "it's holding back our entire provincial economy. Workers look at the housing market and say 'I can't live here.' The issue of health care is closely tied to the issue of housing.

We have a housing market that did not see housing as a place to live; prioritized investors and speculators to make money through flipping homes, mostly through negligence. Province and Feds stopped building affordable housing mid-90s. Local gov's were left to pick up the pieces.

Working with municipalities to set targets, working to your self-directed priorities, build the trails, pipes, rec centres. \$1 Billion rental affordable housing. Changing the zoning rules, loosening permitting process.

A home is foundational to the basics of life. Homes are foundational to local governments. Tackling the housing crisis is going to take everyone together in partnership.

If you are building a home, it should be the same process for building an affordable home as for a SFD, Net loss we are losing homes that have basement suites as we are seeing them renovated & replaced by SFD without basement suits.

Despite building more homes, we've seen homelessness stable or slightly increasing, due to the challenge of housing upstream, people can't get into homes so it affects everyone.

## **Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities Conference April 14-16**

### Attainable Housing Inspiration from Vancouver Island Communities

Development consultants: 1st question: where is the project. Need to understand context.

1. Certainty
2. Land,
3. Money,
4. Policies and Politics

How can local governments provide some certainty to clients of theirs, and attract funders?

Seeing clients/non-profit operators being displaced as they have been renting cheap real estate, and re-development is happening.

HUB model: Get all the non-profits together, figure out who has land, who has money, share the load and manage risk together.

Community Amenity Contributions (CAC) can be diverse and updated to reflect changing community needs. CACs can be drafted to be open as possible to be open to the different needs.

### Regional Collaboration in the Decade of Climate Action

*Joint presentation by VICC-CLP and CEA (I am a representative on the steering committee, and this was my first chance to hear what the committee is involved with).*

Background: The Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities Climate Leadership (VICC-CLP) Steering Committee was established in 2019 to develop a shared climate action and resilience plan for the VICC region. The committee is comprised of elected representatives appointed from each regional district and has been supported by representatives from post-secondary institutions and local government staff. Over the past four years, the steering committee through partnerships has produced valuable outputs, which include:

1. Territorial analysis of the region's vulnerabilities to climate change and survey of local government priorities for climate action conducted by UVic researchers
2. Local Government Climate Resiliency Summit for elected officials, staff and First Nations that gathered over 150 people from across the region in Fall 2020
3. Youth Climate Summit held in Spring 2021
4. First Nations Engagement led by Alderhill, an Indigenous consulting company
5. Establishment of an inter-regional staff network in partnership with the Community Energy Association (CEA)

Community Energy Association (CEA) has 40 staff, charitable status. CLP steering committee is moving from convening to collective work. Want to rebuild the steering committee Secretariat role. Climate impacts will affect most of our services.

- Key outcomes from visioning workshop: strong desire to shift from planning to action, emphasis on convening and advocacy role (brings people together across the region in a way that nothing else does). Relationship building between local/regional gov's and Indigenous gov's.
- Noted that Regional District of Nanaimo is ahead of the Capital Regional District in coastal flood hazard mapping.

## RECONCILI-ACTION: Developing Meaningful Relationships in our Communities

Panelists: **Brent Mueller**, Director Governance Relations, Ministry of Municipal Affairs; **John Jack**, Member of Council for the Huu-ay-aht First Nations (HFN) & Chair, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD); **Tlhmtimut Samuel Schooner**, Chief Councillor, Nuxalk Nation Council member, previously served eight years as a Director with the Central Coast Regional District.

The Province of BC passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) into law in November 2019, to establish the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the Province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) recently endorsed a resolution resolving that the provincial and federal governments legislate requirements for municipalities to implement the UN Declaration, to strengthen relationships between municipalities. Relationships are central to reconciliation. Building trust requires time and patience.

Panelists provided a brief background on First Nations governance, the UN Declaration, and DRIPA, as well as insights on how local governments should start the conversation with Indigenous counterparts on the subject of reconciliation and UNDRIP/DRIPA implementation, and advance relationship building within their communities.

Action 1.1 Legislation and framework in place to have treaty FNs sitting at the table "treaties aren't the only path to self-government". 5 year timeline to work with regional districts (RDN / CRD included)

- C2C Forum, this year fund increased to \$10,000 if a project is transitioning to bylaw changes or OCP review. C2C funding can be for staff to staff relations.
- All First Nations will be moving forward with rights and title in the next 2 generations, and there will be nothing but success. With FN asserting rights and title, some of the changes in your community will be good/hard/challenging.
- Important to understand the context of the FN in terms of history and their own internal priorities and developments. Understanding the collective rights that are entrenched in Sec 35 of Constitution.

Strategies: 1st start by trying to understand who your neighbours are: formal leadership / Administrative leaders / informal leadership / trusted advisors.

Active agreements have to exist in a public place

- look at websites, monitor social media
- takes a lot of time to get anyone to open the door: you have to go more than half way, most of the time
- time/attention/training is all capacity

- First Nations may not understand why they should be talking to local governments, why talk to the child when I could talk to the parents? they are managing a lot of relationships.
- Local govs carry the baggage and collective burden of all the things that have happened between 1 community and another, and we need to acknowledge that. We aren't just who we are individually, we are representing a whole community and the interrelationships. You've inherited a lot. You have to listen to the stories that have been told for the last 50 years, because those issues are active in the hearts and minds of the people you're talking with.
- What you do as local governments can wield a lot of change/transformation to the nation. Sometimes you will be the closest contact/have the greatest influence, so don't buy the idea that only the feds/crown relationship is important.
- Relationships will be what keeps our economy going, locally it will matter more now than ever as de-globalization and free trade breaks down. Local governments and leadership have to make this happen. You have to bring this message to your colleagues. We've been fighting so long, it's the era of truth and we need to continue with it because the truth is not fully out yet.
- Difference between treaty and non-treaty nations? Historic treaties are crappy: Douglas treaty established E&M lands, how the Crown secured coal from SFN. Modern treaty nations are easier to deal with, usually figuring out how they want to be treated. Royal proclamation does give existing FNs rights and title. If a nation gets enough resources and organization to sit down and talk they can negotiate how they fit in BC's landscape. If no treaty, they still have opportunity if they can get organized.

## **Rural Islands Economic Partnership (RIEP) Forum, April 25-27**

The 2023 Forum was an “unconference” focused on the health and resilience of BC’s rural islands hosted by the Rural Island Economic Partnership (RIEP). Four trustees attended (Laura Patrick, SSI, Judi Gedyi, Bowen IM, Susan Yates and myself. <https://ruralislandspartnership.ca/>)

I attended the following panels:

### Housing Lessons Learned from a Rural Islands Perspective

Mod: **Laura Patrick** (SSI), **Nancy Heatherington Peirce** (Gabriola), **Simon Palmer** (Denman), **Justine Starke** (Southern Gulf Islands CRD) and **Dion Wyte**

Key messages (J. Starke) Supporting diverse vibrant island communities requires:

- right mix of housing as generations shift
- Support ownership for families and young people



- Succession planning for volunteer economy
- Support seniors and workforce housing
- Multi-family housing is only appropriate in some areas
- Secondary housing market is key

Takeaways:

- Secure housing breaks poverty cycle
- Build the path where people walk
- Plan for diversity = flexible zoning, adaptable use, support age in place
- Holistic economic lens: zoning = building permit = financing
- Support secondary housing market
- ADU incentive program (\$\$)
- Support multifamily: pre-zone/expedite rezoning
- Help fund pre-development costs
- Help fund servicing: on-site infrastructure
- Approve alternative solutions

*Apologies to the other presenters, I didn't take notes but took photos of J. Starke's slides so this is all I captured!*

### Reconciliation Panel

- What does the nation that you are wanting to talk to interested in?
- Don't be scared to ask the questions you need to ask, also don't pre-conceive the answer.
- Re-regenerative tourism ... think low impact tourism, shoulder season.
- Partnerships are key, not so much serving the "customer".

### Housing Challenges Action Lab - Led by Trustee Laura Patrick (Salt Spring Island)

We brainstormed around the major obstacles to housing (Regulations, Zoning, Attitude, Water, Land, Cost of everything) and separated into groups to come up with solutions.

Ken Gurr and I worked on ideas for 2 programs: a) "Cottage Compliance", a process to assess secondary units/houses to bring them into compliance with BC Building Code. Meeting the mandate to reduce our impact on environment, and make use of existing infrastructure, allow more homes for cheaper; b) the "West Coast Special", a modular housing alternative that splits the cost between renter/leaseholder, landlord, to answer the question "How to make housing rental creation appealing to landowners?" Small (<900 square ft) clusters of 6-10 homes on serviced pads with groundwater, 50% rainwater harvesting.

### Food Security/Resiliency Action Lab

Conversation came back to housing: "The Islands are renowned for their regenerative agriculture and young people are coming here and want to farm but don't have places to live." - Salt Spring Attendee